

The Application of Discourse Ethics as an Approach in Revisiting Cultural Understandings in Cypriot History Education

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Abstract

This paper provides an examination of the parallel efforts undertaken by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities of Cyprus in order to revise their history curricula. Although the high nationalistic discourses which were elected to address the way in which history was taught in the two communities has come under considerable revision, both groups still have a long way to go before a totally 'critical' and 'apolitical' space is reached wherein they locate their approaches to history. By delving into the historical and current geopolitical background of Cyprus, this paper argues that the two communities share many commonalities that form the basis upon which an ethically communicative and discursive space may be developed for inter-communal dialogue via history teaching.

Keywords: history school textbooks, reconciliation agendas, discourse ethics, critical theory, inter-communal dialogue

Introduction

Processes of globalisation such as economic, political, technological and cultural progression have challenged the authority of the nation-state, hence notions of citizenship. Post-modern 'social-interactionist' approaches to identity have further assisted in developing cultural awareness by reviewing our cultural understanding of the 'other', which is no longer considered to be a fixed construction. To be specific, identity constructions as well as cultural depictions are being reshaped in the sense that they are in flux due to ever changing socio-political circumstances along with wider global forces.

However, this paper neither intends to explore the array of global forces and directions conducive to constructions and reconstructions of citizenship identities, nor does it enquire into post-modern approaches to racial discrimination, ethnocentrism, or analyse multicultural education. Instead, this paper attempts to examine future prospects and possibilities of Greek Cypriot history curricula addressed in a Habermasian communicative discourse.

The communicative properties upon which discourse ethics are founded and thoroughly examined in a later section, may well drive Greek Cypriot citizens to become more tolerant toward

their counterpart Turkish Cypriot 'others'. When recalling Hicks (1980) views concerning cultural awareness and teaching materials, it may be argued that if the 'cultural other' is represented as being devoid of ethnocentric or national nuances, then a more level playing field may present itself where exchanges in conversation about culturally friendly and tolerant societies is likely. As Hicks put it:

'All teaching materials that deal in any way with images of the world bring with them a set of attitudes and assumptions, explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, which are based on broader cultural perspectives. These perspectives tend to be ethnocentric, i.e. they generally measure other cultures and groups against the norms of one's own, or racist in that one's own culture is considered to be superior and thus, by definition, others are inferior' (p. 3).

Some of the reasons for focusing on processes undertaken by the two communities to revise their history curricula are mainly because the subject of history contributes more to the discussion of values through teaching. In Cyprus and its motherland Greece, where most of the teaching books introduced by the Greek Cypriot educational system come from, the subject of history has been the principle means by which traditional values such as national and religious ideals have been instilled, and the sense of belonging to a national and cultural community has been achieved (Massialas and Flouris, 1994; Pashiardis, 2007). In addition, although the subject of history is regarded as a key lesson which aims at developing a critical mind, understanding and judgement, it is at the same time loaded with ethno-religious biases (Trimikliniotis, 2004). It is also the belief of some commentators that the historical texts no longer typify a fixed set of meanings and values, but represent rather an 'open text', merely providing cues that push readers to discern the codes, recognise the author's point of view or make inferences and construct meaning (Grossman, 2001; Jenkins, 1991).

While there is ample academic research on how 'otherness' is represented in history textbooks in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schools, this article does not aim to reproduce this premise. The most important contribution of this study is the examination and analysis of the recent parallel educational directions and politics undertaken by the two communities in order to achieve a reconciliatory approach in education in terms of history textbook revisions. In fulfilling this aim, discursive and communicative properties of Habermas' discourse ethics are used as the theoretical frame which can be utilised by history teachers of both communities to liberate their historical discourses from the essentialist and monolithic approaches, as well as dismantle the long-standing power relationships entrenched in schools' history textbooks.

Though recent years have seen the production of some non-ethnocentric textbooks (AHDR, 2003; Stradling, 2003; Council of Europe and Makriyianni, 2005; The American Historical Association, 2014), plus some supranational initiatives aimed at monitoring and eradicating national stereotyping in school textbooks in areas of conflict (UNESCO, 1949; Council of Europe, 2004; Joint Committee on Education and Science, 2008), there is still a great deal to be done to disrupt and undermine the basis of essentialist and politically and socially exclusionist

ethnocentric ideology. Notwithstanding the recent educational reform efforts brought about by both communities of Cyprus to revise their history curricula it would be a mistake to perceive the formation as well as the production of education policies and textbooks as simply the work of state bureaucrats who impose the official state version of reality and truth. For as Hamilakis (2003) notes:

‘The national project in education, is not simply a matter of state imposition. The boundaries on what constitutes state and nonstate initiatives seem to blur. The pressures by social actors, the media, and other mechanisms can express, but also determine, public approval or disapproval and may lead to radical changes. Textbooks, and the debates surrounding them, can be seen as a reflection of wider attitudes and mentalities, but also as a strong ideological mechanism for the production and reproduction of these mentalities’ (pp. 43–44).

It is possible, therefore, to argue that non-state initiatives such as teachers’ discourses and practices play a vital role in interpreting education policies when it comes to redirecting them into the reconciliatory agenda. Before moving on to demonstrate and analyse the properties of discourse ethics, the section which follows delineates the recent geopolitical realities of the country, which in turn, is reflected in terms of the parallel educational directions of both communities.

Historical and Current Geopolitical Background

Amidst other countries of the Middle East, Cyprus constitutes an interesting case where particular attention must be placed on the direction of its education and how it relates to the cultural ‘other’. In conjunction with other former British colonial countries, Cyprus provides a unique case because even though people from the two ethnically divided communities have, since April 2003, been able to cross the temporary ‘border’ that separates them officially, the island is still under ceasefire and no settlement has been reached despite four decades of negotiations.

By examining the island’s contemporary history, it is possible to detect two landmarks associated with the production and reproduction of certain cultural assumptions. Their origin can be traced back to the British colonial rule, 1878–1960, and exacerbated afterwards in the wake of the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974.

It is widely documented that the British, for administrative reasons, evolved a policy of indirect rule on the island which embraced a system of governance developed in some of their other colonies. Under this system – often called ‘Protectorates’ or ‘Trucial States’ – the government of small and large areas was left in the hands of traditional rulers, who gained prestige as well as the stability and protection afforded by the Pax Britannica at the cost of losing control of taxation and their external affairs (The American Historical Association, 2014). Parallel to the indirect policy, the British charted a divide-and-rule course of action. By adopting this strategy, the British broke up existing power structures and sought to prevent smaller power groups from linking up. This being the case, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot religious differences were captured by the

British in nationalist terms (Easton, 1964) and stood against any effort pursued by Greek Cypriots to unite with their motherland Greece. As a result, the British transformed the apolitical elements between Muslims and Orthodox into highly politicised and ethnically divided ideals via indirect policy (Worsley and Kitromilides, 1979). For the most part what triggered the inter-communal controversies was the British policy which, as stated by some scholars, applied a criminal policy by using the principle of millet dating from the Ottoman era. According to Constantinides (2013), by seeking to emphasise the role of the confessional and ethno-religious communities, the millet system reinforced the confrontational logic between them rather than introducing the ideological component of political liberalism that would treat Cypriots as citizens, as witnessed in current democracies of the West. Hence, the millet system resulted in more inter-communal separation on the basis of ethnic and religious affiliation. What is more, another contested area of British liberal policy was the way in which education was formed. By fostering a separate Greek and Turkish identity respectively, the British allowed a divisive educational system to emerge which undermined the development of a common Cypriot civil identity and further nurtured an increased national awareness of the Greek Cypriots, and likewise that of the Turkish Cypriots later.

Over and above that, an extreme national sentiment was developing among the Greek Cypriots due to socio-economic factors. Consistent with some accounts, the British colonial rule had facilitated the modernisation of the economy at that time, and in consequence, a Greek Cypriot mercantile class with a high European orientation flourished (Morag, 2004). On the other hand the Turkish Cypriots being a less economically and socially developed community were excluded from the new found prosperity and subsequently the gap between the two communities continued to widen after Cyprus' independence in 1960. Many scholars have repeatedly stressed that by the 1960s the discourse of Cypriot identity had almost been eclipsed (Makriyianni and Psaltis, 2007; Papadakis *et al.*, 2006). Despite the fact that the year 1960 had marked the end of British colonial rule and inaugurated a new constitutional era for Cyprus, the country was still inhabited by 'Greeks' and 'Turks' who maintained separated educational systems that undermined the very existence of the State which they were meant to serve. During the period of interethnic strife that persisted from 1963 to 1967, the Greek Cypriot education system reinforced a nationalistic ideology by catering only for the ideological needs of Greek Cypriots. But by 1967, interethnic strife had ceased and the political situation started to become more stable. As an outcome of this political stability, the two sides gradually began to negotiate but talks were soon corrupted by the military Junta which came to power in Greece and revived the Greek Cypriot pro-union factions. As a result, on 15 July 1974, intra-ethnic strife between the Greek Cypriots culminated in the coup against Archbishop Makarios, the then president of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC). The coup was initiated by the Greek government and EOKA B¹ – an armed

1 EOKA B was established in 1971. Its aim was to create the conditions that would lead to the union of Cyprus

organisation that had its roots in the National Organisation of Greek Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) and unleashed the first wave of anti-British violence in their demands for union with Greece in 1955. It should be noted that at the time, and in the year 1958, Turkish Cypriots, in response to the formation of EOKA, set up their own armed group called TMT (Turkish Resistance Organisation). Therefore, while armed confrontations between EOKA and TMT abated after 1967, the aforementioned intra-ethnic conflict gave way to the coup in 1974, the ramifications of which resulted in the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus five days later. The magnitude of the latter has impacted upon every part of life in Cyprus, particularly the economy, the education system and the society. The events of the invasion had profound effects on the nation which later empowered an emerging array of cultural patterns that in effect have infiltrated organisational and societal values. There is a prominent discourse on materialism coupled with a 'work ethic' which grew after the disaster of 1974; an expansion termed 'the Cyprus Miracle' (Christodoulou, 1992; Mavratsas, 1997). The RoC, having witnessed a 14-year period of unstable existence, managed to recover economically in a relatively short time. The reclamation of the Cyprus economy is attributed to the hard-working spirit of its people (Christou, 2006; Georgiades, 2006). Mavratsas (1997) draws an interesting socio-cultural analysis on the effects of the invasion events on Greek Cypriot economic and political culture. He views the 'corporatization' of Greek Cypriot politics, brought about by the tragic events of 1974, as an impediment to the 'rationalization and modernization of the political culture and ethos of the Republic of Cyprus' (p. 285). The notion of 'corporatization' can be explained in terms of how internal politics have been carried out to enable Greek Cypriots to cope with the economic uncertainty that emanated from the invasion. Thus, the notion of 'corporatism' of Greek Cypriot politics in conjunction with the notion of 'over-politicization' denotes political practices which are initiated and shouldered by organised interest groups who avoid controversies while aiming to build consensus between a wide spectrum of political forces and interests seeking compromise wherever possible. Undoubtedly, the development of corporatism in some respect has proved productive for the Greek Cypriot economy as the institutionalisation of procedures for achieving collective agreements in labour and industrial relations, has removed Cyprus from the list of so-called Third World countries. Nevertheless, the culture of 'corporatism' has been criticised in that it stifles critical independent thinking (Mavratsas, 1997), and has become the source of another cultural norm – the so called 'nepotism' or 'favouritism' standard. The latter has arisen from a general reluctance by Greek Cypriot people to question accepted dogmas and to express individual opinions, with an implicit

with Greece. The leader of EOKA B, Georgios Grivas, adjudged Archbishop Makarios to be responsible for the Zürich and London Agreement which Grivas regarded as highly unfavourable to Greek Cypriots, and to be treason. As a result, those EOKA members who supported Makarios did not join EOKA B but rather fought them. Whereas EOKA (1955–1959) were viewed by the majority of Greek Cypriots as anti-colonialist freedom fighters, EOKA-B did not have the overwhelming support of the Greek Cypriot population.

acceptance that only social groups and organised interests are legitimate socio-political actors (Mavratsas, 1997; Georgiades, 2006). This, in effect, reinforces politicisation within society as individuals promote their interests through the established channels. In other words, 'over-politicization' as well as 'favouritism' can be perceived as cultural trends founded upon the premise that nothing is accomplished unless you know 'somebody' who is in a position of power or belongs to an organised political group. This susceptibility to unjust practices of favouritism and nepotism in Cypriot culture is reflected in the majority of organisational domains within the Greek Cypriot society, including education in the form of undeserving appointments, promotions and privileged employment transfers.

From the 1990s onwards when the RoC applied for European membership, attitudes began to change between the two communities. A recurring issue stressed by many scholars has been the shift of political orientation from the polarity of Hellenism to Cypriotism (Peristianis, 2006; Kasbarian, 2013; Papadakis *et al.*, 2006; Iliopoulou and Karathanasis, 2014; Karatsioli, 2014a). The movement towards the development of a 'third way' – a common civic identity which embraces both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots – has been the outcome of a range of recent geopolitical events taking place within the past decade.

The first major step to facilitate the process of developing a sense of Cypriotness was in April 2003 when the unrecognised TRNC (Turkish Republic of North Cyprus)² announced the unilateral partial lifting of obstacles to crossing the Green Line. This movement led to some significant changes regarding the interaction of the two communities. Many Greek Cypriots visit the unrecognised Turkish Cypriot state, and thus, they contribute to the improvement of its economy. At the same time, Turkish Cypriots are employed and offered places for study in the government controlled area of the south.

Briefly, since the opening of the Ledra Palace barricade, the reunification of the Cyprus economy is still at stake with a number of sociologists, politicians, academics and economists, stressing a variety of possibilities and opportunities deemed likely to result in the aftermath of the reunification of the island. Ever since Cyprus became a member of the European Union in May 2004 and adopted the euro as its national currency in January 2008, the search for a solution to the long-standing unresolved political problem has continued to concern international organisations. Their interest in the reunification has brought to the forefront the need for social cohesion and has triggered an emphasis on reviewing citizenship identities. Consequently, their involvement has been decisive in facilitating the effort for an identity reconstruction process. Pioneers from the UN and other American-based institutions have been collaborating in the context of 'Civil Society Dialogue' which aims to energise and re-mobilise peace builders across the dividing line and seeks to structure dialogue sessions, the objective of which is to envision and

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

design their future worlds. Examples of these efforts have been the structured dialogue sessions organised for business people and entrepreneurs who wish to understand how the current political impasse harms both communities on the island regarding the domain of business (Laouris *et al.*, 2008). Another case concerns the cooperative effort of environmentalists who seek to treat the environment of Cyprus as a whole and not one divided by invisible political lines (Famagusta Revival Report, 2008).

A significantly different activity generated by the partial lifting of obstacles in 2003 is the grassroots activism that involved a shared activity between the two communities built on the premise of a common socio-political framework as a reaction to the rejection of the 'Annan Plan' and the disappointment towards the institutionalised bi-communal activism (Iliopoulou and Karathanasis, 2014). The grassroots activism is an example of how new generations from both sides of the divide went beyond bi-communalism to adopt a 'communal identity' which could possibly address most of their societal and political issues. By and large, these are not simply the outcome of a hostile historical past, but can be viewed generally as products of the devastating effects of globalisation. And so, grassroots activism and the activities deriving from it such as public, political and cultural events, may well contribute to the youth's wider awareness of the bigger global picture so that a political bottom-up activity might kick-start negotiations regarding the Cyprus problem with top-down approaches to it. The wider global picture predominantly concerns the economic and energy global orders which are currently posing further demands on the Cyprus economy in order to rebuild its economy and lay strong foundations to maximise prospects for competing in the global energy market. Apart from this challenge, Cyprus is currently on a correction path following an international €10 billion bailout and a Memorandum which has forced authorities to implement structural reforms within a defined timeframe. The Cypriot economic crisis was largely caused by Cypriot bank speculation on the Greek public debt by purchasing the risk from the European centre (Karatsioli, 2014b). Thus, the so-called economic miracle and prosperity experienced by the Greek Cypriot community in the aftermath of the 1974 invasion, is now subverted by the bail-in measure imposed by the Euro Group and has resulted in the 'monetary blocus' of Cyprus and the lockout of its economy from global transactions enforcing the austerity package. The upshot of the domino effect from the economic crisis has meant greater unemployment and the privatisation of semi-governmental institutions, together with the restructuring of public policy and the welfare system.

The economic crisis experienced and witnessed by the RoC in the recent past is not new to the island. Partitioned Cyprus has known another major crisis in the last ten years: the 1999–2001 Turkish Cypriot crisis which ended in 2004 and hitherto experienced substantial economic growth until 2009. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse the actual triggers of the Turkish Cypriot crisis, it is important to highlight the prospects and implications for peace potentialities. An interesting point has been made by Karatsioli (2014b), who states that the crisis of the two communities has transformed the identity and imaginary of the state. Given the current

economic downgrade and the experienced disappointment of both their motherlands, the same author raises the question as to whether there is a prospect of peace for the two communities.

Many scholars see the economic crisis as an opportunity for the two communities to be reconciled for they share the conviction that a reunified economy is likely to foster considerable opportunities for both sides. While it should not only advance the Cyprus tourist sector further, it should enhance the island's geostrategic position as well, taking also into consideration the recent hydrocarbons discovery within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). But, these opportunities can only succeed if the two communities learn to work beyond bi-communalism (Mullen *et al.*, 2014; Theophanous and Tirkides, 2006).

It seems that along with the economic challenges, there is at play the globalisation of energy demands. It is acknowledged extensively that the oil industry is not only being reshaped by globalisation but at the same time it is challenged by it. More specifically, this can be reflected in the rapid integration of two recent economy players, India and China with the world economy. In other words, the two countries representing one-third of the world's entire population are becoming progressively interconnected with the global economy. This, in turn, means growing trade, increased industrial production and consequently a massive rise in energy use. Globalisation is also driving the emergence of a second global energy business; that of liquefied natural gas (LNG). This has led to the integration of regional natural gas markets. Basically, the major driving forces of this trend are lower LNG costs, more spot trade and increased needs. Moreover, although the Middle East has a key role to play in LNG exports, any significant constraints on its international trade may alter this picture (Yergin, 2013; Bradshaw, 2010; Aune *et al.*, 2009).

A forthcoming key energy player of the Middle East is Cyprus. In July 2012, a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Cyprus, the US-based Noble Energy and its Israel partners with a view to seeking investors jointly for an LNG plant. According to the Minister of Energy and Commerce of the RoC, the island of Cyprus should be able to begin LNG exports by 2022 (Hydrocarbons Cyprus, 2014) with an optional extension of one to three years. In theory, Cyprus is entering an era of becoming a vital contender in the energy stakes. The geostrategic position of the island is now about to be heightened even more due to the recent hydrocarbons discovery within its EEZ. Moreover, Cyprus must play a vibrant role in bringing together neighbouring countries on the joint exploration process. Worth noting is that the current government, along with other international figures, tends to combine the exploitation of hydrocarbons with the resolution of the Cyprus problem to facilitate overcoming the economic crisis. Consistent with the opinion of most experts the discovery of hydrocarbons could serve as a catalyst for Cyprus' economic development (Mullen *et al.*, 2014). President Anastasiades reiterates the position that natural gas belongs to all citizens of the RoC and that if, through a solution, the state becomes a federal administration, then natural gas will belong to the citizens of the federal state. Politicians and experts are determined to turn the economic crisis into an opportunity and they remain steadfast in the conviction that the economic developments along with those in the

energy sector have upgraded and garnered international interest and attention in Cyprus and the wider region. Therefore, from the perspective of a cultural understanding, energy should not be a source of conflict but rather serve as a catalytic agent towards the resolution of conflicts and regional integration.

The Discourse Ethics of Habermas and the Reconciliatory Agenda

Given the political and economic realities highlighted in the previous section, we may come to the same conclusion as Firillas (2008) in his eloquent statement:

'The post-1974 situation has paradoxically liberated the Greek Cypriots from their Turkish Cypriot compatriots, increasingly from Ankara's hold, and fundamentally from Greece. It is this independence that should be preserved and bolstered, and should guide Greek-Cypriot negotiators. It must not be based on blind nationalism but on the recognition that post-1974 there are new realities in the government controlled south, and these have shaped Greek-Cypriot society, politics and self-perception, and these should be understood well if the Greek Cypriot national interest is to be expressed best. Because it is time that we distinguish Greek-Cypriot national interest from that of the Republic of Cyprus circa 1960, and come up with some new slogans' (p. 2).

As far as Greek Cypriot education is concerned, in order to override the old 'slogans' which the state has purposefully used in the Greek Cypriot history curricula since 1960, a new framework needs to be employed in the repertoires of history teachers. If we are to disrupt and undermine the basis of the essentialist and politically and socially exclusionist ethnocentric ideology alluded to in the above quotation, we should, as Hamilakis (2003) notes, pay more attention to education procedures and critique the 'doxa'³ projected in school textbooks. The fluid nature of identities may well be negotiated, framed and reframed by a communicative discourse such as that pioneered by Habermas.

Much of the theory of Habermas draws on 'critical theory' which is tied to an 'emancipatory interest' in that the latter seeks to free individuals from domination and oppression. The rationale for drawing on Habermas' theory rests on its emancipatory character. A contention held by this study is that history teachers can become eligible to free themselves from external control as well as from the 'distinctive regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1980) by employing Habermas' theory into their everyday teaching, and by claiming an 'ethically discursive' awareness in a Habermasian sense.

The basic assumption underlying Habermas' theory (1990) is that qualifying the validity of moral norms can be done in a manner analogous to the justification of facts. Rudimentary to his hypothesis is the idea that the validity of a moral norm cannot be justified in the mind of an

3 The term 'doxa' used in the text originates from Ancient Greek δόξα, which means 'taken for granted beliefs', or implies to what Foucault calls 'regimes of truth'.

isolated individual reflecting on the world. Instead, the validity is somewhat justified only intersubjectively, in a dialectic discourse, in a process of argumentation between individuals. Claims to truth, in other words, depend on the mutual understanding achieved by individuals in an argument. Communication of this type came to be labelled 'communicative action' by Habermas, which he contrasts with what he calls 'strategic action' as in the latter case 'one actor seeks to *influence* the behaviour of another by means of the threat of sanctions or the prospect of gratification in order to *cause* the interaction to continue as the first actor desires' (p. 58). In developing his argument further, Habermas (1993) coined the principle of 'universalization' which he extracts from the notion of 'ideal role taking' (p. 129). According to Habermas, the principle of universalisation requires 'a universal exchange of roles' so that none of the actors affected will be constrained to adopt the perspectives of all others in the exchange of reason, hence a process of what he calls 'deliberation' is achieved where all actors involved in a dialogue justify the correctness of their decision. In addition to these principles, Habermas employs the concept of 'the moral point of view' as a prerequisite in the process of a cooperative search for truth. The 'moral point of view' as formulated by Habermas (1990), arises out of the multiple perspectives of those affected by a norm under consideration where 'nothing coerces anyone except the force of the better argument' (p. 198). The essence of the moral point of view lies in the fact that it is not the sole property of an individual subject but the property of a community of interlocutors seeking to define 'what is equally good for all' (Habermas, 1993, p. 151). What underlies his theory is a sense of solidarity inducing participants in argumentation 'to become aware of their membership in an unlimited communication community' (*ibid.*, p. 154).

As already noted, the partial lifting of travel restrictions across the Green Line in 2003, has offered several opportunities for contacts to take place between the two communities. Education has not remained unaffected by this landmark in the reconciliatory milieu. The fact that decisions to change history textbooks were initiated in both communities by the new elected Leftist governments are worthy of mention. The Turkish Cypriots were the first to instigate the revision of their history textbooks as the Republican Turkish Party rose to power in 2004, whereas the Leftist political party AKEL came into power in 2008 in the RoC.

The Turkish Cypriot school textbooks in use until 2004 had followed the logic of ethnic nationalism (Karahassan and Zembylas, 2006; Papadakis, 2008, 2014; Makriyianni and Psaltis, 2007; Psaltis *et al.*, 2011; Demetriou, 2014) and were produced during periods when the Right monopolised power over the Turkish Cypriot side and held the political aspiration of the *de facto* partition of Cyprus. The dominant discourse of these books is a national one which presents the history of Cyprus as nothing but a part of Turkish history and follows a narrative of how Turkish Cypriots suffered a great deal from the Greeks and Greek Cypriots. In a recent examination of the old Turkish Cypriot school textbooks by Papadakis (2014) he evidences the nationalistic rhetoric prevalent in both elementary and secondary textbooks. More particularly, he notes that these books present Cyprus as being connected to 'Anatolia' from a historical-geographical, strategic and

economic perspective, while Cyprus has no significance at all for Greece, either from a historical or from a strategic perspective. In addition he remarks that the Ottomans are presented as having come to Cyprus in order to save the Greek Cypriots from Venetian cruelty. Moreover, Papadakis notices that the Greeks are always referred to as 'Rums' and depicted as barbarians who behaved ungratefully toward their Ottoman saviours and who had betrayed the gracious Ottoman tolerance. A remarkable note by the same scholar, is that the most prominent period documented is 1963–1974, which is depicted as a continuous barbaric assault of 'Rums' against the 'Turks' in Cyprus; all part of a plan. He notices that this trend is followed in all Turkish Cypriot school textbooks which document that the 'Rums' displayed such savagery and barbarism the world has seldom seen. It is also widely documented that the events of 1974 are described in all Turkish Cypriot school textbooks as the 'Happy peace operation' when the 'Heroic Turkish Army' came to safeguard the 'Turks of Cyprus' and remained ever since (Papadakis *et al.*, 2006; Papadakis, 2008, 2014; Halil-Ibrahim, 2013). Overall, the suffering documented in Turkish Cypriot school textbooks of the 'Turks of Cyprus' at the hands of the 'Rums', serves to preserve the national sentiments and sovereignty of the Turks, reproducing a general trend that is followed by societies which are divided by ethno-national conflicts. According to Papadakis (2014), history in these terms is used to propagate both a narrative focusing on the suffering of the nation and to legitimate its political goals.

However, the paradigm shift emanating from the 2003 election victory of the left-wing CTP (Republican Turkish Party), gave way to a radical approach to history and immediately called for a complete change of the old history textbooks. Since then, many scholars share the conviction that the newly revised textbooks offer a more balanced view of Cypriot history, devoid of prejudiced attitudes against Greek Cypriots (Karahassan and Zembylas, 2006; Papadakis, 2008, 2014; Psaltis *et al.*, 2011). A representative example of this paradigmatic shift is that the Ottoman conquer is no longer demonstrated as a process for defending the Turkish Cypriots from suffering at the hands of the Greek Cypriots, but rather, it is now clearly documented that the Ottomans conquered Cyprus because of its strategic position. Overall, the new textbooks reveal that a great deal of effort has been put in to erase biased material.

Likewise were the conditions generated for revising Greek Cypriot textbooks but the reactions by different stakeholders varied and the outcome has not been as effective as in the Turkish Cypriot side. The presidential elections in the Greek Cypriot southern part on 24 February 2008 were decisive regarding the country's educational and political future. For the first time Cyprus would be governed under the presidency of a communist leader. The Greek Cypriot communist party leader, Dimitris Christofias, took a firm stand on the issue of education reform and reunification once he had won the island's presidency. It was unprecedented that in the post-invasion era, Greek and Turkish communities would be headed by leaders who were willing to reach a settlement for the Cyprus problem. The left-wing president then announced to the Press, the media and the public, the fundamental pillars of Greek Cypriot education that would be promoted from September 2008. At that juncture, with the start of the new academic year, the

Minister of Education distributed a circular to all state schools to outline two principle aims: the development of innovation and creativity in schools and the cultivation of a culture of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots (MOEC, 2008b). The circular received a good number of reactions from the Church, some teachers and politicians accusing the Minister of derogating the nation's Hellenic identity (Evripidou, 2008). The Minister's response was that history textbooks had remained virtually unchanged for decades, notwithstanding modern history teaching practices being implemented in the rest of Europe. He also gave his assurance that all school textbooks would be revised based on historical truth and accuracy by a committee of experts that had yet to be created. In order to make his argument more sound he expressed the view that 'My personal commitment firstly as a scientist and then as a minister, is that there is nothing like the truth' (Evripidou, 2008). Noteworthy is the response from the Archbishop to the Minister's declaration concerning the revision of history textbooks:

'Why do we want to create new programmes of study, and so on? We were pupils once and we were also taught history. Does this mean that the history we were taught was false?' (Evripidou, *Cyprus Mail* 2008).

The president had mentioned among other things that in order for reconciliation to be achieved it was vital that education should seek the 'reinstatement of the truth' and the elimination of the falsification of history (MOEC, 2008b). It is believed that the search for the truth behind the events concerning the Greek coup that triggered the Turkish invasion of 1974 will contribute to the rehabilitation of trust between the two communities (Makriyianni and Psaltis, 2007; Papadakis, 2008; Evripidou, 2008). The president's suggestion was founded on the conviction held by many anthropologists and sociologists of the country, that most of the textbooks produced on the island in the humanities and social sciences area, and particularly the history textbooks of both the Greek and Turkish sides, gave a distorted picture of Cyprus' past (Makriyianni and Psaltis, 2007; Papadakis 2008; Council of Europe and Makriyianni, 2005). It should be noted that the president's declarations prompted many disputes, controversies and reactions. The Greek Cypriot ethnic nationalist right-wing party and the Democrat party were not only wary of the revision of the history textbooks but they also expressed offensive responses regarding the president's determination to rectify the omissions on Cyprus' history and past. Hitherto, Greek Cypriot history textbooks have remained unchanged in terms of their highly nationalistic content, despite other fragmented efforts to revise curricula in lower secondary education and the newly imported textbooks from Greece in 2009. All textbooks are still embroidered with a nationalistic discourse of antagonism and animosity and reproduce the general framework as well as basic principles of the dominant model of the history of Greece which, on the authority of Papadakis (2014), posits the following three key periods: ancient Greece, medieval Greece (the glorious Byzantine Empire) and modern Greece. Even in the history textbooks about the History of Cyprus, which are written

by the Greek Cypriot Pedagogical Institute, the history of Cyprus is merely presented as an extension of the history of Greece. In addition to this monolithic narrative, all Greek Cypriot history curricula, as well as literature curricula, emphasise the concept of 'loss' as experienced by the Greeks and Greek Cypriots in many facets of their suffering by the Turks. Demetriou (2014), writes about the concept of loss which dominates the Greek Cypriot curricula and reproduces sentiments of collective refugee-hood which, in turn, gives rise to the use of highly nationalistic slogans such as the one most recognised: 'I don't forget and I struggle'. As specified by the same author, the concept of loss enables an approach that focuses on nuances and differentiations of experience that fracture rather than unify collectivities. History and literature curricula, therefore, need to employ a new rhetoric that will evoke new slogans which do not produce shared or privatised experiences of 'loss', but celebrate and build on those shared lives of the two communities that were lost in vain. Rather than grieving for an imaginary loss, young generations may well start to envision and visualise their imaginary future. A core argument of this paper is that the production and reproduction of the 'imaginary loss' in formal and informal curricula, may prove to have detrimental effects on young mind-sets because it inhibits further the process towards the adoption of a unified national identity.

From a Conflicting and Biased History to a 'Shared History of Conflict' via Discourse Ethics

Given the historical and current economic and educational realities of the two communities, it is feasible to argue that the two communities share an array of commonalities but in order to unmask them a communicative discourse needs to be employed in their approaches to history. The 'multiperspectivity' approach to history teaching coined by the Council of Europe (2004) and later employed by many research scholars of history teaching, does not suffice as it offers approaches only on the basis of constructivism. More particularly, scholars of the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (2003) place teacher understanding about knowledge and learning on a continuum by distinguishing between the positivist/realist standpoint and the relativist/postmodernist perspective at the two ends of the spectrum with an emphasis on constructivism which is placed in the middle. The argument put forward by this article is that apart from constructivism there is at least one shade of grey between the two extremes and that is 'critical theory', upon which the discourse ethics of Habermas are founded. The latter is tied to an 'emancipatory interest' and could open up a cultural space through which educational professionals and students arrive at a shared recognition; that living with difference is a necessary condition in the realisation process that all of humanity is affected by the same global issues. Constructivist approaches view knowledge as something to be constructed at the interface of the subject and object of knowledge and the teachers' role in this approach is to train students how to enact the inquiry-based process of aiming for objectivity even if it can never be totally achieved due to our subjective knowledge limitations (Psaltis *et al.*, 2011). However, in taking the constructivist

paradigm a step further, 'critical theory' is a school of thought that stresses the reflective assessment and critique of society and culture by seeking to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them (Horkheimer, 1982).

That being so, history teachers from both communities may well employ the premises of Habermas' communicative discourse in their everyday practicum, such as the principle of 'universalisation' which requires 'a universal exchange of roles' rather than employing only superficially the multiperspectivity approach compounded to other constructivist activities. In cases where fragments in history textbooks manifest or allude to the 'victim metaphor', teachers may engage their students in role exchange activities by acting as 'critical theorists' to transform the discourse of the 'victim metaphor' into an emancipatory narrative. In doing so, the grief that both communities have suffered equally from their respective nationalist circles is made visible, together with the fact that both groups had set up their corresponding armed struggles as well. Hence, the *taksim* struggle was organised as a counter movement to Greek Cypriot *enosis*. Keeping in mind such discussion, students would then consider all of the consequences that stemmed from both counter movements and question the 'victim metaphor' which is viewed from the vantage point of the speaker's side. Understanding should bring awareness to the fore that *inter*-ethnic strife has brought about *intra*-ethnic strife, with EOKA killing left-wing Greeks, and TMT killing left-wing Turks. Likewise, it could be stressed through critical theory student activities that both communities equally bear the consequences generated by the British colonial policies of 'indirect rule' as well as 'divide and rule'. Also, by undertaking role exchange activities the students may become familiar with the reasons that prompted the formation of the armed organisations, EOKA and TMT, which led to the exacerbation of inter-ethnic conflicts and gave rise to the violence which began in 1963 and lasted until 1967.⁴ In regard to these events, teachers may well employ the principle of 'deliberation'; capture student interest and involve them in a moral dialogue in order to understand the period between 1963–1967 when Turkish Cypriots bore most of the costs in terms of casualties. This is comparable with the Greek Cypriot refugee case in 1974 when the

4 Prior to the inter-ethnic conflict noted here, it should be mentioned that the first wave of massive intercommunal violence arose during the Greco-Turkish talks in 1958 which led to the Zurich and London agreements. Turkey dictated the course of diplomacy over Cyprus while the British and the Greek Cypriots continued to claw at one another in the island. The purpose of the Turks was to block any deal between Britain and the Greek Cypriots which would open the door to *enosis*. For this purpose they had two weapons: The first was diplomatic pressure on Britain; the second was violent action in Cyprus to show that the Turkish Cypriots could not be ignored and to prove that coexistence in the island between Greeks and Turks was impossible without partition. Fighting between Greek and Turkish Cypriots followed in the aftermath of demonstrations which accompanied the opening of the United Nations debate on Cyprus in December 1957. The debate set in motion a resolution which was a partial political victory for the Greeks. It expressed the hope for further negotiations 'with a view to having the right of self-determination applied in the case of the people of Cyprus'. But it was passed without the two-third majority needed to enforce it as a recommendation.

Greek Cypriots were the ones to pay the highest price.

In terms of the narratives used by both communities, a critique elucidated by Papadakis *et al.* (2006), exposed how certain accounts tend to divide communities. This drove the authors to conclude that the experience of suffering in Cyprus has officially become sharply divided to the point where terms such as 'the dead', 'the missing' or 'the refugees' refer only to those of the speaker's side. That being in case, in order for this division to be resolved, history teachers need to turn their attention to the Habermasian 'moral point of view' and engage their students in a retrospective dialogue concerning all of the refugees, including those missing and dead that happened to exist as inhabitants on the island. Teachers should join together and engage with their students to discuss what the two communities have lost by not interacting with each other rather than talking over issues of past memories and loss. The exemplars represented in this section are nothing but a snapshot of what the two communities share in common. Thus, by moralising the teaching of history in Habermasian terms, students may well become aware 'of their membership in an unlimited communication community' (Habermas, 1993, p. 154). History teachers of both communities should also locate their discourse on a framework which encompasses all recent economic and political realities that the two communities are facing. In making this clear, students should recognise that both communities have been through economic crises, and to some extent, these crises might be explained not only in terms of the overall European and global crisis, but part of the blame may be apportioned to their 'motherlands' and the detrimental effects caused to both communities by the way they have managed capital. By presenting such current realities to students, the teachers' argument should not be a coercive one with political nuances and deliberations. Nothing should force the discourse except the force of a better argument that may lead interlocutors to define what is equally good for all.

Not only do Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot teachers need to be aware of current global and national forces posing great pressure on the reunification of the country, but they should be conscious of the consequences that their practice might incur for all members of the Cypriot community as well as for humanity at large.

The Way Forward

This article has sought to examine the parallel efforts undertaken by the two communities in order to revise their history curricula. The high nationalistic discourses elected to address the way history was taught in the two communities has come under considerable revision, yet both communities have a long way to go before reaching a totally 'critical' and 'apolitical' space in which they locate their approaches to history. The so-called 'multiperspectivity' agenda founded on the constructivist paradigm is hitherto only superficially applied. It is not sufficient to merely let the students discover and construct knowledge without engaging them in a symmetrical discourse to examine and re-examine their already biased assumptions by taking the 'others' standpoint. Even if some history teachers persevere with teaching history simply for the sake of 'multiperspectivity' there will always

be students who, as 'free, democratic and autonomous [European] citizens' (MOEC, 1996, p. 17) will seek to challenge and question the truthfulness and objectivity of the historical events being taught. By the same token, there will be teachers who, as active European citizens in a yet divided island, will either engage in a 'reflexive', 'intersubjective' and 'non-coercive' dialogue, or they will just ignore the moral dispositions of teaching and follow a mechanistic history teaching in order to be sure that the requirement of the exam-centred system is met.

Given the historical and current economic and geopolitical background of Cyprus, this article has argued that both communities have been subjected to post-colonial realities that must rethink and revise their national identities and place them under the umbrella of a re-unified identity. It should be a characteristic that encompasses not only the historical narratives of their respective motherlands but also their 'shared history of conflict'. It should not be a dispute about nations and states who have struggled to maintain their sovereignties, but about two states that are now being subjected to wider global and political realities, and therefore in a process of state rehabilitation after being subjected to parallel colonial and national forces. The finding of this study suggests that the overall reunification, reconciliation and re-rapprochement project needs to be deconstructed and reconstructed to enable it to become whole once more by replacing the empty political abstraction required so that the bi-communal mistrust is minimised. In order to achieve this we need an 'apolitical', communicative and ethically discursive space in education where Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities will 'de-legitimize' their respective political positions in such a way that future citizens will start to develop a critical approach toward their future bi-communal 'other'.

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