

# THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AND FORGETTING IN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES: TOWARDS PEDAGOGIES OF RECONCILIATION AND PEACE IN DIVIDED CYPRUS

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## Abstract

Being raised in a divided country, we are deeply concerned with the ideological and affective practices that are used to perpetuate the existing stereotypes about the Other within each community. Using as a point of departure our own personal narratives – one of us is a Greek Cypriot (G/C) and the other Turkish Cypriot (T/C) – depicting the circulation of nationalistic technologies in education, this paper examines the prospects of peace and reconciliation education in Cyprus. The premise on which this paper rests – that nationalistic education is a problem – is not new; that premise is not the most important contribution of this paper. The more important contribution is the analysis and sorting through the G/C and T/C nationalistic pedagogical practices, to figure out ways to disrupt those practices and invoke pedagogies of reconciliation and peace in both communities. We also emphasise the importance of considering personal narratives of past trauma in critical terms to help us re-learn the wisdom of forgetting in order to remember that the weight of the past should not stand in the way of the future.

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In his seminal study on nationalism, Anderson (1983/1991) pointed out that selective memory and forgetting are essential elements of the historicity of a nation and its efforts to achieve homogeneity and continuity. History emerges as the salient factor in the construction of national identity and otherness – what separates Us from Them. Not surprisingly, then, educational practices have been used to create nationalist subjects. Curricula and pedagogies implore students to remember the nation's glories and honour the leaders and warriors who defended the lands and values of the nation. Students are repeatedly reminded of what it means to belong to the nation by reasserting particular values, principles of patriotic responsibility and moral conceptions of right and wrong. In certain respects, such practices aim at establishing an historical consciousness that "aligns forgetting with evil forces" (Eppert, 2003, p. 186) that threaten to destroy the nation's identity and its very existence.

While students and teachers may view state-sanctioned curricula and pedagogies as simply the truth about what happened in the past, such practices are, in Foucault's (2003) terms, technologies formed and circulated to promote nationalism. Drawing on Foucault, Montgomery (2005) explains that there are two mechanisms with which this happens: first, by selecting and organising what can be legitimately known about the nation-state and its supposedly glorious character, and second, by legitimising both the existence and governance of the nation-state as normal and unproblematic. Analysts of political socialisation through education emphasise that the discursive practices built around curricula, textbooks and everyday pedagogical practices can become overtly nationalistic in depicting the evil enemy (Davies, 2004). Nationalistic education, then, constitutes a difficult problem in efforts to push reconciliation in divided societies.

Using as a point of departure our own personal narratives – one of us is a Greek Cypriot (G/C) and the other a Turkish Cypriot (T/C) – depicting the circulation of nationalistic technologies in education, this paper examines the prospects of peace and reconciliation education in Cyprus. The premise on which this paper rests – that nationalistic education is a problem – is not new; that premise is not the most important contribution of this paper. The more important contribution is the analysis and sorting through the G/C and T/C nationalistic pedagogical practices, to figure out ways to disrupt those practices and invoke pedagogies of reconciliation and peace in both communities. Being raised in a divided country, we are deeply concerned with the ideological and affective practices that are used to perpetuate the existing stereotypes about the Other within each community. Thus we are interested in telling the story of how Cypriot educators in both communities can invent pedagogical spaces (Shor, 1992) in which former “enemies” learn to engage in reconciliation and peace despite their past traumatic experiences.

### **The Case of Cyprus from the First-Hand Experience of a Turkish Cypriot and a Greek Cypriot**

#### **Hakan's Personal Narrative of Education**

“I was born in north Nicosia in 1978, four years after the war of 1974. My father was born and raised in Limassol, in south Cyprus, and he later moved to Nicosia before the war began. My mother was born in Ankara, Turkey in the period after her father had migrated from Bulgaria (he was a Bulgarian Turk from Vidin) to Turkey in 1945; her mother was born and raised in Turkey. Interestingly, I don't remember any stories related to my father's life before the war. Although my father talked about his past life in Limassol, it always appeared to me that he had lived in a 'far-off land'.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, I was able to see this far-off land in 2003, when after 29 years people began to cross the Green Line.

I went to primary school in 1985. It was two years after the establishment of the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)'.<sup>2</sup> I clearly remember my teachers' efforts on every possible occasion to emphasise that the T/Cs were members of the 'great Turkish nation'. The G/Cs were presented as 'people that cannot be trusted'. I don't remember any of my teachers making any distinction between a Turk and a T/C or a Greek and a G/C for that matter; it was 'us' (the Turks) against 'them' (the Greeks). We used to be told by our teachers that although we had given everything to 'them' – or to the 'Rums', as the Greeks and G/Cs were referred to – 'they' always 'wanted more'. For example, we were taught that when the British Empire had taken over the administration from the Ottomans in Cyprus in 1878, the Greeks celebrated the fall of the Ottoman flag, whereas, we were distressed. In a sense, then, we learned that the Greeks had shown no gratitude at all because they had never been pleased with what we had given them during the Ottoman period. For instance, we gave them their religious freedom whereas the Venetians had made them suffer a lot by trying to convert them to Catholicism.

Our teachers constantly reminded us how much we had suffered because of the G/Cs. For example, we learned that the G/Cs had been systematically attacking and killing T/Cs to fulfil their vision of uniting the island with mainland Greece – i.e. their vision for Enosis. I recall how convinced I was that the only aim of all Greeks was to kill us and unite with Greece. Our official slogan in the north, UNUTMAYACAGIZ (We Will Not Forget), referred to the martyrs who had given up their lives fighting against the G/Cs. Early on in my life, I learned the great significance of this slogan in uniting us as a nation against the G/Cs. The slogan served to remind us of the bloody events of 1963, a time that is seen as the spark of interethnic violence in Cyprus. The poster of this slogan was usually posted in notice boards during the period of the Bloody Christmas week so that we remembered how barbarian, unjust, and evil the Greeks were. The lesson I learned throughout my schooling was clear: we gave them freedom and respect (especially during the Ottoman administration) and all they wanted was to kill us and unite with Greece; therefore, the G/Cs were never to be trusted.

I never met a G/C until 2000. It was then that I had a powerful emotional experience. I was 22-years old and there was a bi-communal TV programme (Siyaset Meydanı) by ATV (Turkish private TV channel) at the Ledra Palace. I still remember the moment during a break when I met the mayor of Limassol and told him that my father was born and raised in Limassol. He smiled, kindly gave me his business card and said that he would try to arrange a pass to the south and show me the neighbourhood where my father used to live. I admit that I was shocked, not because this unknown individual showed kindness and courtesy, but because it was the first time in my life that I had sat near a G/C and nothing had happened! I always had this image in my mind that the G/Cs would hurt me the very moment they saw one of us ...

My perception about the G/Cs and the overall situation in Cyprus began to gradually transform during my university studies. Reading about nationalism and social theory helped me to reflect on the things that I had learned while I was in primary, secondary, and high school. Delving into social theory made me question the things that I thought I knew. I realised that I had always listened to the stories from 'our' point of view; I never tried to listen or see that there was another side. I wondered whether my G/C compatriots were educated in the same manner ... The simple and humbling experience that I had at the Siyaset Meydanı programme initiated a process of transformation, because this event showed me that the G/Cs were human beings just like 'us', and 'they' had the same needs that we had: food, shelter, living in safety on their land. The moment I met a G/C for the first time sparked a new beginning for me: although I always felt that G/Cs were human beings and not monsters, a lived experience with someone was actually necessary in order to help me see things differently.

Another powerful emotional experience that I recently had was when I was invited by a G/C friend and colleague to visit his class at a tertiary institution in the south. The class was full of junior students, all young women majoring in kindergarten education. It was December of 2005 and for the first time in my life I had the opportunity to speak about our education system in the north and its nationalistic basis and hear their reactions. I talked about my involvement in the first bi-communal project that had been initiated to analyse how mutual distrust and nationalism were cultivated through T/C textbooks. The students' reactions stunned me. One after the other they began to narrate similar stories of how their own educational system was not much different to ours: similar references to the 'we/they' dichotomy; similar fanaticism against the other; and similar claims that one side is responsible for the other's suffering. I was pleasantly surprised to find out how honest some of the students were; for example, the fact that they said how they had always learned to hate us, admitting this in front of me was emotionally overwhelming for all of us. I also appreciated the fact that some students pointed out how hard it was for them to change how they had always felt about the Turks and the T/Cs. My initial awkward feeling of being among them was replaced by a sense of optimism that many of these students at least began to see glimpses of how this 'us/them' mentality was a big part of the problem and that with hard work we could overturn these beliefs by questioning the things we had been taught.

Despite the seemingly insurmountable difficulties, I remain optimistic that the T/Cs and the G/Cs can find ways to educate their children away from fanaticism and nationalism. If someone told me back at elementary school that one day I would be involved in bi-communal efforts for reconciliation and peace in Cyprus, I would have laughed and pledged that something like that would never happen in this lifetime. And yet ..."

### **Michalinos' Personal Narrative of Education**

"I grew up in a small village near the Troodos mountains, one hour west of Nicosia. After the war of 1974, this village, like many others in the area, became a refuge for families who fled from the north to save their lives. Despite the fact that I was only five years old, I vividly remember many family friends and relatives, who became refugees, staying in our house for several weeks after those tragic events. I also recall how everyone was wearing black; mourning for what had happened marked everything that was being discussed. The only exception was my grandfather, a refugee from Morphou, who was always optimistic and was constantly saying that it was just a matter of days before the refugees would return to their homes: 'Within fifteen days ...' he would reassure everyone, 'within fifteen days, and we'll be back home in Morphou'. He kept repeating these words to friends and relatives, almost like a ritual, until he died in 1991 without ever being able to return to his beloved city – something that I had the chance to do in an emotionally overwhelming visit, after the opening of the Green Line.

I went to elementary school in the fall of 1975. One of the first childhood paintings I drew depicted the Turkish planes bombing Cyprus and the Turks as monster-like animals who wanted to eat 'us'. This painting was put on display on a board and everyone reiterated how evil and barbarian the Turks were. I also remember participating in frequent commemorations of past historical events in which the Greek glories were celebrated. For example, we used to memorise all the heroes of the Greek revolution in 1821, and in our childhood games each one of us picked a revolutionary hero and tried to 'be' him or her. A few years after the war of 1974, the theme of 'DEN XECHNO' became prominent in our school life.<sup>3</sup> Pictures of Kerynia, Bellapais, and Famagusta (our 'occupied places') would decorate all classrooms; the goal was to acquire knowledge so that we would never forget these places and care enough so that one day we would be ready to fight for them, if necessary. The most prominent themes of the DEN XECHNO campaign focused on the remembrance of the Turkish invasion, the thousands of refugees, the missing, the enclaved, the violation of human rights, and the destruction of ancient Greek archaeological places. I recall how I was encouraged by a teacher to write letters to the missing persons (six years after 1974) telling them how much we loved them and prayed for their return.

My teachers presented the Greeks and the Turks in stereotypical ways: the Greeks as heroic figures who were always fighting for what was right, and for justice, democracy and freedom, and the Turks as barbarians, unjust, deceitful, evil, and war-loving. We were repeatedly reminded of what the Turks had done to us, and that the young generation had a duty to remember and fight, if needed, to throw the Turks out of Cyprus. The perception in my mind about the history of 1974 was very clear: the victims who suffered were the G/Cs and the perpetrators who committed barbarisms were the Turks (in those years, I never made a distinction between T/Cs and Turks). Not a single

teacher in my entire primary and secondary education discussed with us who the Turkish Cypriots were, whether they also suffered at the hands of Greek Cypriots, or whether G/Cs and T/Cs lived in peace in the past and fought common social issues. On one of the few occasions when the issue arose of who the T/Cs were, I stood up in front of the class and repeated full of pride what I had been taught in Katichitiko (religious school): the T/Cs used to be Christians who became Muslims to avoid taxation during the Ottoman rule.

Several years later, I left Cyprus to study in the United States. One day, while I was eating at the university's cafeteria, I was told by an American friend that there was another Cypriot in the cafeteria 'but he doesn't have a Greek name'. I was curious to meet this new Cypriot student, because I was certain that I knew all the Cypriots studying at my university. So it was in the US where I met the first T/C in my life. A few minutes after the initial shock of meeting each other, while many friends were watching us, we started yelling at each other: 'You did (so and so) to us in 1974', I said; 'You did (so and so) to us in 1963', he hit back. Then I replied 'Yes, but you did (so and so) to us in 1453' and he responded with another date that went further back in time ... The conversation became so heated that the university security was called upon to intervene. We separated with a lot of lingering anger and resentment for each other, but I remember feeling proud that I had told him how evil 'they' were. Fortunately, I met this T/C student many times after this troubling event and we eventually became close friends. For many months, we had discussions along the lines of 'You did so and so to us' and although there was no immediate shift in our perspectives about the history of Cyprus, we discovered that at least we could talk to each other in a civilised manner and 'hear' each other's point of view.

I extended my studies at another university in the US for several more years, and at the same time continued to exchange emails with my T/C friend. My studies in educational philosophy helped me to gain a deeper understanding of my earlier socialisation in nationalist G/C education and the pedagogical practices that had been used to instil hatred in us for all Turks (including the T/Cs). Only then did I discover the implications of all the polarities that were constructed in my mind: the good Greeks vs. the bad Turks; Greeks, the victims vs. Turks, the perpetrators; and so on. The struggle to overcome these polarities was not easy but emotionally painful. I became angry at myself for being deceived for so long. Only then did I realise that I had been seduced into a trap of 'egotism of victimisation': That I had never been taught to listen to the Other's point of view. I did not really appreciate my T/C friend's perspective until that moment.

After finishing my studies, I returned to Cyprus and began teaching at a tertiary institution. I saw first-hand that my young students (high school graduates) felt the same hatred as the one experienced by me many years before. My own personal transformation led me to make efforts to help my

students rethink the way they had been educated: How dominant perspectives of memory and forgetting were constructed and how toxic their consequences were. So now I teach students about whether we sometimes need to learn how to forget in order to remember, so that we may (even momentarily) subvert our emotional investments to sacred histories and face what may be designated as unpatriotic. My students' testimonies need to be heard; but the T/C's testimonies also need to be heard. These testimonies intend not only to inform us about past events and their haunting legacies, but also fundamentally to challenge us to alter our relation to these events and our modes of social interaction with each other.

In the summer of 2004, my T/C friend and I met once again at a bi-communal social event at the Ledra Palace Hotel. I had not seen him since our university years almost ten years earlier. We both confessed to each other that an amazing transformation had taken place in our lives and that we were no longer the youthful nationalists we had been in the past! We agreed that memories of past traumas inflicted by one community against the other should not be dismissed, but it was time to move on. Moving on, we both emphasised, should not be interpreted as forgetting, but rather a way of building connections between us. 'Who would have thought that we would end up in the same position, advocating peace and reconciliation in Cyprus?' we said laughing."

### **Narrating the Self: What These Narratives Tell Us?**

These personal narratives tell us what is obvious to an outside observer: That there is a "memory industry" (Klein, 2000, p. 127) prevailing in both communities in Cyprus. Undoubtedly, there is a lot of lingering anger, resentment and grief accumulated over the years in both communities, but the biggest problem, according to Kizilyürek (1993), is the mentality of "Us and Them" that continues to be dominant. The most powerful way of forming an "Us and Them" mentality is to idealise one's own group and demonise the Other. Idealisation and demonisation are accomplished through myth-making (Aho, 1994) – accounts which justify the polarities created, that is, the negative evaluation of the Other and the glorification of one's own nation. The constitution of these polarities was very obvious in our own early socialisation as our narratives indicated.

Our personal narratives highlight two important aspects in the circulation of stories that are woven through nationalist discourses of education. First, personal narratives of education in both communities provide significant evidence of the ways in which pedagogical practices are constructed around the politics of emotions (Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990) such as hatred, trauma, resentment, and anger. The theme of politics of emotions emphasises how emotions are not simply an individual matter, but are crucial to the formation of social norms and collective

imaginings (Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990; Lupton, 1998). In other words, emotions circulate and play an important part in the constitution of collective identities and power relations within a community (Ahmed, 2004). In her study of personal narratives in Cyprus, Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis (1998) emphasises how personal feelings are political in the sense of how Cypriots' experiences or memories of past events are embedded in conflict-socialising processes and reflect the political reality in each community. Thus, in our own narratives, the notion of the politics of trauma and hatred in Cyprus helps us understand the ways in which emotional practices, sociability and power are interrelated both in everyday life contexts and in educational settings. In other words, we learn how to remember the past trauma and sustain negative emotions about the Other through everyday social and educational practices. Inevitably, then, the collective memory of fear, hatred, victimisation and dehumanisation of the Other becomes a powerful symbol and an effective tool that strengthens the existing conflicting ethos.

Consequently, when the emotional elements of the politics of trauma and hatred are not accounted for in educational efforts, they risk perpetuating the existing conflicting ethos. Personal narratives should not be discarded but considered in critical terms to help us re-learn the wisdom of forgetting (Eppert, 2003) in order to remember that the weight of the past should not stand in the way of the future. Ricoeur (1999) reminds us that "the duty to remember is a duty to teach, whereas the duty to forget is a duty to go beyond anger and hatred (p. 11). Towards the end of our own narratives forgetting is not presented as it is commonly understood – that is, as an omission that constitutes an unpatriotic thing to do – but rather as a dynamic movement toward developing new emotional connections between the two communities. It is not easy to dismiss collective memories and imaginings; however, it is a pragmatic goal to begin imagining the capacity to reconcile with one's enemies.

The second important aspect in the circulation of stories that are woven through nationalist discourses of education is that discussions of peace and reconciliation in Cyprus are often suppressed; such stories are suppressed in the sense of being played down in favour of legitimating a conflicting ethos and demonising the Other. Both of our narratives show very clearly how understanding between the two communities becomes primarily a rhetorical mechanism when it comes to educating young people. Teaching about past glories and traumas is well embedded in educational practices and school life. In particular, the ideology of victim-hood is perpetuated through pedagogical practices that highlight the violent, traumatic aggression and loss and the cultivation of a deeply rooted fear that the enemy is simply waiting for another opportunity to inflict more pain and suffering.

Therefore, there are indeed considerable advantages in putting forward people's personal narratives about past experiences of trauma and suffering and



the role of education in manipulating or subverting the memory of past events. It is important to highlight the significance of lived experiences in order to understand the emotional depth and the power of collective imaginations around memory and forgetting. Personal narratives tell us much about how individuals and social groups are engaged in the work of constructing their identities (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). Such narratives reflect the political circumstances and the larger ideologies and hegemonies that lie behind them (Denzin, 1997). Narratives should not, therefore, be dismissed, no matter how painful they are; all points of view must be heard and acknowledged. It is through finding ways to subvert the hegemony (Apple, 1979) of official narratives that educators and students in both communities will construct spaces for peace and reconciliation in educational settings. Personal narratives of students and teachers provide significant insights about life stories, and if properly problematised, they create the potential to inspire students and teachers in the development of alternative – i.e. other than the official – pedagogical practices. However, the work of subverting the hegemony of official narratives cannot consist simply in a struggle for recognition and legitimacy of an alternative narrative in terms set by the dominant ideologies (Worsham, 2001). The work of subversion, argues Worsham, requires that we change the terms of recognition, that is, the ways we conceptualise and feel the social world. If our commitment is to effect real change of individuals and communities then the work of subversion must occur at the affective level (ibid.).

Our personal narratives reflect many findings of ethnographic studies and other analyses in Cyprus that depict how educational practices (e.g. school textbooks, national rituals, symbols and celebrations) create dehumanised images of the Other within each community and inspire hatred for the “enemy” (Papadakis, 1993, 1995; Bryant, 1998, 2001, 2004; Spyrou, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2006; Hadjipavlou, 2002; Karahasan, 2003, 2005; AKTI, 2004; POST, 2004). In particular, there is much ethnographic evidence indicating how individuals as well as organised groups from both communities systematically attempt to nationalise suffering and highlight the need to remember what the “enemy” has committed in the past (Loizos, 1998; Papadakis, 1998; Bryant, 2004; Sant Cassia, 2006). Spyrou (2006), for example, argues that Greek-Cypriot school education is to this day largely nationalistic in its outlook, and relies upon the image of the Turk/enemy as the primary Other for the construction of G/C children’s identity (Spyrou, 2002). He documents several negative stereotypes that are encouraged in school education and show the absolute categorisation of the Turk as an enemy, barbarian, uncivilised, aggressive and expansionist. Also, his work indicates that Greek-Cypriot children are unable to deal with the more complex, hyphenated categories of “Turkish-Cypriot” or “Greek-Cypriot.” In fact, school education promotes the use of more inclusive categories such as “Greeks” or “Turks,” at the expense of more synthetic or hybrid ones such as “Greek-” and “Turkish-Cypriots” (Spyrou, 2006; Theodossopoulos, 2006).

Similarly, the negative stereotyping of the G/Cs is pointed out in several efforts to analyse the educational system in the T/C community (e.g. see Yashin, 2002; Karahasan, 2003, 2005). For example, a recent review of school textbooks by the POST Research Institute (POST, 2004) emphasised the negative representations of the G/Cs: e.g. the systematic teaching about how the Turks and the Ottomans did their best and gave the G/Cs freedom, but the G/Cs were never happy with the situation, because their only aim was Enosis and their only goal was to exterminate the T/C community. Also, Bryant's (2004) analysis goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century and argues how the ideology of Turkish nationalism was introduced in Muslim schools and within a matter of years, Muslim Cypriots became Turks; in this manner, education was transformed into a vehicle for nationalism.

There is now ample evidence around the world that in areas of conflict, education is systematically used to demonise the enemy and legitimises particular nationalist narratives and agendas (Davies, 2004). The challenging question is then: How should we, as educators, approach personal narratives that communicate suffering for past historical trauma and resentment for the Other? A pessimistic response would be that these narratives are so deeply embedded in a group's historical consciousness that nothing can disavow past memories of trauma and resentment. An alternative response that is more optimistic, however, aspires towards a critical reconsideration of the representation of each other that goes beyond debates concerning memory and forgetting. We suggest that personal narratives can help us rethink the way we teach and learn, and teach us how to discontinue to be traumatically possessed by the past when we work through it (Eppert, 2003). Forgetting, then, argues Eppert, is not only bound up with obligation, but also with an obligation implicated in peace and reconciliation.

### **The Challenges for Educators in Cyprus: Constructing Pedagogies of Reconciliation and Peace**

We believe that it is important to develop pedagogies that explicitly promote reconciliation and peace. Here, we use the term pedagogy not to signify classroom pedagogical practices. Broadly speaking, pedagogy may be defined as the relational encounter among individuals through which unpredictable possibilities of communication and action are created. Pedagogy, then, is a site of inter-subjective encounters that entail transformative possibilities. Consequently, we view reconciliation and peace not as states, but as ongoing processes of developing co-existent relations and seeking alternatives to feelings of hatred, resentment and trauma.

### **Possible Solutions**

The preceding discussion about the circulation of narratives woven through

nationalist discourses of education has important implications for the prospects of peace and reconciliation education in Cyprus. Here we want to consider three options to strengthen the potential of developing pedagogies of reconciliation and peace in divided Cyprus. The first option is to develop pedagogies which encourage empathetic communication through an understanding of Others' thinking and feeling. The second one is that pedagogies of reconciliation and peace should focus attention on problem-solving, criticality and multi-perspectivity in the teaching of social studies (history, geography etc.). And the third option is the need to develop pedagogies that construct citizenship education which accepts difference and the notion of hybrid identities by relaxing the emphasis on separate identities. We discuss these options below.

The first role for pedagogies of reconciliation and peace in Cyprus is to engage both communities in relational empathy (Broome, 1991, 1993, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b). The process of relational empathy can be useful in the development of shared meanings created through interpersonal encounters. Such pedagogies of empathetic communication would lead students to start thinking and feeling about the Other in different ways to those in the past. Instead of presenting the Other as the enemy, or someone who cannot be trusted (as our personal narratives have shown), students should be encouraged to see the Other as a human being who has also been traumatised by past events and who has similar needs for security, rights and homeland. In Cyprus there is an urgent need of pedagogies that are based on "empathy towards the suffering Other" (Theodossopoulos, 2006, p.10). As Theodossopoulos (2006) asserts, humanising processes, such as similar cultural characteristics between G/Cs and T/Cs and common predicaments could be some of the things to stress when social studies are taught.

Clearly, promoting relational empathy in the classroom is not an easy process and it often involves a lot of discomfort for students and teachers. However, a pedagogy of discomfort can be an alternative way to see history from the other's point of view. As Zembylas and Boler (2002) claim,

"... we suggest that a 'pedagogy of discomfort' can be used to analyse the contradictions and emotionally-embedded investments that underlie ideologies such as nationalism and patriotism. We argue that a pedagogy of discomfort ... offers direction for emancipatory education through its recognition that effective analysis of ideology requires not only rational inquiry but also excavation of the emotional investments that underlie any ideological commitment such as patriotism. A pedagogy of discomfort invites students to leave behind learned beliefs and habits, and enter the risky areas of contradictory and ambiguous ethical and moral differences."

As Zembylas and Boler (*ibid.*) further emphasise, a pedagogy of discomfort requires that individuals step outside of their comfort zones and recognise what and how one has been taught to see (or not to see) things. In Cyprus, a pedagogy of discomfort could be used as a powerful pedagogical tool to help teachers and students to “step outside of their comfort zones” and problematise the ways in which G/Cs and T/Cs have been taught to see the Other (e.g. through history textbooks, pedagogical practices, school rituals, celebrations and so on), in other words, to understand how education is so often politicised and one-sided (see also Boler and Zembylas, 2003).

In building empathy and reconciliation, a wide variety of alternative narratives need to be developed out of the mutually hostile trauma stories. It is important to deepen awareness and criticality in children about how trauma stories can be used to teach fear, hate, and mistrust (Ramanathapillai, 2006). All narratives, Kreuzer (2002) emphasises, even the ones from the perpetrators of violence, need to be considered seriously, because they help us understand the emotional aspects of conflict and they point towards openings for strategic intervention. To build empathy and reconciliation, it is valuable to identify the narratives that evoke fear, hate, and mistrust and publicise the stories that show positive emotions emphasising the humanity of the “enemy” – for example, stories of collaboration and caring among G/Cs and T/Cs. Telling positive stories can help rehumanise the Other, and they counteract the confrontational symbolical and emotional content of competing narratives that work hard to dehumanise the enemy. We suggest therefore that the promotion of empathy and reconciliation in curriculum and pedagogy is a critical component of developing alternative narratives about past traumas – narratives that contribute to changing the hegemonic conflictive ethos.

Second, peace and reconciliation pedagogies in Cyprus should focus on multi-perspectivity, criticality and problem-solving, especially in the teaching of social studies. Multi-perspectivity is suggested by the Council of Europe in the teaching of Twentieth Century European History (Stradling, 2001) and emphasises the teaching of history from a variety of perspectives, including political, religious, social, cultural, economic and techno-scientific. The notions of multiple perspectives, critical thinking and problem-solving are highlighted by many recent developments in educational research and practice. These notions are not only strategies of understanding the Others’ perspectives but also feeling with the Others’ viewpoints and building connections with them. Stradling argues that multi-perspectivity, especially in the context of history teaching helps students: to gain a more comprehensive and critical understanding of historical events by critically comparing and contrasting the various perspectives that are constructed; to gain a deeper understanding and feeling of the historical relationships between nations or groups; and to gain a more dynamic picture of the ongoing development of the

relationships between nations and groups.<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly, peace and reconciliation pedagogies can benefit greatly from using multi-perspectivity in Cypriot classrooms. Having to deal with multiple perspectives, G/C and T/C students can begin seeing that there are multiple voices within the Cypriot society. More importantly, though, students will be encouraged to see that their ethnic identity is just one out of many other identities they share with others (related to their age, gender, family relationships and so on). As Stradling writes: "Often their [people's] identities as a parent, daughter, woman or doctor may be more significant in trying to understand their reactions to a particular situation or event" (p. 143). In those roles, G/C students may begin to realise that they have more in common with their T/C peers than they think (and vice versa) – such as fashion trends, technology gadgets, friendships, age-level concerns and worries, food preferences, familial customs and so on. Bi-communal visits to sites in Cyprus and internet communication can certainly help along the lines sketched here. In general, educators and students have to become aware that they are falling prey to nationalist agendas and need to discover ways to overcome the hegemonic power of these narratives.

Finally, another way of pushing peace and reconciliation education is to construct pedagogies that promote the idea of citizenship education based on accepting differences and hybrid identities. Bekerman and Maoz (2005) suggest that goals such as peace and coexistence education may be better achieved if the emphasis on separate identity and culture is somewhat relaxed. According to them, strengthening coexistence might not be achieved if alternative options to the ones dictated in the past are not pursued. As Azar also notes, it is the perpetuation of "exclusionary myths, demonising propaganda and dehumanising ideologies" (in Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, 2000, p. 75) that legitimise polarised trauma narratives. Educators and students should learn to be open to the possibility of transformation and the exploration of multiple ways of connecting with each other. Such connections will constitute a third space – a space that opposes nationalist sentiments and polarised trauma narratives and opens possibilities for re-imagining the sense of community and identity. An important way that pushes such connections is to avoid becoming enclosed in past identities that have been historically associated with nationalism and struggle to invent a democratic citizenship that critically reconsiders past feelings of belonging.

It is important to emphasise the need to be careful with claims about what kind of citizenship education is promoted, since much citizenship education has been geared to the strengthening of nationalism and patriotism (Davies, 2004). The question here is how citizenship education could likely challenge nationalist ideologies. We want to argue that hybridity should be an important component of

citizenship education in Cyprus. That is, Cypriot educators need to develop a notion of citizenship that takes into account difference. “The tendency”, writes, Davies (2004), “is to view citizenship in terms of universals that everyone, despite or because of their differences, should try to recognise and respect” (p. 90). There are, however, problems in an approach that tends to represent citizenship education as a homogenising process. Spinner-Halev (2003) urges us to be particularly cautious about citizenship education in divided societies: “Education in divided societies has to begin with different assumption[s] than education in other societies. In divided societies, those divided by religion or nationality, where fear and perhaps hatred permeate these divisions, the group cannot be ignored” (p. 90).

Consequently, the goal of citizenship education in Cyprus cannot exist by itself without the difficult goals of reconciliation and peace. Nevertheless, to push reconciliation and peace, Cypriot educators need to encourage tolerance and respect for difference, not bland commonalities. In our view, then, citizenship education in Cyprus has: to value hybridity and multiplicity in identity construction, including regional and global identities; to have a critical approach to difference, enabling analysis of when this is valuable or destructive for individuals and groups; and to promote empathetic communication without diminishing the importance of dissent – thus it is significant to avoid the veneer of politeness in the building up of relations between the two communities.

Undoubtedly, there are several structural limitations in doing what we suggest. For example, the official structures in both communities do everything in their power to perpetuate the conflicting ethos – through political rhetoric, commemorations of historical events, official school policies, military and school parades and so forth. The prevailing ideologies of conflict and resentment make Cypriots in both communities vulnerable to chauvinist propaganda. Official ideologies in both the south and the north have been insisting that each community and its people are part of a greater ethnic family (Greek or Turkish). Thus the quest for a new identity that is not fixated on the ethnic identity of Greeks or Turks is politically sabotaged. Reconciliation activities are often criticised by nationalist groups and the vocal positions of authorities, such as political and religious leaders speaking against the perceived intentions of the other; reconciliation efforts are interpreted (in both communities) as reaching out to the enemy labelling those who participate as traitors (Hadjipavlou, 2002). Finally, a common language for communicating with each other is missing. Although English might do the job to a certain extent, it is important that we learn the language of each other.

Despite the structural limitations, it is important to acknowledge that both of us are involved in efforts to try some of the above ideas for promoting pedagogies of peace and reconciliation. An ongoing project in which we are involved is the

accumulation of university students' narratives from both communities and their analysis in terms of their rhetoric of memory and forgetting. For example, in one of the first attempts to implement this idea, Hakan visited Michalinos' class in the south and narrated his life story, his initial perceptions about the G/Cs and his transformation process. Many G/C students confessed that this was the first time they had ever met a T/C; they told Hakan of their own perceptions about him and the T/Cs and they soon acknowledged the role of stereotypes in preventing communication between the two communities. Although it is too early to talk about any transformation taking place, the feeling emanating from students' written reports relating to this event has been the fundamental impact of listening to the other's point of view. In their reports, the students analysed various aspects of the impact that nationalistic history teaching had on constituting negative stereotypes about the T/Cs. If nothing else, the process of beginning to give new meanings to old events was an important lesson for these students.

Consequently, what we are trying to do is to provide opportunities for our students to encounter first-hand testimonies to ethnic hatred and atrocities conducted by both communities, as well as to create openings for students to expose acts of kindness and compassion enacted by both communities in the past or in the present. The intended effect of directing students to collect and examine such testimonies (e.g. orally through stories, interviews, and written records) is to invite students into bearing witness to one's own or another's trauma (Zembylas, 2006). Furthermore it is our intention to constitute responsibility for one another as co-witnesses engaging in alternative versions of how and why past traumatic events leave us feeling the way they do. This pedagogical approach is set in motion by questions of how we and others feel about trauma narratives, bearing in mind those feelings that we are eager to talk about as well as those that are not easily acknowledged or expressed. In this way, the classroom-based community moves beyond traumatic feelings by using such responses as a springboard to appraise emotions and nationalism politically and ethically. Whenever such a community is created – and clearly this is not always the case – our classroom becomes a place of political transformation in which students perform their roles as witnesses. It is precisely because of the possibility of such connections that teachers and students are called into being witnesses of testimonies as inscriptions of empathetic understanding. A critical engagement with testimonial narratives means that teachers and students have to decide how to become critical witnesses of such testimonies (rather than merely consumers or tourists) and “consider what of (and about) these testimonies should be remembered, why, and in what way” (Simon and Eppert, 1997, p. 185).

In other words, the pedagogical activities that inspire witness need to include provision for a dialogical structure within which the resources are provided for

expressing and interpreting old and new affective relations (Zembylas, 2006). As witnesses, teachers and students are obliged to recognise that such engagements are active, yet partial, ways of meaning-making; however, teachers and students have an obligation to be open to the possibility of transformation and the exploration of the multiple ways of connecting with others (Ropers-Huilman, 1999). In addition, acting to promote the practice of defined connections – such as intimacy, kindness and compassion – helps teachers and students to create movements of difference and hope that can act to propel the future by intensifying the present. The groups who are willing to take up these challenges may also be ready for open engagements.

### **Conclusion**

The ideas discussed here explicate the educational challenges to peace and reconciliation education inherent in our own personal narratives as well as in the official narratives of our communities. We have argued that there are many things to be gained by drawing on students' narratives (or their families' narratives) in teaching as well as on educators' personal experiences. Through the analysis of their narratives, students and teachers can learn how to name their affective lives, and how they might begin the process of subversion and renaming. Educational programmes and pedagogies – especially those of history education – must be designed to help Cypriot children become aware, both at an emotional and an intellectual level, of the shared meanings, visions and ethical interdependence that can promote understanding and communal interaction. These shared meanings and visions are embodied in gestures, languages, beliefs, foods, narratives and rituals (Cohen, 1997). Pedagogies designed to help our children make choices about how they wish to relate to these shared meanings must help them overcome emotional resistances to change, and, therefore, must engage them both emotionally and intellectually (McKnight, 2004).

In this regard, educational practices in Cyprus can actively facilitate the efforts for peace, coexistence and reconciliation by helping to dismantle the system of entrenched myths and antagonistic trauma narratives that perpetuate division between G/Cs and T/Cs. In particular, educational programmes and pedagogies which challenge hostile trauma narratives may offer two important things. First, they provide a space where educators and students can question common sense assumptions and the politics of hegemonic trauma narratives. Second, those programmes and pedagogies also provide opportunities for traumatised students to work through feelings of trauma and rehumanise the Other. Through dealing with the emotional challenges of trauma, educators and students may begin then to empathise with the Other; thus, by becoming sensitive to the emotions of trauma and mourning, educators and students can begin to confront the ideological and



political aspects of chosen traumas (Volkan, 1979, 1988, 1997) within each community. While these suggestions do offer alternative approaches for the promotion of peace and reconciliation education, education alone cannot do much for reconciliation; both T/Cs and G/Cs must be actively engaged in addressing the structural limitations mentioned earlier at the widest social level. Simultaneously, more research and analysis is needed in this area particularly through educational interventions undertaken in both communities in Cyprus.

In Cyprus where suffering has been experienced by all communities, educators may choose to use the lived experiences of one's own suffering to enhance his/her understanding of the suffering of the Other. This is not an easy task, especially as our "enemies" are implicated in our suffering (as we are in theirs). Suffering, in itself, does not necessarily lead to compassion or empathy, however, compassionate and empathetic attitudes can be nourished (Cohen, 1997). Through social and educational practices, our own experiences of suffering, and our memory and forgetting of them, may enhance our capacity to form wise and compassionate responses to the suffering of others, and help us to take a critical stance toward the construction of our narratives.

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#### Notes

- \* Michalinos Zembylas: Intercollege, Cyprus and Michigan State University, USA, and Hakan Karahasan: Eastern Mediterranean University.
1. The phrase "far-off land" is inspired by the Cypriot (T/C – British) writer Taner Baybars' book, *Plucked in a Far-Off Land: Images in Self-Biography* (1970/2005).
  2. "TRNC" is not recognised as an independent state in the international arena, except by Turkey.
  3. The slogan of "Den Xecho" is originally attributed to author Nikos Dimou; see [[http://www.ndimou.gr/kypros\\_gr.asp](http://www.ndimou.gr/kypros_gr.asp)].
  4. The recently completed school textbooks on Teaching Modern Southeast European History by the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, is an exemplary case of putting in practice the idea of multi-perspectival teaching. For more information visit [[http://www.cdsee.org/teaching\\_modern\\_sehistory.html](http://www.cdsee.org/teaching_modern_sehistory.html)].

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