



Those who control the narrative control the future: The teaching of History in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schools¹

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ABSTRACT

History education in both the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot educational systems in Cyprus is dominated by ethnocentric approaches. In the case of the former this is the idea of history education promoting a Hellenocentric narrative which aims to cultivate a Greek national identity, while in the case of the latter the promoted Turkocentric narrative seeks to cultivate a Turkish one. In the Greek Cypriot educational system this narrative tells the story of Cyprus as part of the Greek nation and the hardships that Greek Cypriots have suffered from their enemies and especially the Turks (Perikleous, 2015a). A similar narrative in many aspects exists in the Turkish Cypriot educational system; however in this the roles are reversed (Onurkan-Samani & Tarhan, 2017). In this sense one can argue that the teaching of history in both communities is utilised as a medium not only to create a collective memory but also to antagonise one community to another. These narratives are challenged by Cyprocentric ones in both communities which support the idea of promoting a Cypriot civic identity shared by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. This article discusses aspects of history education in Cyprus during and following the British colonial rule on the island. Despite the fact that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot educational systems evolved separately, especially after the decolonisation of the island, important similarities can be identified both in terms of their development and in terms of their current state.

KEYWORDS

Greek Cypriot education, Turkish Cypriot education, narratives, Hellenocentric, Turkocentric, Cyprocentric, social engineering approach, disciplinary approach, social education approach

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Introduction

For most of the nineteenth-century, Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1878, the Ottomans ceded control of the island to Britain which declared Cyprus a Crown Colony in 1925. In 1960, with a compromise reached between Britain, Greece, and Turkey, the Republic of Cyprus was established as a bi-communal independent state based on partnership between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The 1960 partnership, however, lasted only three years because of disagreements between the two communities related to the Constitution and other inter-communal matters. In 1963 inter-communal conflicts broke out leading to the introduction of a UN Peace Keeping Force (UNFICYP) by the United Nations Security Council in 1964, which has been in charge of peacekeeping in Cyprus since then.

Disagreements remained unresolved in the next decade and up to the present day. In 1974 a coup, which was staged by a Greek Cypriot paramilitary organisation and the Greek Junta to overthrow the Greek Cypriot president of the Republic of Cyprus, prompted a military intervention by Turkey. According to the official Turkish Cypriot narrative, "Turkey militarily intervened under Article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960, [in order to remove] the threat of further violence and even greater loss of life on the Island" (Deputy Prime Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d., n.p.). According to the Greek Cypriot official narrative this was a "full scale invasion against Cyprus... [Although this] ... was in violation of all rules of international legality, including the UN Charter, Turkey proceeded to occupy the northern part of the island" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006, n.p.). As a result, the island was divided and a significant part of the population was displaced. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot authorities declared the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which has since remained internationally unrecognised except by Turkey. In turn Turkey does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus which is governed by Greek Cypriots and is the only internationally recognised government entity on the island.

With the physical division and the existence of two different governmental systems that do not politically recognise each other, the main communities of the island had no physical contact for four decades. Hence, for the new generations, the main sources of information about the other community were essentially their families and school. In 2003 a number of checkpoints opened allowing crossings to both sides. This allowed contacts between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots; however, many people have not passed to the other side yet and the political division between the two communities remains.

This article discusses recent developments in history education in Cyprus. While sections that discuss both educational systems were jointly written, those discussing each system were separately written by the individual authors. The authors of this article were personally involved in developments in history education in Cyprus during the last two decades. However, every account will always be influenced by its creator's own contextuality and positionality. Having this in mind we believe that the readers will recognise that this article remains valuable in order to understand Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot perspectives in relation to history education on the island of Cyprus.

History education during British colonial rule

Colonial educational policy regarding the teaching of history is a relatively under-researched area in many former colonies. This allowed the prevalence of the belief that colonial policy was homogenous around the world and was essentially an effort to impose a narrative that favoured

the European colonisers and devalued indigenous cultures. The teaching of the history of the colonisers and the emphasis on the history of the colonised since they were ruled by the Europeans were, according to this belief, a common aspect of colonial history curricula (Vickers, Kan & Morris, 2003). However, this was not the case in Cyprus.

The two main communities of Cyprus have had different educational systems throughout their common history. From the Ottoman Period onwards (1571 - 1878) education in Cyprus was mostly the responsibility of the respective ethno-religious communities. The two different systems also existed during the 82 year-long British colonial rule (1878-1960). Until the 1930s, the British colonial government was quite tolerant towards the different ethnic orientations of the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot education systems and allowed a considerable degree of autonomy to the two communities in terms of handling their own educational affairs, including the use of textbooks from Greece and Turkey (Persianis, 2010; Philippou, 2014; Samani, 2006; Suha, 1971). However, this changed in the 1930s with a significant reduction of Greek and Turkish history in the substantive content prescribed by the 1935 Curriculum for primary education. The import of school textbooks from Greece and Turkey was also banned for a period of time (1931-1948) known as the 'without-book period' in the history of Cyprus (Güneş, Çapraz & Erdönmez, 2018).

According to the British authorities this was necessary in order to a) address the problem of history being distorted by Greek and Turkish teachers, and b) give the proper attention to the history of Cyprus through the 'correct' perspective of the island's past (Palmer, 1936 cited in Persianis, 2010). This change can be explained by the fact that during the 1920s and 1930s the British began to see education as a vehicle for what they viewed as an unhealthy nationalism which fuelled the two communities' demands over the island's future (Onurkan-Samani, 2007; Philippou, 2014). It also coincided with a general change in British colonial policy in Cyprus which became extremely strict and intolerant to any signs of nationalism after the 1931 uprising of the Greek Cypriots (Perikleous, 2015a).

The teaching of Greek and Turkish history returned as a distinct subject for the respective communities with the 1949 Curriculum (Persians & Polyviou, 1992; Polydorou, 1995). After the end of the Second World War, the British partly abandoned the strict policy enforced after 1931 and attempted to negotiate a new constitution with increased self-administration for Cypriots. At that time (particularly in the context of the decolonisation in India) the British realised that Cyprus could not be ruled in the imperial manner of previous years. Greek Cypriots expected that union with Greece would be awarded to them after their contribution during the war while the Soviet Union's growing influence among Cypriot workers increased anti-British incidents and the possibility of new revolts. In this climate "loyalty through development and political reform" (Faustmann, 1999, p. 75) became the new guiding principle for British policy on the island.

According to Yiangou (2004), unlike British educational policy in other colonies, in which British history was compulsory in order to challenge local nationalism, in the case of Cyprus, the teaching of the island's history was encouraged in order to suppress Greek Cypriot nationalism. This was because while in other colonies local nationalism reinforced demands for independence, in Cyprus, Greek Cypriot nationalism reinforced the demand for union with Greece. This phenomenon was not unrelated to the fact that in Cyprus two communities, which identified as members of nations that existed outside the British Empire, were living within the Empire.

History education in Cyprus between 1960 and 2000

The independent Republic of Cyprus, which was founded as a partnership state in 1960, did not have a central ministry of education and educational issues were handled separately by each community through two separate bodies called Communal Chambers (Onurkan-Samani, 1999; Perikleous, 2015a). The fact that the two communities preferred to implement almost the same curricula – and use the same textbooks – as in Greece and Turkey for the teaching of Greek and Turkish history (Onurkan-Samani & Tarhan, 2017; Perikleous, 2010), gives us an idea of how

Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots viewed themselves at the time; both communities aimed to promote and preserve the national identities of the motherlands. In addition to influences from Greece and Turkey, the educational systems of the two communities – and particularly the teaching of history – were substantially affected and shaped by the internal conflict conditions which existed on the island between 1963 and 1974 and the physical division of the two communities.

Turkish Cypriot educational system

During the twentieth-century and the beginning of the twenty-first, in the absence of a curriculum, designated textbooks essentially defined the teaching of the subject. The first Turkish Cypriot textbook for the history of Cyprus, titled 'History of Cyprus from the beginning to the present', was written in 1966 by Turkish Cypriot history teacher, Vergi H. Bedevi. This was shortly after the intercommunal conflicts of 1963-1964. A subsequent textbook approved for use in schools was written in 1971 by Vehbi Zeki Serter, a member of a nationalist right-wing party. This text and its updated editions under the names of 'History of Cyprus' and / or 'History of Turkish Cypriot Struggle' were used in secondary schools for almost three decades, from 1971 to 2004 (Karahasan & Latif, 2010).

The last edition of the Serter textbook (2002) included sections on the geographical location of Cyprus and its geopolitical importance for Greece and Turkey. It covered the Byzantine, the Catholic, the Ottoman, and the British periods. Most of the textbook, however, was devoted to the Ottoman period. The arrival of the Ottomans on the island in 1571 was presented as the most important historical event because, as emphasised in the book, this was the beginning of the history of Turks on the island. The textbook approached the history of Cyprus as part of Turkish history referring both to Ottomans and Turkish Cypriots as Turks while the term 'motherland' was used for Turkey throughout the book. The existence of Greek Cypriots was rarely acknowledged and references to them were usually related to conflicts that took place on the island. According to the textbook, Greek Cypriots are a 'hybrid' group who although they self-identify as Greeks, in reality are not related to the population of Greece. The period that received the most attention was the years between 1963 and 1974 which were described as 'the history of the struggle of the Turks of Cyprus.' The textbook's narrative for this period focused mainly on the suffering of Turkish Cypriots while the hardships suffered by the Greek Cypriots were rarely mentioned. Overall, it can be argued that the first history textbook used in the Turkish Cypriot educational system provided an ethno-nationalist narrative that prescribed a very specific national identity for new generations of Turkish Cypriots. Furthermore, it cultivated the idea that the two communities could never live together and thus the permanent division of Cyprus was the best solution.

In terms of teaching methodology, the textbook contained long narratives without any activities for students and was illustrated with limited black and white pictures including pictures displaying the suffering of Turkish Cypriots such as martyrdoms and massacres. It followed a traditional teacher-centred approach where teachers conveyed knowledge that students were supposed to passively receive and memorise. Opportunities for the students to actively engage in the construction of historical knowledge were absent.

Greek Cypriot educational system

History teaching in Greek Cypriot education during the twentieth-century was also heavily influenced by the Greek educational system. Greek history was the most prominent part of the teaching of the subject and, as in the case of Turkish Cypriot education, it was taught through the same textbooks used in Greece. The period after 1974 saw the rise of Cyprocentric views in education which took the form of establishing the history of Cyprus as part of the teaching of the subject and the development of textbooks and curricula in Cyprus (Philippou & Klerides, 2010). This was mainly because ethnocentric ideas and the *Enosis* (union) ideal became unpopular among Greek Cypriots after the 1974 events, which had begun with a coup by supporters of union

with Greece. Nevertheless, the teaching of the subject did not decisively move away from Greek Cypriot education's ethnocentric/ Hellenocentric orientation (Philippou & Klerides, 2010). The 1981 History Curriculum for primary education was an example of this tension. According to this document, students should learn the most important events of the history of their country (i.e. Cyprus) and develop feelings of patriotism (Ministry of Education of Cyprus, 1981). However, according to the same document, students should also acquire a national identity (i.e. Greek) and preserve national heritage. The curriculum's ethnocentric character was also evident in the prescribed content that focused on Greek history rather than the Cypriot one. In 1993 a right-wing government rose to power and ethnocentrism in education became even more prominent. The 1996 History Curriculum for primary education, which was a moderately amended version of the one introduced in 1994, stated that the main purpose of history teaching was "to help students to get to know and appreciate the history and cultural heritage of Cyprus and Greece and to form national consciousness as members of the Greek nation and as inhabitants of the semi-occupied Cyprus" (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996, p. 133). As in the case of Turkish Cypriot education, the textbooks did not offer any activities designed to promote historical thinking and students were expected to memorise the factual knowledge contained in them.

The narrative in the Greek textbooks was one about the Greek nation being a brave and freedom-loving people who struggled against their enemies and civilised the world. Greek Cypriot textbooks presented Cyprus as a Greek island since at least the thirteenth-century BCE and all Cypriots as essentially Greeks who typically fought bravely for freedom (Perikleous, 2010). Encounters with other people were usually presented, in both cases, as conflicts in which the Greeks and the Cypriots were the heroes fighting against enemies who wanted to enslave them. Turkish people were presented as the main enemy since the fifteenth-century CE. They were those who had dissolved the Greek Byzantine Empire and enslaved the Greeks (including the Greek-Cypriots) for four centuries. In many Greek Cypriot textbooks the Turkish-Cypriots were only referenced during the description of conflicts on the island.

Overview

History teaching in Cyprus during the twentieth-century was an example of what Seixas (2000) calls a 'best story' approach which aimed to transmit a single definite narrative (the best story of the past) in order to reinforce a sense of belonging and to promote the dominant values of the society. In the case of Greek Cypriot education this story was a Hellenocentric narrative that aimed to cultivate a Greek national identity, whilst a Turkocentric narrative sought to cultivate a Turkish identity in Turkish Cypriot education. In the Greek Cypriot educational system this narrative told the story of Cyprus as part of the Greek nation and the hardships that Greek Cypriots had suffered from their enemies and especially the Turks (Perikleous, 2015a). A similar reverse narrative in many respects existed in the Turkish Cypriot educational system (Onurkan-Samani & Tarhan, 2017).

These ethnocentric approaches were rivalled by Cyprocentric ones that instead of promoting a national Greek or Turkish identity, favoured a Cypriot civic identity which included both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Proponents of these approaches in both communities aspired to educate future generations who felt primarily Cypriot (whether they were Turkish Cypriot or Greek Cypriot) and shared a similar narrative about Cyprus being at the crossroads of civilizations. This pointed towards a more consensual narrative of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots co-existing and living peacefully for centuries and creating a shared culture (Kızılyürek, 2002; Perikleous, 2015a). However, these Cyprocentric approaches did not have a substantial impact upon the teaching of history during the twentieth-century.

History education in Cyprus in the twenty-first century

Turkish Cypriot educational system

In 2003, with the ascension to power of a left-wing party which supported a federal solution based on political equality, the already established role of history education within the Turkish Cypriot system was questioned. The new government was against the nationalist policies and the ethnocentric perception of history reflected in history textbooks (Beyidođlu Önen et al., 2010). Therefore, a commission consisting mostly of local academics, historians and teachers was set up to develop new history textbooks with the aim of developing Turkish Cypriot cultural identity, inquiry skills, empathy, responsibility, respect for diversity and active participation in social life. In total, six textbooks titled 'History of Cyprus' were developed. These new textbooks were in contrast with the previous ones in terms of content, appearance, pedagogical approach and underlying assumptions (Papadakis, 2008). The new textbooks attempted to eliminate elements of ethno-nationalism focusing more on inclusive historical knowledge. As Beyidođlu Önen et al. (2010) state, content referring to a 'national enemy' and the 'Other' was removed. The new textbooks were Cyprocentric in geographical and cultural terms with a tendency to move towards a model of civic nationalism that promoted loyalty to the Turkish Cypriot state open to the idea of a future joint state, presenting Cyprus as the homeland of all communities living on the island (Papadakis, 2008). Instead of employing an ethno-nationalist perspective, the textbooks recognized the existence of the other communities (i.e. Greek Cypriots, Maronite Cypriots and Armenian Cypriots), referring to them as 'Cypriots too', who can live together in peace. The word 'Turks' for Turkish Cypriots and 'motherland' for Turkey were not often used in these textbooks.

In terms of appearance, the new textbooks were colourful and well-illustrated. This was also the period during which an educational reform that aimed for a shift from traditional teaching to a constructivist student-centred learning approach was launched (Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2005). Hence, the new textbooks were based on this student-centred approach that put students at the centre of teaching and took their characteristics, needs and interests into consideration. Unlike traditional teacher-centred approaches of teaching history that focused on knowledge transmission, the new textbooks mainly contained student-centred activities embedding the aim of promoting higher order thinking skills including historical thinking, multi-perspectivity, critical thinking and inquiry skills. Furthermore, the textbooks implied that a united Cyprus based on political equality was the best solution on the island. Thus, the maps of Cyprus included in the textbooks were not divided. The textbooks were in use for five years from 2004 to 2009 and during this time the main criticism against them, by right wing political parties, journalists and historians, was that the new generations would lose their national identity (Beyidođlu Önen et al., 2010).

Despite their substantial differences with the previous texts, especially their focus on cultivating abilities related to historical inquiry and deserting traditional ethnocentric narratives, the 2004 textbooks did not abandon the idea of promoting social aims through the teaching of history. This is evident in their focus on promoting a specific narrative (i.e. Cyprocentric), a specific identity (i.e. Turkish Cypriot) and a specific idea about the appropriate solution for the current situation in Cyprus. In this sense, they were one of the many examples around the world where a disciplinary approach was employed as a means to promote social aims related to reconciliation in conflict societies.

Upon the return of the previous right-wing government in 2009, the history textbooks were once again revised and rewritten. Changing history textbooks was one of the now ruling party's promises during the election campaign (Beyidođlu Önen et al., 2010). Therefore, soon after the elections, a committee of academics mostly from universities in Turkey was set up to rewrite the history textbooks. The textbooks claimed to shed light on 'historical realities' (Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2009). Compared to the previous ones, the new textbooks differed mainly in terms of content. As promised, there was a return to teaching national history in an ethnocentric way, through the use of a nationalist and militaristic discourse (Beyidođlu Önen

et al., 2010). Unlike the previous textbooks, the new ones presented the history of Turkish Cypriots on the island from a strictly Turkish Cypriot point of view ignoring the shared past and experiences of the two communities (Karahasan & Latif, 2011). As in case of the first history textbook, the suffering of Greek Cypriots during conflicts was not voiced. In these new textbooks, history was defined as a 'science that highlights historical facts' (Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2009). In terms of the appearance, they were also highly colourful and illustrated. However, the main problem with these textbooks, which were used until 2018, was the effort to promote a nationalist way of teaching history but to an extent maintain the student-centred methods of the previous textbooks. This phenomenon created confusion for teachers and students alike (Onurkan-Samani & Tarhan, 2017).

In 2013, the Basic Education Curriculum Development Project (TEPGEP), funded by the Turkish Embassy and run by a Turkish Cypriot university, under the responsibility of the Turkish Cypriot educational authorities, was set up in the Turkish Cypriot educational system (Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2016). Within this project, a basic education curriculum for the history of Cyprus was developed for the first time in the Turkish Cypriot educational system. This was the 'Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot History Curriculum' for lower secondary education which claims to be "student-centred based on Progressivism and Reconstructionism as educational philosophies aiming to promote historical thinking" (Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2016, p. 27).

Parallel to the curriculum, three school textbooks were also written by a committee consisting of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot academic historians and history teachers. In contrast with the official Greek Cypriot narrative, the Turkish Cypriot textbooks do not refer to the existence of a Greek population in Cyprus during the pre-Ottoman period. The terms Greek Cypriots and Rums of Cyprus only appear in the second and the third textbook, along with the term Turkish Cypriots. The periods of conflict between the two main communities of the island are presented from a Turkish Cypriot point of view. However, the narrative related to the missing persons of these conflicts also refers to the Greek Cypriots.

All three textbooks are colourful and highly illustrated consisting of units that provide substantive knowledge in the form of narratives, followed by a variety of activities. Despite the fact that the Basic Education Curriculum refers to the aim of promoting historical thinking, the textbooks focus on providing substantive knowledge and do not provide the students with much opportunity to construct meaning and develop critical, historical and reflective thinking.

Greek Cypriot educational system

The dawn of the new millennium marked the beginning of changes in Greek-Cypriot history education too. The report of the Educational Reform Committee (2004), which was appointed by a newly elected government supported by the centre-right, centre-left and leftist parties, called for changes in order to a) abandon the Hellenocentric (ethnocentric) ideological orientation of Greek Cypriot education, b) promote interculturalism and multiculturalism, and c) acknowledge the existence of the Turkish Cypriot community. The report criticised the import of Greek textbooks and suggested that new history textbooks should be written by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot experts. It also argued that history education should become a means of promoting peaceful co-existence and rapprochement between the two communities in Cyprus. (Perikleous, 2015a).

This report was the beginning of a process which led to a comprehensive educational reform for both primary and secondary education. The reform was officially commenced in 2008 by a leftist-led coalition government and continues until today under the current right-wing government. In 2010 a new history curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010) was published. Although it contained general references to the development of historical thinking, multiperspectivity, the use of sources and understanding change, and continuity, strong elements of a traditional ethnocentric/Hellenocentric approach still existed in it. This is evident in its description of the aims and purposes of history education and in its prescribed content which

essentially supported the same Hellenocentric dominant narrative of the twentieth-century, albeit less explicit in promoting Greek superiority and in drawing attention to negative aspects of other groups (Perikleous, 2015a, 2015b). One could argue that the 2010 Curriculum's ethnocentric approach was in contrast with the Cyprocentric politics of the predominantly leftist government at the time. This was more than likely due to an effort not to cause reactions by attempting a balanced position between the two opposing views and also to the fact that this was still a coalition government in which Hellenocentric parties also participated. The political appointment of only historians and no educators for the development of the curriculum attests that the matter was treated as an issue of politics rather than one of curriculum thinking and related pedagogy.

Although the 2010 History Curriculum did not bring any substantial changes, its implementation process in primary education introduced a new approach that was radically different from the traditional Hellenocentric one and its Cyprocentric opponent. This process, which was undertaken by a group of teachers at the Department of Curricula, included the development of teaching proposals for Year 3 (ages 9-10) and in-service training for primary school teachers. Both the teaching proposals and the in-service training introduced a constructivist inquiry-based approach which instead of promoting a specific narrative, aimed to develop historical literacy, that is the combination of substantive knowledge and disciplinary understanding. Unlike the case of the Turkish Cypriot textbooks of 2004 that employed a disciplinary approach to promote social aims related to the promotion of Cyprocentric views, the teaching material for the implementation of the Greek Cypriot 2010 Curriculum in primary education focused on intrinsic aims by prioritising disciplinary understanding rather than any kind of identity or narrative. This was based on the idea that disciplinary understanding (the way knowledge is constructed in the discipline of history) allows students to deal with conflicting views of the past and gives meaning to substantive knowledge making it usable and worthy to be remembered (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012). The implementation process in secondary education emphasised the use of sources; however, it retained a focus on conveying factual knowledge rather than developing disciplinary understanding. With the election of a right-wing government in 2013 the implementation process was essentially halted in order to be re-evaluated. Since then no more teaching material has been developed and in-service training is limited.

The latest version of the History curriculum was published in 2016 (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.) and in some aspects adopted the suggestions of the implementation process for primary education. According to this the main purpose of history is the development of historical thinking and consciousness. The means for this is the cultivation of historical literacy, coherent knowledge of the past and an understanding of the methods and logic of the discipline of history.

Despite the changes in terms of methodology, the prescribed content to be taught in the 2016 version of the history curriculum remained essentially the same as the one in previous curricula: ethnocentric without allowing much space for different interpretations. Also, apart from the teaching material for Year 3, which was developed during the first year of the implementation of the 2010 History Curriculum, no new history textbooks have been published after the introduction of either the 2010 History Curriculum or its 2016 version.

Overview

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, ethnocentric approaches in both educational systems were seriously challenged by Cyprocentric ones, and views of education as a contributing factor to rapprochement between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots found their way into official texts. This can be explained by the ascension of Cyprocentric parties to power, the partial removal of travel restrictions in 2003 which allowed the contact between the two communities, the debates over the 2004 referendum for a solution in Cyprus, which brought forward voices that supported reconciliation and coexistence, and the phenomenon of nationalism being challenged globally (Perikleous, 2015a). The efforts of international organisations (for example, Council of Europe, United Nations) to promote reconciliation on the island were also a crucial factor for this development.

The same period also marks the emergence of disciplinary inquiry-based approaches of history education on the island, initially as a crucial element in suggestions by international organisations for promoting mutual understanding on the island. However, advocates of the original purpose of disciplinary approaches also influenced developments on history education in Cyprus.

Discussion

Even though the two educational systems in Cyprus developed separately, at the moment, they face a similar situation. On one hand there is an officially expressed policy (in terms of curricular texts) for the introduction of constructivist approaches in history education which aim to develop disciplinary understanding and abilities of historical inquiry. On the other hand, the officially prescribed factual knowledge to be taught (as described in the curricula and presented in history textbooks) remains ethnocentric and mono-perspectival. Furthermore, the official textbooks used in both educational systems follow traditional approaches of conveying facts without any substantial provisions for the development of ideas related to disciplinary historical thinking or abilities related to the construction of historical knowledge.

The existence of this tension is buttressed by the key role of history textbooks. History textbooks are far more visible to the public than the curriculum which is essentially meant to be used only by the teachers. While curricula can be found only in teachers' libraries and are accessed online usually by teachers, textbooks are practically in every household with school-aged children. Textbooks and factual knowledge prescribed by the curriculum are much more specific than methodological aims in terms of the kind of history that is being taught. Lists of topics in curricula and texts contained in textbooks explicitly suggest a specific narrative, while methodological aims referring to the development of historical thinking do not. Furthermore, the development of historical thinking is, for many, an abstract idea with which is difficult to disagree.

Although teachers' pedagogical choices are affected by a variety of internal and external factors (Husbands et al., 2003), international literature suggests that textbooks have a crucial role in the teaching of history and that they are often more influential than curricular documents (Foster & Crawford, 2006). Despite the absence of research data on teachers' practices in Cyprus, anecdotal evidence (including the authors' experience as educators and teacher trainers) confirms the key place of textbooks in history teaching in both educational systems. Therefore, one can argue that between the constructivist methodology described in the curricula and the traditional approach of the textbooks, teachers are more likely to teach according to the latter.

Due to their higher visibility and specificity and also the key role of textbooks in history teaching, public opinion, the media, politicians and even educators are more sensitive to changes to the school narratives (in textbooks and curricula) than changes related to methodological suggestions. Unlike the latter, the school narratives in both educational systems tell stories about the past which do more than to inform students about the past. They tell students the story of who they are (Greeks and Turks). As evidenced by several debates which took place in Cyprus during the last decades these narratives remain dominant and do not allow space for the Cyprocentric ones that challenge them (see for example Perikleous, 2015a; Onurkan-Samani & Tarhan, 2017). Klerides and Zembylas (2011) describe this phenomenon as a form of *immunology* where Cyprocentric narratives are prevented from passing the border of history textbooks in order to threaten ethnocentric identities. We suggest that the phenomenon goes beyond textbooks and that this imaginary border includes the narratives prescribed by curricular texts and educational policies too. The rather ethnocentric narrative of the 2010 Curriculum for Greek Cypriot education, which was arguably the result of an effort to avoid reactions, despite the Cyprocentric view held by the predominantly leftist government at the time (Perikleous, 2015a), is an example of this phenomenon. In the light of this, the co-existence of constructivist inquiry-based methodologies, suggested by the curricula, and ethnocentric narratives, included in the curricula and textbooks, that promote national identities is not a paradox. It can be explained by the fact that changes of pedagogical methodology in history education policy documents are not perceived as threatening identities as much as changes in the prescribed narratives do.

The dominance of ethnocentric narratives in both systems can also partly explain the fact that a 'third [bi-communal] space' (Makriyianni, Psaltis & Latif, 2011) that exists in the form of bi-communal NGOs and initiatives, which aim to promote reconciliation through history teaching, has not managed, at least until now, to substantially influence developments in the teaching of the subject in the two educational systems. For example the most prominent of these organisations, the Association of Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR), even though it has strong support from organisations such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations, and during the last two decades has produced a significant amount of high quality teaching material and provided training opportunities for history teachers (Counsell et al., 2013; Psaltis et al. 2013), has not managed to substantially influence the two educational systems. The AHDR's teaching materials and training seminars challenge the ethnocentric narratives and, in this way, threaten the integrity of deep-seated identities in both communities, causing resistance (see AHDR, n.d. and AHDR, n.d.b).

Another example of how the dominance of the two conflicting ethnocentric narratives does not allow changes in the teaching of history is the case of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Education (TCE) which was established by the leaders of the two communities in 2015 with a mandate to: a) review research and good practices and also undertake new research on education's potential to contribute to conflict transformation, peace, reconciliation and the countering of prejudice, discrimination, racism, xenophobia and extremism; b) suggest a mutually acceptable mechanism for the implementation of confidence-building measures in schools and to promote contact and cooperation between students and educators from the two communities; and c) to make recommendations regarding the coordination of the two educational systems (UNFICYP, 2015; United Nations, 2016). The establishment of this committee was a significant development since it was the first official common project, related to education, undertaken by the two communities in the history of Cyprus. The TCE's work and particularly its *Imagine* educational programme were praised by the United Nations Secretary-General in his reports on the UN operations in Cyprus (United Nations, 2018; 2019). One would expect that the teaching of history would be one of the key aspects of the TCE's work. However, so far, nothing related to history education has been delivered or suggested by the TCE. Although no official explanation about this phenomenon has been provided so far, it is likely that it is due to concerns about possible reactions caused by changes that could be considered as threatening to the official narratives.

Conclusion

During the last century history education in Cyprus has been characterised by a game of competing identities (Perikleous, 2015a). This rivalry reflects different political aspirations about Cyprus and the island's relationship with the British Empire (during colonial times) and the so called 'motherlands': Greece and Turkey. As in many other places in the world, the different groups in Cyprus approach the teaching of history as a tool for social engineering. As Shemilt points out, in a "social engineering model... [of history education] ... specific lessons from the past are taught with the intention of shaping students' attitudes and behaviours in the lived present" (2011, p. 70). The prevailing idea is that those who control the narrative in school history in a community of people, essentially control the future of the community itself.

This is not a localised phenomenon. Different depictions of the past are the main cause of the so-named History Wars that occur in a number of societies, which quite often take the form of public debates between historians, educators, politicians, and commentators over the kind of history students should be taught. This is also a major feature of the debates over the teaching of history in former colonies. However, as in the case of colonial educational policy, differences can be observed in the way such debates manifest in different former colonies. For example, in Australia and New Zealand, a key issue in these debates is the balance between the history of the European colonisers and their achievements on one hand and the history of the Indigenous peoples and the injustices that they have suffered on the other (Guyver, 2013). In the case of Cyprus, as discussed earlier in this article, the history of the British colonisers was never part of

this debate. Instead, the controversy is caused by different views about the balance between the history of the island and the two communities' perceived motherlands (Greece and Turkey) and by conflicting assumptions of how the relationship between all four groups should be depicted.

These differences between educational systems in former colonies are related to how colonisation and decolonisation occurred in each case. In Australia and New Zealand, the settlement of people was a main feature of the colonisation process. During decolonisation these people became the first citizens of the new countries. This explains, at least partly, the strong support for a narrative that adopts the perspective of the coloniser and suppresses the history of the Indigenous peoples and their suffering. In Cyprus this did not happen. British colonial rule did not include the settlement of people on the island and the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 were the locals who lived on the island a long time before colonisation and considered themselves as members of nations that existed in places other than Cyprus. This identification with the 'motherlands' resulted to the dominance of the Greek and Turkish narratives in school history while the history of Cyprus itself remains of secondary importance until today. Even when the latter is taught, the prevailing narrative is again one that tells the story of the island from either a Greek or Turkish perspective. It can be argued that the role of the coloniser's history, in the case of the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot educational systems is fulfilled by the history of the 'motherlands.'

There are three different directions in which history education on the island could move. The first one is the preservation of the current situation with the prevalence of ethnocentric narratives which promote the identities of the 'motherlands' in order to cultivate citizens who will strive to protect their community as part of a greater nation. The second one is the replacement of the current ethnocentric narratives with a Cyprocentric one which will promote a common civic identity for all Cypriots. The third one is a radical change of decisively shifting the focus of history teaching from a social engineering model to what Shemilt calls a 'social education model' (2011) that prioritises historical literacy over social aims such as identity building. In this disciplinary model the teaching of history aims to develop knowledge of the past and an understanding of how we know about the past without prioritising a specific narrative. Instead it aims to make students aware of the existence of multiple narratives and help them develop a mental apparatus to navigate through them. In this case, there is no effort to develop a certain kind of identity.

A move from the current Hellenocentric and Turkocentric approaches to a Cyprocentric one is not likely to take place without a shift in the current political situation. The example of the short-lived history textbooks with more Cyprocentric views in both communities supports this argument. Furthermore, as Falk Pingel (2011) points out, experience in textbook revisions globally shows that successful changes aiming to promote reconciliation and mutual understanding usually take place in contexts where the opposing groups have already settled their political conflicts. Therefore, this move seems to be highly unlikely before a political solution is agreed.

A shift towards what Shemilt (2011) describes as a social education approach would be an arguably even more radical development. It demands the abandonment of the current social engineering model which means to reject history's role as a tool for identity building. It also means accepting that the story of the ethnic or ideological other should be told too. Although for now advocates of a Cyprocentric approach seem to favour multiperspectivity and argue for a teaching of history that develops historical thinking, it is debatable whether these views include the perspective of their ideological other, the ethnocentric one. Debates within each community over history, in which all sides demand the teaching of 'true history' and deem the other's narrative as a 'forgery of history', suggest otherwise. It is unlikely that the supporters of either the ethnocentric or Cyprocentric identities would accept a teaching of history that does not aim to develop any kind of national or civic identity. This is of course not a local phenomenon but a global one. The idea of history education as a key component of preserving modern states remains strong, and arguably an educational system in which the teaching of the subject is completely disassociated from identity formation does not exist.

The case of history education in Cyprus is not unique. Debates and developments which change the balance between different narratives that promote different identities and between socio-political and disciplinary aims in history teaching have been happening around the world for decades. As Stuart Foster points out “victimization of school history by external ideological forces appears to be the most unfortunate and chilling curriculum lesson to be learned” (1998, p. 162) from these debates. This is also true in the case of Cyprus where usually the educational community is absent from these debates, and arguments voiced by politicians and public figures who do participate, are often ahistorical, revealing a simplistic and superficial understanding of pedagogy driven by political interests. In view of this we argue that there is a need for strong communities of history education teachers and academics, within and between the two educational systems in Cyprus, who will promote the discussion of the issue of history teaching in pedagogical and disciplinary terms. The involvement of academic historians in this process is also crucial. Since different perspectives of pedagogy, the past, history and history education exist also within the circles of history educationalists and academic historians, the pedagogical and disciplinary nature of the discussion will not necessarily lead to a consensus. It can, however, create a space for the exchange of informed arguments and provide resistance to the abuse of the subject by political agendas and uninformed policy makers.

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Endnotes

¹ In George Orwell's (1949) dystopian fiction novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the ruling class, called the Party, uses the slogan "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" to describe their manipulative attitude to the knowledge of the past.

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