

From Nation-Building to Europeanisation: The Influence of History on Greek-Cypriot Education

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Abstract

The socio-historical context of Cyprus entails various consequences for Greek-Cypriot education. However, the distinctive character of Greek-Cypriot education does not only have historical credentials, but it is also bound to the contemporary situation that includes Cyprus' accession to the EU. This paper explores the ways in which history influences Greek-Cypriot education. Furthermore, it examines the types of interaction between European influences and national education policies by reporting on policy-document analysis and semi-structured interviews carried out with Greek-Cypriot policy-makers. As Greek-Cypriot education has been developed in a case characterised by both inter-communal and intra-communal conflict, it has been inextricably linked to the nation-building project. The Europeanisation of Greek-Cypriot education has been merely symbolic, indicating 'simulated' development and implementation processes.

Keywords: education, history, nation-building, Europeanisation

Introduction

Cyprus is an independent, sovereign Republic of a presidential type. It is a small island situated at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, south of Turkey, west of Levant, north of Egypt, and south-east of Greece. Cyprus has always demonstrated a unique historical context because of its strategic geographical location, at the crossroads of civilisations that has led to a continuous situation of conflict and conquest. The 1960 constitution of the Republic of Cyprus recognises the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot groups as the two major communities of the island and establishes Greek and Turkish as official languages. In modern history, the two communities have attempted to establish a strong link between the actual state and the nations that they represent (Greece and Turkey). The presentation of the Cypriot state as coterminous with one of these two nations has had adverse implications for the separate education systems of the two communities.

Coulby (1997, p. 34) argues that 'it might be expected that the nature of the state's selection of nations would be reflected in the culture and knowledge chosen within curricular systems'. The state can potentially control cultural reproduction through school curricula; therefore education should be assessed against cultural forces that are historically formatted. The notion of nationhood, which historically became stronger in the Cypriot context, has influenced the educational

arrangements of Cyprus. However, the portrayal by school curricula of the state as coterminous with a homogenous culture and nation might operate to produce and reproduce xenophobia towards non-dominant groups (i.e. immigrants) (Coulby, 1997). On the other hand, Coulby suggests that a state's accession to the EU could potentially become 'a corrective against nationalist isolationism' (*ibid.*, p. 34). Arguably, Greek-Cypriot schooling and society is substantially influenced by the traditional Cypriot historical context and, more recently, Cyprus' accession to the EU and Europeanisation.

Conceptualising Europeanisation

Europeanisation is assembled as the effect of policy development within European-related structures of governance, but also as the process of political problem-solving which influences the interactions of policy actors and networks in Europe (Lawn and Keiner, 2006). Radaelli (2000, p. 4) defines Europeanisation as the processes in which:

'(a) construction (b) diffusion (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, "ways of doing things" and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies.'

Europeanisation often bears a diversified impact of European requirements and procedures on domestic policies.

In examining the mechanisms through which European institutions may influence national policy, literature identifies coercion, mimetism, framing mechanisms and elite learning. *Coercion* indicates that European institutions pressurise member states to bring their domestic policies into line with European policies by deploying legal or economic incentives (Radaelli, 2003). *Mimetism* indicates that 'if the countries adopting EU policies provide a critical mass, the remaining countries can feel the force of attraction of the EU "centre of gravity" and join in' (*ibid.*, p. 42). *Framing mechanisms* are weaker instruments and, by extension, softer modes of Europeanisation, that operate by: (a) suggesting new policy solutions to a national policy problem; (b) diffusing ideas via processes such as benchmarking, sharing of best practice, monitoring and evaluation; or (c) the promotion of the network mode of governance' to the member states. Lastly, *elite learning* implies the adoption of adaptation and coping strategies in response to external stimulation (*thin learning*) or the shift of beliefs, preferences and values (*thick learning*).

Nonetheless, researching Europeanisation through the lens of an exclusively top-down rather than a bottom up perspective disregards the complex two-way interrelationship of European integration (Radaelli, 2003). Europeanisation is an 'interactive process of policy-making whereby member states co-construct, influence or shape the formation of policies, which get crystallised as "European"' (Alexiadou, 2007, p. 107). The adoption or implementation of supranational (i.e.

Europeanised) educational policies at the national level involves processes of translation and recontextualisation. The flows of Europeanised ideologies are mediated by national histories, cultures and politics (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Accordingly, we examine the influences of history on Greek-Cypriot education.

Pre-Independence Period: Implications on Education

The contemporary reality and ideology, which underpin Greek-Cypriot education, are strongly influenced by Cyprus' historical context. Persianis (1996) suggests that the unique historical context of Cyprus has substantially affected the development of its educational affairs. In discussing Cypriot modern history, Kizilyürek and Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis (1997, p. 10) suggest that we should go 'as far back as the Ottoman occupation of the island in 1571 ... because herein lies the origins of bicomunalism in Cyprus'. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire to include the island led to the settlement of the Muslim population in Cyprus and planted the seed of bicomunalism. During the period of Ottoman rule (1571-1878) the different communities appropriated their own cultural, educational and religious administration (Kizilyürek and Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1997). This period was neither a period of integration nor conflict.

Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1824 affected the politics of the island. Cyprus was officially excluded from the territory of the Greek state. However, following a process of state- and nation-building, Greece mobilised the implementation of the vision of the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea). The concept of the Great Idea implied the goal of establishing a Greek state that would include all Greeks and thus Cyprus. This political programme necessitated the creation of intellectual links between Greece and its eastern periphery. The Greek-Cypriot Orthodox Church became the 'vehicle' for the intellectual expansion of the Hellenic Kingdom to Cyprus. The Church and the Hellenic Centre cultivated the interpretation of local traditions as national assertions. This raising of national consciousness by the means of education inspired the vision of *Enosis* (unification) of Cyprus with Greece (Philippou, 2007).

In 1878, Turkey exchanged Cyprus for 'a British commitment to maintain the integrity of Turkish dominions in Asia against Russia' (Persianis, 1996, p. 47). The Greek-Cypriot community, fearing its 'dehellenisation' by the colonial government, adopted an ideology of 'Greek supremacy', which reinforced a construction of collective existence attached to the unification of Cyprus with Greece (Persianis, 1996). On the other hand, the Turkish-Cypriot community, which had no interest in the union of Cyprus with Greece, announced a counter-demand for the continuation of British Colonial rule. Otherwise, they demanded the return of the island to the successor of the Ottoman Empire (Holland, 1998). The clash between the two nationalisms boosted an intercommunal conflict between right-wing Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. Greek-Cypriots' aim of *Enosis* (Union) with Greece mobilised an armed anti-colonial struggle (1955-1959) led by EOKA, an organisation mainly formed by right-wing Greek-Cypriot fighters (Papadakis, 1995). In 1956, a major shift marked both Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot politics

suggesting a demand for the partition (*taksim*) of the island. Moreover, left-wing Greek-Cypriots were subject to suspicion and violence as AKEL, the communist party of Cyprus, expressed reservations about the timing and the form of the struggle.

During this period, the educational policy in Cyprus was marked by the conflict between the Greek-Cypriot Orthodox Church and the colonial government. The former exploited education to promote the vision of *Enosis* in Greek-Cypriot consciousness, while the latter attempted to carry out a 'civilising task' towards their colonies (Koullapis, 1999). During the first period of Cypriot colonialism (1878-1931), Greek-Cypriot education promoted nationalist propaganda through the teaching of Greek history. But over the second period (1931-1960) the British adopted a policy of planned cultural and educational 'lending' (Persianis, 1996, p. 45). The colonial power attempted to 'lend to the Cypriots the academic model of the British metropolitan schools, the English language and culture and the advantages of the British universities and colleges' (*ibid.*, p. 57). The British founded multicultural secondary schools for the co-education of students from all communities in Cyprus. By the end of the British rule, they had established Britain's technical model of schooling. Herein lay an attempt at cultural integration through education in order to restrict the development of Greek or Turkish consciousness among Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots respectively. In order to secure its rule over the island, Britain attempted to develop a Cypriot collective identity (in contrast to a Greek or a Turkish one) by making Cypriots aware of their responsibilities as part of the British Empire. They deployed education as a means for establishing a new middle class which would be culturally responsive and politically supportive of the Colonial government. Through academic secondary education they sought to prepare a class of public servants, who would work for, and not against, their governance. The new middle class would function as the link between the colonial government and the masses.

However, Greek-Cypriot resistance to British integrationist policies strengthened Greek-Cypriot nationalism (Koullapis, 1999). Greek-Cypriot teachers purposely ignored the history curricula and textbooks imposed by the British administration and adopted a teaching-as-usual approach. Many Greek-Cypriot secondary schools refused British financial support and retained the National Curriculum of Greece. Lastly, in the 1950s, central high schools (i.e. Pancyprian Gymnasium in Nicosia) organised anti-colonial parades in favour of *Enosis*. It may be argued that Greek-Cypriot teachers' perceptions of their cultural identities constrained the implementation of British educational policy. The enactment of educational policy legislation by the British was not equivalent to the execution of this policy by Greek-Cypriot schools.

The Independence Period: Implications on Education

Moving from colonialism to independence, Cyprus was granted independence as a bicomunal Republic by the Zurich-London agreement in 1960 (Papadakis, 1995). Even so, the previous intercommunal conflict militated against cooperation between the two major communities as a bicomunal Republic. Although the two 'mother' countries (Greece and Turkey) agreed to

abandon their counter goals for Cyprus' unification with Greece and partition, respectively, they continued to reinforce Greek or Turkish consciousness among Cypriots (Kızılyürek and Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1997). The strong resistance of the two communities towards cooperation led to an out-break of intercommunal violence and the consequent collapse of the bicomunal structures of the state. Eventually, Turkish-Cypriot Ministers withdrew from the Cabinet and Turkish-Cypriots were moved by their leaders into certain locations to form self-administered enclaves in 1963. In 1964 the United Nations Security Council stationed an international peacekeeping force (UNFICYP) on the island and appointed a UN mediator to promote a peaceful settlement of the problem in accordance with the Charter of the UN.

This period of intercommunal conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots was also substantially marked by intra-ethnic conflict between right-wing Greek-Cypriots, to whom the administrative authority was rendered; and left-wing Greek-Cypriots who were considered as not eligible for positions of power on the basis of their absence from the anti-colonial struggle. Taking advantage of this situation, the dictatorial military government (Junta) of Greece, which came to power in 1967, encouraged a coup against the government of the Republic in 1974 to fulfil the aim of unification of Cyprus with Greece. In response, Turkey invaded Cyprus leading to the division of the island and the massive relocation of Greek-Cypriots in southern Cyprus and Turkish-Cypriots in northern Cyprus (Papadakis, 1993).

In 1975, the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus was formed which formally declared its independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983.¹ The UN Security Council Resolution 541 (UN, 1983) claimed the invalidity of such a state and TRNC is recognised as an independent state only by Turkey. Even though since 1974 the Greek-Cypriot government has controlled only the southern part of Cyprus, it is recognised as the *de jure* government of the whole island (Constantinou and Papadakis, 2001). Since 1974 various UN led attempts to overcome the division of the island on a bizonal, bicomunal basis failed. The island came closest to a reunification when in 2004 the two major communities of the island held an unsuccessful referendum to settle the Cyprus question in April 2004. Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots were asked to ratify or reject the 'Annan Plan for Cyprus' (fifth revision), a UN proposal for settlement. As a result, when Cyprus became a full member of the EU (May 2004), the *acquis communautaire* (total body of EU law accumulated thus far) of the EU remained suspended in the occupied north. Moreover, in 2003 there was a partial opening of crossing points between north and south Cyprus. The Turkish-Cypriot administration allowed access to the northern part via specific checkpoints across the buffer zone, where Greek-Cypriots are asked to demonstrate their passports.

1 Although the northern part of the island is referred to as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in this essay, it is acknowledged that the TRNC is not recognised by the international community except Turkey.

The aforementioned intercommunal conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots and the intra-communal one between the political left and the right permeated the Greek-Cypriot educational policy. The language used to describe national identity by various curriculum documents drew upon two conflicting discourses: (a) *Hellenocentrism* that asserts the Greekness of Greek-Cypriots and was mainly argued by the right wing; and (b) *Cypriocentrism* that pursued a Cypriot identity common to all the communities of the island and was mainly deployed by the left wing (Philippou, 2007). The Turkish invasion and the division of the island resulted in a stronger 'hellenocentricity' of Greek-Cypriot education. Koyzis (1997, p. 30) argues that the Greek-oriented philosophy of education attempted 'to place Cypriot education within the broader premises of Greek national education'. Hellenocentrism implied the adoption of nationalistic history curricula, which reproduced the national myth (Trimikliniotis, 2004). History teaching presented Greek-Cypriot history as highly enmeshed with ancient and modern Greek history. During this period, Greek-Cypriot education relied on textbooks freely provided by the Greek state. However, a reformist education movement arose, lasting from 1976 to 1992, which enabled the expansion of the Cypriocentric school of thought (Koyzis, 1997). Cypriocentrists introduced Cypriot history as a separate subject or as sections of courses on the history of the Greek world. Moreover, Cypriot geography and Cypriot literature became part of general geography and Modern Greek subjects respectively. Civic education was added to the curriculum of the third year of lower secondary education. The reformists favoured a Cypriot educational route independent of Greece. Even though Greek-Cypriot education continued to draw upon the freely provided Greek textbooks, Greek-Cypriot publications were included in the curricula of secondary education. The early 1990s meant a return to cultural and educational conservatism and thus a return to the Hellenocentric orientation (*ibid.*). Although the Greek-Cypriot Ministry of Education was now publishing up to 45% of all textbooks used in secondary education, the subject of ancient Greek was introduced to the curriculum of the first grade of gymnasium. Koyzis (*ibid.*, p. 35) contends that 'this return to "formalism" in language education signals a return to a 1970s ethno-nationalism through language teaching'.

Koutselini-Ioannidou (1997) adds to the debate arguing that the political situation in Cyprus and the unresolved political problem influence the philosophy underlying Greek-Cypriot secondary education. She explains that monolithic cultural considerations have shaped a national conscience that permeates school curricula. Koutselini-Ioannidou concludes that the curriculum should be studied as a political text. On a similar route, Philippou and Varnava (2009) claim that the construction of Cypriot identity as Greek in the curriculum and textbooks is denoted by salient mechanisms which attribute responsibility for the Cypriot political problem, while at the same time legitimising particular solutions over others. The first mechanism refers to the use of language 'using the term "Cypriot" or "nation" to systematically denote Greek Cypriot or Greek nation in Cyprus', while excluding others (i.e. Turkish-Cypriots) as non Cypriots (*ibid.*, p. 199). The second mechanism ascribes to the construction of a linear chronological historical narrative

by the textbooks, which pertains to the Greek origins of Cyprus. The third mechanism points to the depiction of Turkish Cypriots as the remnants of the 'conquers' Turks, underestimating them as a religious minority and not as a community with equal political rights. The fourth mechanism relates to the content attached to Cypriot identity by the use of national symbols and anthems of the motherland Greece. Lastly, the fifth mechanism portrays Cyprus as European because of its Greek-Roman culture and Christian heritage. We may then argue that the Greek-Cypriot curriculum and textbooks emphasised the interconnection between culture and Greek civilisation. This reinforced the conceptualisation of cultural differences in terms of ethnic differences.

International literature criticises this conceptualisation and suggests that cultures should be constructively critical, both of others and of themselves (Gaglar, 1997). Spyrou (2002) argues that in ethnically divided societies, education draws upon nationalism to define a political sense of 'self' in contrast to 'others'. Koullapis' (1999) research on Greek-Cypriot textbooks illustrates that in the post-1974 era Greek-Cypriot textbooks have constructed the absolute 'Greekness' of Cyprus. While they conceal the existence of other non-Greek speaking populations on the island, they deploy the notion of 'Hellenism' as a defence mechanism towards the division of the island. Koullapis asserts that Greek-Cypriot education has a strict monocultural orientation. Consequently, other ethnic groups within Cyprus are systematically ignored or condemned as 'obstacles' or enemies.

This assumption legitimates 'attempts to "cleanse" the national body ... from such elements' (Papadakis, 1995, p. 57). These attempts might also take the form of peaceful operations, such as linguistic purification movements or folklore studies. Through school commemorations of national celebrations and the presentation of national heroes as role models school curricula construct the 'self' as superior to the 'other' (Zikas and Koutselini-Ioannidou, 2002; Trimikliniotis, 2004). Damanakis' (2002) case study of Cyprus illustrates that the national education goals suggest the teaching of traditions and attitudes that may contribute to the 'survival' of Greek-Cypriot Hellenism; the raising of a 'fighting' consciousness for national liberation; the conservation of Greek-Cypriots' memory of their history and lost land; and the development of national over individual interests.

Nonetheless, the partial opening of the crossing points (2003), the subsequent inter-communal meetings between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot students and teachers; the Annan Plan (2004) and the efforts for reconciliation have brought up questions about the relevance of the 'I don't forget curriculum'. Also, Panayiotopoulos and Nicolaidou (2007) report that since the opening of the divide, a considerable number of Turkish-Cypriots have moved to the south aiming at a better quality of life. They argue that educational reform and intercultural education become an imperative need within the context of Cyprus' accession to the EU.

Cyprus' Accession to the EU: Implications on Education

Trimikliniotis (2001a) locates Cyprus' turn towards the EU in the context of the collapse of the USSR and the decline of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) through which Cyprus had

attempted to gain recognition of its sovereignty in the past. Moreover, the failure of the intercommunal talks under the auspices of the UN led to the adoption of a discourse presenting the European Community (EC) as a potential catalyst in the resolution of the Cyprus' problem (Trimikliniotis, 2001b; Kizilyurek, 2002). Although the Community reaffirmed Cyprus' European character in 1993, it also set the resolution of Cyprus' political problem as a precondition for its accession to the EC. Nevertheless, the condemnation of the Turkish-Cypriot side as solely responsible for the absence of a solution by the 1994 EC report on the evolution of the Cypriot Problem led to a change of direction in EC policy. As a result, Cyprus' accession negotiations with the EU (former EC) started in 1998. Accession negotiations with the Greek-Cypriot government, which was subsequently recognised as the sole interlocutor, provoked Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot reaction. Even though Cyprus became a full member in 2004, its political question remains still unresolved.

'Euro-enthusiasts' argue that Cyprus' accession to the EU will gradually lead to the social and educational modernisation of the island. They claim that the EU educational agenda reinforces the development of policies that will potentially abolish the nationalistic elements within Greek-Cypriot schooling and society. Nonetheless, Trimikliniotis (2004) contends that Greek-Cypriots have always perceived themselves as victims of 'racism' due to British colonialism and Turkish occupation of the northern part of the island. Therefore a debate about Europeanisation does not "fit in" the national story of victimisation of Greek-Cypriots'.

Philippou's research (2007) indicates that Europeanisation was warmly welcomed only by the political, not the educational, domain. Notably, the rationale for Cyprus' accession to the EU was mainly political, arguing for the EU's role as a catalyst in the resolution of the Cypriot problem. Philippou reports the marginal inclusion of European discourses in Greek-Cypriot education. She asserts that the traditional ethnocentrism of Greek-Cypriot education impedes Cyprus' participation in the European cultural space. The Greek-Cypriot Ministry of Education markedly included the European dimension of education in its main aims for education. In spite of that the European dimension has been restricted to the addition of EU languages to school curricula and participation in EU teacher and student exchange programmes. Furthermore, the concept of the European dimension has been associated with technological and economic development. Philippou concludes that the Ministry has purposely avoided the cultural implications of the Europeanisation of Greek-Cypriot education. Her findings necessitate the examination of Greek-Cypriot educational policy within the context of 'simulated-Europeanised' schooling.

Taking into consideration the debate between 'Euroceptics' and 'Euroenthusiasts', it is important to examine if and how the EU has influenced Greek-Cypriot educational policy processes. This, in turn, raises the question of the role of the EU in the formulation of Greek-Cypriot policy. However, there are few assessments of the impact of European integration on Greek-Cypriot educational policy. The Cypriot problem overwhelms the research agenda examining education as a promising element of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot relationships (i.e. Damanakis, 2002; Spyrou, 2002). Drawing upon our conceptualisation of

Europeanisation, we examine the role played by European institutions in the formulation of Greek-Cypriot educational policies and the Greek-Cypriot responses to these influences.

Methodology

To this end, we drew upon policy documentary and interview data coming from the Greek-Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), which represents an institution of the Cypriot state. Given the scant literature examining the field, policy documentation was a crucial data source. We also interviewed officials working within the MEC. Interview data were essential, as we regarded 'the information yielded through the spoken word as a matter of "filling the gaps" left by an incomplete documentary record' (Gardner and Cunningham, 1997, p. 38).

We examined a wide array of official documents from the MEC's archives (i.e. national curricula, annual reports, circulars sent to schools). The Greek-Cypriot policy-makers were selected purposively according to the level of their involvement in the development of educational policy. On the basis of a snowball selection, we used each policy-maker that we identified as an informant to put us in touch with other policy-makers working in the field of intercultural education. We selected ten policy-makers working in the MEC's departments including the Bureau of Primary Education, the Pedagogical Institute and the Inspectorate. The duration of the interviews was approximately 90 minutes. The interview questions focused on the interviewees' definitions of educational reform and their understandings of the policy-making dynamics between Greek-Cypriot and European educational arenas. The interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed so that no verbal information would be lost. To maintain credibility, we adopted a member check measure (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Thus interviewees were asked to review and revisit the interview transcripts and the themes that emerged from their interview accounts.

Data analysis started at the beginning of our data collection. We carefully examined our collected data in order to identify groups of concepts, issues, perceptions and behaviours and the ways in which all these groups are interrelated within a theoretical model (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In trying to establish the trustworthiness of the data, we examined and triangulated our data from multiple angles and different perspectives, continually looking for alternative possibilities and different explanations, trying to develop a richer understanding of them (*ibid.*).

Europeanising Greek-Cypriot Education: Europe as a Centre of Gravity?

The last national curriculum for primary education, which will stop being in force in the next school year, was developed in 1994 and revised in 1996. The 1994 curriculum was produced in the light of the re-evaluation of Cypriot institutions and ideologies that consequently generated a debate concerning curriculum reconstruction. It is remarkable that the MEC showed its devotion to the Cypriot tradition in articulating the curriculum goals:

'The general aims of education are defined by the state on the basis of our national, religious and cultural tradition, the socio-economic situation, and international educational, technological and cultural achievements.' (MEC, 1996, p. 17)

'In regard to the orientations of Cypriot education, a substantial role is played by, *inter alia*, the semi-occupation of Cyprus, the existence of the Greek-Cypriot refugee population and the speedy socio-economic change.' (MEC, 1996, p. 17)

It is noteworthy that the MEC explicitly emphasised that the goals of Cypriot education were state-derived and, by extension, MEC-derived as the Ministry is the only official state institution concerned with educational issues. The MEC stressed the particular importance of nationalistic, religious and cultural elements in the making of Cypriot education. It justified such an approach on the basis of the division of the island. The aforementioned extracts exclusively recognised *our* Greek-Cypriot culture as the cornerstone of Cypriot education. Even though, the curriculum referred to international cultural achievements, these achievements were not defined or specified. It may be argued that the goals of the Cypriot state and the MEC prioritised the political sovereignty of the country which was legitimised by a nationalistic discourse. Cross-cultural understanding was included in the curriculum goals, albeit by simply referring to Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot relations (MEC, 1996).

Policy Maker 9 (PM) goes on to describe that in 2004, the MEC began a campaign for educational reform to address the above issues. It is noteworthy that the campaign coincided chronologically with Cyprus' accession to the EU. The slogan 'Democratic education in a Euro-Cyprian society' was adopted to describe the MEC's efforts to steer the national education system towards a European orientation (Committee for Educational Reform, 2004). In the context of this campaign, the MEC composed a committee of academics to examine the prospects for educational reform in Cyprus. The committee indicated the need for curriculum reform, while their suggestions reinforced the elimination of ethnocentric and monocultural elements in Cypriot education (*ibid.*, p. 4). To this extent, the MEC composed inter-disciplinary committees of academics and teachers, who worked towards the reform of the national curriculum. The aims of the 'new' curriculum include *inter alia*: (a) the adoption of an intercultural ideology that connects Cypriot tradition with the knowledge of other cultures; (b) the development of citizens' such attitudes as democracy, tolerance, 'friendship' and cooperation; and (c) the emphasis on the European dimension in education (MEC, 2010). As the 2010 curriculum had not been put in practice yet, we cannot examine its impact on educational practice in Cyprus. Yet, these observations beget further crucial questions regarding the impetus for educational policy change. The discussion below sets the aforesaid discursive field in the European context.

It is arguable that the new policy orientation towards reform and Europeanisation was not entirely self-induced or self-determined. In line with the guidelines of international and European institutions, the Cypriot state sought to transform its educational policy by legitimising Europeanisation as the overarching discourse from which the Greek-Cypriot educational policy

would emanate. The following extracts evidence the turn in Greek-Cypriot educational policy in the context of its accession to the EU:

'As future European citizens we should democratically and peacefully co-exist in a socially pluralistic society. Cultural and linguistic diversity in public schools is a common reality for all the member states.' (MEC, 2007, pp. 1-2)

One aspect alluded to by the MEC's documentation was the new roles ascribed to the Cypriot state in regard to educational provision. Policy-related documents suggested that in the light of Cyprus' accession to the EU, the MEC ought to ensure that the quality of Greek-Cypriot education adhered to the European standards.

Arguably, the EU functions as a 'centre of gravity' for the Cypriot state and, by extension, for the Greek-Cypriot Ministry of Education. At times, MEC documentation claims that the Greek-Cypriot educational policy identifies with the usual policy of other EU member states. The shift in the educational rhetoric from national-building towards the creation of the Euro-Cyprian society should undeniably be examined in the context of Cyprus' accession negotiations with the EU. According to the Copenhagen Criteria, the applicants for membership of the EU must fulfil political, economic and *acquis* criteria. Political criteria indicate that states must establish institutions to safeguard democracy, law, human rights and respect for, and protection of, minorities (Wilson, 2002). Economic criteria emphasise the development of a market economy, while *acquis* criteria underline the allegiance to the current goals of the EU by integrating the EU law into the state's legislation. Consequently, the Cypriot state and its institutions (i.e. the MEC), are required to comply with EU goals in all spheres of public life, and particularly in the field of education. On the other hand, Greek-Cypriot policy-makers in their interview accounts emphasised the absence of coercive mechanisms deployed by the EU beyond the conventions ratified by the Cypriot state. The extracts below are indicative of their responses when asked to comment upon the impact of Europe on the national educational agenda:

'Inevitably the EU affects all the spheres of our society: educational and economic. However, there is no educational *acquis* that we are forced to implement. Education is a matter of the national state and the EU has a subsidiary role. Nevertheless, all the conventions ratified by the Cypriot Republic because of our accession to the EU are acknowledged in the formulation of the Ministry's policy.' (PM1)

One aspect alluded to by policy-makers was the absence of provision of strong legal measures by the EU. Policy-makers suggested that Europe possesses an implicit and subsidiary role instead of an explicit and top-down one in the Greek-Cypriot educational policy process. Hence they depicted a rather weak connection between European and Greek-Cypriot institutions in the field of educational policy, even though this link was evident in the MEC's policy documentation.

Nevertheless, when policy-makers were asked to describe specifically the relation between Europe and Greek-Cypriot educational institutions, they identified alternative mechanisms of

interaction. Policy-makers pointed to the participation of the Greek-Cypriot Minister of Education in the Council of the European Union, or informally the Council of Ministers (i.e. PM1). The Council is the main decision-making body of the EU. The Ministers of the member states meet within the Council of the EU. Depending on the issue on the agenda, each country is represented by the Minister responsible for that subject (e.g. school curricula, history education etc). From policy-makers' accounts, supranational imperatives in relation to educational policy issues often appear to have been reliant on the network mode of governance, a mechanism that has no coercive force in the EU. Network governance draws upon the negotiation of the satisfaction criteria for the educational organisations' lines and integrates processes for the measurement and improvement of the efficiency. Policy-makers argued that the definition of common objectives formed the major network-governance technique adopted by the Cypriot state:

'The Council of Ministers of the EU and the Ministers of Education who participate in the Council set out common objectives which influence the development of our Ministry's policy.' (PM1)

Despite the existence of EU framing mechanisms, the policy-makers who participated in this study argued that educational policies were exclusively shaped by Greek-Cypriot institutions like the MEC. They claimed that top-down educational incentives deriving from the European space were merely recommendations and did not have any coercive impact on Greek-Cypriot policy processes. The following quote is indicative of such an approach:

'The EU's influence was marginal. Although there was pressure for policy change, there were no penalties for the absence of educational reform. We are not the only "mischief-makers". Other states should be pressurised too.' (PM2)

Interestingly, policy-makers highlighted the fact that the MEC often exerts influence on the Europeanisation of Greek-Cypriot educational policy by delaying decision-making and implementation processes. They contended that the centralisation of the Greek-Cypriot educational system added to the slow-down of educational policy change and thereby its adherence to European standards. The quote below echoes their concerns relating to the centralisation of Greek-Cypriot education:

'We still have a long way to go. Our progress is slow but steady. These are the drawbacks of our centralised system.' (PM3)

Literature asserts that the centralised character of the Cypriot educational system pertains to a sequential array of policy gatekeepers, whereby policy-makers assert the highest influence on policy formulation processes (Kyriakides, 1996). Policy-makers argued that the MEC should adhere to European recommendations if Greek-Cypriot policy-makers agreed to such recommendations. Thus Greek-Cypriot policy-makers could act as 'vetoers' of recommendations proposed by Europe, whenever their personal beliefs were in contrast to European recommendations. This enabled

national institutions and therefore the MEC to exert influence on the Europeanisation of Cypriot educational policy.

Conclusion

The development of the Greek-Cypriot educational system, in terms of content and structure, has historical and political origins. Greek-Cypriot education has been inextricably linked to the nation-building project, as it has been developed in a case characterised by both inter-communal and intra-communal conflict. Thus, the restrictive character of Greek-Cypriot educational policies has allowed for discriminatory ideologies and discourses to prevail in the Greek-Cypriot society. In any event, Cyprus' accession to the EU would provide the impetus for educational reform providing a European dimension in education. In the context of Cyprus' accession to the European Union, the Greek-Cypriot Ministry of Education and its officials, the schools and their personnel were called upon for the first time to develop and implement Europeanised policies. European institutions induced the reform of Greek-Cypriot educational policies by imbuing the Greek-Cypriot socio-political environment with discourses of Europeanisation and modernisation. However, such discourses often run counter to nationalistic notions of identity. Greek-Cypriot education has drawn upon the nation-building project, mainly because of the unresolved Cypriot problem. Therefore discourses arguing for students' assimilation to the national identity remain present in the socio-historical context. Yet Cyprus has had to respond to calls for the Europeanisation of its educational agenda.

It may then be argued that the Greek-Cypriot educational policy has been formed by complex and often counteractive influences. Such influences include supranational variables, national factors and policy actors' values regarding history and politics. This incongruity mirrored substantial tensions within and between the national and European arenas. Arguably policy-makers operated within this context of shifting discourses and the subsequent evolution from the nation-building project towards Europeanisation. Often accountable to European monitoring institutions, policy-makers provided the link between EU and national educational policy agendas. Therefore policy options were not only shaped by the national, but also by the European context. However, Europeanisation processes of Greek-Cypriot educational policy were constrained by initiatives, which pertain to covert nationalism.

Our findings suggest that the Europeanisation of the Greek-Cypriot education is merely symbolic, indicating 'simulated' development and implementation processes. Although a process of educational reform was initiated and is still in process, it has exclusively focused on curriculum reform. The educational system itself has delayed such a process due to the absence of consensus within and among the national and the European spheres. Undeniably, there remains a high degree of ambivalence towards the process of transformation needed to make Europeanised educational policy a 'reality' in Cyprus.

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