

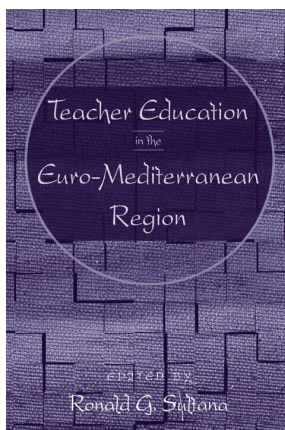


The *Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research* (EMCER) is one of the more recent of the University's research centres. Building on the Faculty of Education's Comparative Education Programme, which was established in 1994, EMCER sets out to further one of the University's main goals—that of becoming a pole of excellence in the inter-disciplinary study of Mediterranean and European issues. In pursuing this goal, and in focusing specifically on the challenges that education systems in the Euro-Mediterranean region are facing, EMCER has made a number of contributions that highlight the way Universities can be mobilised to support development goals of the wider regional and international community.



EMCER has adopted a four-pronged approach to its activities. First is the **research aspect**, particularly qualitative research that involves field work in different Mediterranean and European societies in order to capture the lived realities of complex educational dynamics. So far, fieldwork has been carried out in Syria, to document the way global education has been integrated in the basic school system;<sup>1</sup> in the Occupied Territories, where an evaluation was carried out of the Education Management Information System set up by the Ministry of Education,<sup>2</sup> as well as of the Distance Education Project in the beleaguered town of Hebron;<sup>3</sup> in Tunisia, where an in-depth study of the competency approach in the compulsory education cycle was carried out over a period of four years,<sup>4</sup> in Albania, where research was carried out on student disengagement from schooling,<sup>5</sup> and in Egypt, where a Girls' Education Initiative was evaluated.<sup>6</sup>

Recently, too, EMCER has been involved in looking into the educational entitlement of Palestinian refugee children in the UNRWA schools in the camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and West Bank and Gaza. In all these studies, field visits, first-hand observation, interviews, and analysis of documents enabled the development of insights which feed into the policy-making process of different stakeholders. Other projects have looked at the lifelong career guidance policies and agendas as these are being articulated in 10 Mediterranean states.<sup>7</sup>



Secondly, EMCER has a strong **research dissemination agenda**. The different studies referred to above have all been published in international academic journals, and have been presented in conferences the world over. EMCER has also published several volumes addressing specific educational issues in the region, including higher education,<sup>8</sup> innovation,<sup>9</sup> teacher education,<sup>10</sup> power,<sup>11</sup> special education,<sup>12</sup> science education,<sup>13</sup> and the link between education and economic development.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the research centre is responsible for the publication of the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*—a biannual refereed international review now in its ninth year of existence, and supported by the University of Malta's Publications Committee.

Thirdly, EMCER attempts to serve as a **regional node** for other educational researchers, as well as social scientists with an interest in Mediterranean education systems. The Centre co-ordinates a network and database that now includes over 250 scholars, and has helped to bring together a number of them to seminars in order to debate challenging issues that are of common concern, such as innovation, teacher education, and power. Personal ties developed at such meetings have helped consolidate long-lasting academic partnerships that have borne much fruit over the years.

EMCER has recently developed a fourth dimension to its activities, namely the offering of **post-graduate research-oriented courses** for students from across the Euro-Mediterranean region. The MA in Euro-Mediterranean Comparative Education Studies is now in its second run, and there are plans to offer the course through and open and distance learning mode.

The Centre's activities are self-funded, with research grants coming through from such organisations as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the European Cultural Foundation. The Centre operates as a loose network of associated scholars, engaging academics from across the region according to the profiles required by the different research projects it is involved in. The core detached members supporting EMCER's activities are the members of the regional board of editors of the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, whose role it is to ensure networking, within their own respective countries, on behalf of the Centre.

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