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## **Representations of ‘Europe’ in the Greek-Cypriot Social Studies secondary school curricula: Challenges and opportunities**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the case of the Greek-Cypriot secondary school curricula and aims at mapping and discussing constructions of ‘Europe’ in social studies subjects, namely Geography, History, Civics, Religious Studies and Economics. This sample of subjects is important (see Schissler and Soysal, 2005), but is also especially relevant in the divided context of Cyprus, since a number of studies have indicated the role of some of these subjects individually in constructing national and/or European identity, for example, in History (Papadakis, 2008; Koullapis, 2002; Philippou, 2004), Geography (Philippou, 2008), and Civics (Philippou, 2009) textbooks. However, no study has so far attempted to bring together these subject areas in secondary education and explore how ‘Europe’ is constructed across these subjects’ curricula (rather than textbooks). This study aims at addressing this gap in the literature and contributes to ongoing debates with regards to curriculum as ideological-political text drawing upon the potential impact of European education policy on Greek-Cypriot curricula as a case study. Discussions over curriculum and identity are not of course a new phenomenon, but rather reflect historical debates in Cyprus; it is these to which I now turn.*

### **Setting the context: education, curriculum and ideology**

In a periodisation into four historical periods (1960-1974; 1974-1994; 1994-2004; 2004-2010) attempted by Philippou and Klerides (2010) over discourses of national identity in official Greek-Cypriot curricula and policy documents since independence, it is argued that a combination of Hellenocentric, Cypriocentric and Hellenocypriocentric discourses were present in all four periods, reflecting and sustaining debates over national identity and its perceived relation to the Cyprus problem. In their study, discourses over ‘Europe’ appeared essentially in the later two periods (1994-2004; 2004-2010), though obviously they were not a new rhetoric (c.f. Philippou, 2009) reflecting discussions over whether and how the Republic of Cyprus would become an EU member-state, as well as what the implications of accession should or could be in educational policy and curricula post-2004.

Secondary general education, which is the focus of this study and is distinct from technical/vocational education, consists of two cycles of studies of three years duration each cycle, the first one being the Gymnasium (which offers general education with emphasis on humanities, with all its subjects being compulsory) and the second one the Lyceum (which offers a programme of studies which encompasses common core subjects, optional stream subjects and subjects of special interest and/or enrichment). There is no general Social Studies subject, but rather social studies content is structured under different subject areas, namely Religious Studies, History (both taught in all

grades), Civics (taught only in Grades 9 and 12), Geography (Grades 7 and 8), and Economics (Grade 10). There is a national curriculum compulsory for all public schools which is currently undergoing reform; the documents analysed for this study were those applicable until August 2010 and in place for approximately 15 years. These documents have been 'powerful', since they were expected to be implemented in highly similar ways across schools and Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) inspectors ensured the observance of the official curriculum.

### Methodological considerations

The sample of documents included official documents which were in place for Greek-Cypriot secondary education in the five subject areas and which were compulsory-common for all students (i.e. the specialisation subjects provided at upper secondary school for Grades 11 and 12 were not included in the analysis). The curriculum (*Αναλυτικό Πρόγραμμα: Analytiko Programma* in Greek) as a document was structured under the subjects taught in each grade and usually included (though there are variations from subject to subject) philosophy and aims, content (subject-matter), suggestions for teaching approaches and activities and suggestions on evaluation. In some subjects curricula took the form of *syllabi* i.e. documents which described in detail the lists of contents to be taught for one subject or 'groups' of subjects and the time to be allocated to each chapter or unit (these documents are usually referred to as '*programmatismos*' in Greek). All curricular documents analysed are shown in Table 1 organised under each grade (age-group); the Table also indicates where these have been published, their length in pages as well as the year and edition of publication of the documents.

**Table 1. Sample of Curricular Documents Analysed**

Age/ Grade level	Subject title	Title of Document	Pages	Published by/ Edition
12-13 7 <sup>th</sup>	Geography	Annual Subject Matter Planning for Geography	1	MoEC, 2008
		Gymnasium Geography Syllabus	10	MoEC, Curriculum Development Service, 1997a
	History	Annual Subject Matter Planning for History	4	MoEC, 2009
	Religious Education	Annual Subject Matter Planning for Religious Education	1	MoEC, 2008
13-14 8 <sup>th</sup>	Geography	Annual Subject Matter Planning for Geography	1	MoEC, 2008
		Gymnasium Geography Syllabus	23	MoEC, Curriculum Development Service, 1997b
	History	Annual Subject Matter Planning for History	4	MoEC, 2009
	Religious	Annual Subject Matter Planning	1	

	Education	for Religious Education			MoEC, 2008
14-15 9 <sup>th</sup>	History	Annual Subject Matter Planning for History	6		MoEC, 2009
	Civics	Annual Subject Matter Planning for Civics	3		MoEC, 2007a
	Religious Education	Annual Subject Matter Planning for Religious Education	1		MoEC, 2008
15-16 10 <sup>th</sup>	History	Curricula for Grade A <sup>1</sup> of the Unified Lyceum	21		Nicosia, Curriculum Development Service, MoEC, Directorship for Secondary Education, 2000, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition
		Annual Subject Matter Planning for Common History	4		
	Economics	Curricula for Grade A <sup>1</sup> of the Unified Lyceum	11		MoEC, 2009
	Religious Education	Curricula for Grade A <sup>1</sup> of the Unified Lyceum	61		Nicosia, Curriculum Development Service, MoEC, Directorship for Secondary Education, 2000, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition
16-17 11 <sup>th</sup>	History	Curricula for Grade B <sup>1</sup> of the Unified Lyceum (Vol IV)	46		Nicosia, Curriculum Development Service, MoEC, Directorship for Secondary Education, 2002, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition
		Annual Subject Matter Planning for Common History	3		
	Religious Education	Curricula for Grade B <sup>1</sup> of the Unified Lyceum (Vol IV)	45		MoEC, 2008
17-18 12 <sup>th</sup>	History	Annual Subject Matter Planning for Common History	3		Nicosia, Curriculum Development Service, MoEC, Directorship for Secondary Education, 2002, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition
	Civics	Annual Subject Matter Planning	2		MoEC, 2007b

	for Civics		
Religious Education	Curricula for Grade C' of the Unified Lyceum	14	Nicosia, Curriculum Development Service, MoEC, Directorship for Secondary Education, 2004, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 Documents</b>	<b>265</b>	

This paper is drawn from a broader study which included both quantitative and qualitative analyses of these documents, the details of which can be found in Philippou (2010). In this paper the focus is on the content and discourse analyses which, through initial open coding and multiple readings of the data, five representations of 'Europe' were identified, namely spatial-locational, economic, political, historical and cultural representations. The content of these representations is described below.

#### *Spatial-Locational representations of Europe*

This was one of the most common representations of Europe when the term 'Europe' as such was used in the documents in question. The content ascribed to the term was spatial-locational either to denote the whole continent or parts of the continent e.g. Western Europe, Eastern Europe etc. References to particular places, countries, cities etc within Europe largely occurred in documents for Geography, when specific places were included in the curriculum content e.g. the Ruhr, the Alps etc or in the documents for History and Religious Studies, to denote where some historical events were taking place e.g. the Balkans. It must be noted that the areas within Europe to be studied were largely western and Mediterranean in all documents analysed. Turkey was not included in this type of representation for Europe and was thus not included in the Grade 8 geography curriculum (which focused on Europe) but was included in the Grade 7 curriculum (which focused on World Geography). This was quite relevant to what has been found in the textbooks used to implement this curriculum where Europe was rigidly defined both in text and in maps with a traditional geographical definition from Iceland to the Urals and Caucasus, which included the islands of the Mediterranean and Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan and excluded most of Turkey (see Philippou, Latif and Karahasan, 2008). On the contrary, Cyprus was perceived as a distinctly European country and one of the aims of the syllabus document was for students to justify its Europeanness (MoEC, 1997a; 1997b). The geographical information provided on Europe was mainly geographical information locating Europe into the rest of the world, climatic characteristics, geophysical features, distribution of vegetation (flora), geological information, distribution of natural resources and was again largely located in the Grade 8 European geography syllabus document.

#### *Economic representations of Europe*

The analysis indicated that 'Europe' was also frequently ascribed an economic content; surprisingly, this did not occur in the documents for the subject of Economics, but

mostly in History, Civics and Geography and largely when the European Union (and its predecessors) were in focus. The EU thus featured quite prominently in this economic definition of Europe, as it was presented as an ‘economic organisation’ (as opposed to the preceding unit on ‘Political Organisations and Bodies’ in the documents (MoEC, 1997b, p. 49), expected to bring about numerous economic benefits to Cyprus after its membership. Other economic information were encountered and referred to individual European countries, largely in the Grade 8 Geography syllabus. This was obvious also when the topic of study was Cyprus’s relations with Europe and the rest of the world. Such information (on individual European countries including Cyprus) was organised usually around sectors of the economy, namely agriculture, animal stocking, fishing, industry, services (tourism, transport etc), which were illustrated through case studies i.e. heavy industry in the Ruhr area, forestry in north Europe, the polders in the Netherlands, tourism in the Alps etc. Economic content was ascribed to Europe when there was reference to colonialism and imperialism by European countries, largely in the Grade 7 Geography curriculum (which focused on world geography and included Australia, the Americas and Africa) but also in the History documents when these historical periods were in focus, as well as when Industrialisation and ‘development’ were examined. Within this context, the perspective adopted was usually Eurocentric, for example there was reference to ‘the discoveries’ of the ‘new countries’ in the Grade 11 History syllabus (MoEC, 2008). Finally, Europe was portrayed in economic terms when it was described as a ‘developed’ destination for immigrant workers from many Third World countries today (MoEC, 1997b, p. 39) but also as an economic power in comparison to others in the world; for example, students were asked to evaluate the economic power of united Europe in today’s world under a section of the Geography syllabus entitled ‘Europe a world economic, political and cultural power’ (MoEC, 1997b, p. 51).

### *Cultural representations of Europe*

Europe also acquired ample cultural content, especially in the History documents, but also in the ones for Religious Studies. For example, ancient Greece and Rome were presented as the cultural foundations of Europe and phenomena such as the Hellenic colonisation of the Mediterranean, Alexander’s influence and the Roman Empire were construed as events which unified culturally these areas and laid the foundations or were milestones for European civilisation. This was especially relevant to Christianity, which was cited in the Geography documents, as a key characteristic of the human geography of Europe (MoEC, 1997b). The cultural content ascribed to Europe was essentialised and reified since it was identified largely with language, religion, technology, scientific discoveries, customs and the fine arts. In addition, cultural content was ascribed to Europe through references to ‘important figures’ or ‘historical personalities’ with various accomplishments in these fields, especially in the History and Religious Studies documents, an approach which imbued these cultural representations with an elitist dimension e.g. to ‘mention important elements of the European civilisation’ (MoEC, 1997b, p. 51). Interestingly, ‘Europe’ was represented as culturally (as well as climatically and economically) both unified and diverse; for example one of aims in Geography was that students could divide Europe in North, South East and West ‘according to climatic, cultural and economic particularities’ and that ‘despite the particularities that Europe has in certain areas, it comprises a united whole’ (MoEC,

1997b, p. 37). Europe was also construed as at the crossroads of ideas and peoples because of its position between large areas of land in the northern hemisphere (MoEC, 1997b, p. 37). It must be noted that the Greek term for 'culture' used in the documents was *politismos* (and its derivatives) which is the equivalent term of 'civilisation' in English.

### ***Political representations of Europe***

Political content to Europe was largely located in the study of political organisations within Europe (Council of Europe, the Western, Eastern, Neutral and Non-Aligned Countries of Europe) (as opposed to economic organisations in which the European Union was included (see previous comment on the economic representations of Europe in the Geography documents). However, Europe as a political entity was also substantiated by content on the European Union, because it was presented as an organisation moving beyond its initial economic aims to a political entity protecting, through its institutions (which students were expected to name and explain) political values. This was evident also in how both the EU and the Council of Europe were considered to have been founded after World War II to work against conditions which would allow such wars in Europe again in the Geography, Civics and History documents. Indeed these political values were construed as European not only today but also historically through the French Revolution and the Enlightenment in the History documents. Europe was also represented as having undergone major political change after the end of the Cold War and especially during the 1990s but also as an arena of conflicting nationalisms or other interests e.g. one of the aims was for students to understand that 'the concentration of population in a small space [Europe] creates antagonisms and divisions. Thus the frontiers of the states of Europe are mainly political frontiers (established after political agreements' (MoEC, 1997b, p. 37). In the documents analysed political content was also ascribed to Europe through references to how frontiers were changing in Europe, especially during the 1990s in Eastern Europe. Though perceived as an achievement, especially after the political and geostrategic divisions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, European unification was also construed as an ongoing difficult process e.g. students were expected to refer to 'important problems which hinder European unification' (MoEC, 1997b, p. 51). However the political representations of Europe were smaller or less emphasised in comparison to its economic and cultural representations. It must also be noted that as a political entity, the term 'Europe' was used interchangeably with the term 'the EU', which was somewhat problematic because it reduced the size of Europe to EU member-states and excluded a number of the other European countries.

### ***Historical representations of Europe***

Historical representations of Europe were closely related to cultural ones and one could note that they fuelled each other with content. Even though historical content was located in all subject areas in focus, the vast majority of it was located in the History documents, largely due to the nature and chronological-linear structure of their content, but also the emphasis of this subject of Greek history and the understanding of Greek

history as part of European history. Key historical periods included were the Greek and Roman heritages, the Christianity, Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, Colonisation, the French Revolution, colonial rivalries, the two World Wars, the EU, the end of the Cold War and its political implications in Eastern Europe. In the Geography documents, a non-conflictual past was selected to represent Europe, with the exception of colonisation and World War II, the latter portrayed as setting the scene for the foundation of the EU and the Council of Europe, and the conflicts before and after the Cold War in Eastern Europe, processes also linked to the enlargement of the EU and the Council of Europe. This was in stark contrast with the History and Religious Studies documents, where the history of Europe was largely presented as a history of imperial, nationalist or religious rivalries through the centuries not only with other parts of the world but especially within Europe. This was particularly applicable in the study of the Byzantine period, during which numerous conflicts (military and political) occurred between Byzantium and neighbouring peoples, the Crusaders, the Arabs, the Roman Catholic Church. The documents analysed contained actually severe contradictions within and between subjects in their historical representations, since Europe was constructed as a 'developed' and an 'enlightened' source of cultural and political values for the rest of the world to imitate, but also as a continuous source of (largely religious) heresy and uncontrollable political and military power usually in opposition to local and national (small and weak) interests, be they Cypriot or Greek. However, the vast majority of curriculum content in History and Religious Studies concerned the Hellenic world in ancient, medieval and modern periods and Cyprus was treated as part of this Hellenic world but with somewhat different historical path at times, because of various conquests which differentiated Cyprus from 'mainland' Greece, namely Fragkokratia (French rule), Venetokratia (Venetian rule), Tourkokratia (Turkish rule), Agglokratia (English rule).

### **Discussion**

Representations of 'Europe' as described above were largely consistent in constructing Europe in general and the EU in particular as a space and a source of development and progress in political, economic and cultural ways, both for the rest of the world, but also for the local level (Cyprus and Greece according to the documents), historically and at present. However, these representations were also frequently negative, especially during the Medieval period (because of the Crusaders, the Schism and French and Venetian presence in Cyprus), but also during the period of the Greek Revolution and Greek Independence, when European [Great] powers (countries or empires) were evaluated according to their stance towards the Revolution and the Modern Greek State. 'Europe' thus conveniently acquired a negative or positive outlook according to perceived advantages or disadvantages it has incurred or could incur for Cyprus and Greece.

These findings are significant in that they both resonate with arguments of past research, as well as indicate some new issues for discussion. Firstly, Europe was represented in Eurocentric ways, since it was presented as a model and a source of progress, development, civilisation; this applied generally for cultural, political and economic ideas, but was also distinctly reiterated when it came to religion, and more particularly Christianity, since the latter was identified with Europe in both Religious Studies and



Geography documents. In addition, a conflictual representation of Europe was constructed in the text, in the sense that it was at times portrayed in positive terms and at others in negative terms, especially in its historical and political representations. In fact, in its historical representations, as explained above, 'Europe' was often construed as an 'other' or even an enemy. Similarly, Soysal and Antoniou (2000; 2005) found that the Greek and Turkish lower secondary history textbooks did not singularly differentiate the Ottoman (Turk) and Greek respectively as the 'other'; the Roman Catholic West also entered the historical narrative as a temporary 'other' when the Crusades, the Schism and the conquest of Constantinople/Istanbul were presented.

Moreover, the analysis indicated that especially in the cultural and historical representations, Greece was at times located within Europe and the 'West' and at others outside Europe and within the 'East' (especially as Byzantium). For example, in the Religious Studies documents, the 'West' was at times identified with 'Europe' and opposed to 'Orthodoxy' e.g. when students were anticipated to 'evaluate European humanism and understand orthodox humanism as [the] source of life' (MoEC, 2002, p. 891). At other points, Christianity was discursively divided as 'western' and 'eastern'. These are examples of how 'Europe' has been defined in different ways by historiography but also in curricula, both from within (in this case Greek and Greek-Cypriot curricula) and from the rest of Europe (see Slater 1995; Antoniou and Soysal 2005).

Even when Europe was presented and certain openings were created in the curriculum beyond the national or local context, 'Europe' was mobilised to fuel ethnocentric ideals and a national (Greek) identity, since it was evaluated as negative or positive based on grounds of national (Greek and Cypriot) interest. Thus, Europe was at times a conqueror or a 'Great Power' *against* the national and local, but at other times was a source of economic or political benefits *for* the national and local. For example, in the Religious Studies documents Orthodox Christianity was identified with a Greek national identity; in fact Antoniou and Soysal (2005) have argued that in Greek history textbooks 'the presentation of the Roman Catholic West as the 'other' is clearly a result of the importance attributed to the Orthodox Christian tradition as a defining national characteristic' (p. 117). The perspective of the social studies curricula thus remained ethnocentric, since references to Europe did not occur to teach about Europe as such, but to teach about the nation *via* Europe. Historical and cultural representations were particularly strong, not because of references to 'Europe' as such, but because of numerous references to Greece, which was construed as the cultural and historical foundation of Europe; since Cyprus was represented as historically and culturally Hellenic (especially in the History documents), this cultural and historical bond discursively mediated for Cyprus's Europeaness as well. Thus, 'Europe' was systematically mobilised to fuel a national (Greek-Orthodox) identity rather than to create a potential European identification which would include various 'others'.

The context of 'Europe' has so far been discursively used in educational policy and curricular documents to legitimise and justify the need for the ongoing Educational Reform of Greek-Cypriot public education (Philippou & Haggipavlou, 2010). The Educational Reform was actually launched in 2004, the year when the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the EU, but in fact the curriculum documents analysed in

this study were developed and have been in place since before EU membership whereas the subject-matter planning documents are more recent, but still refer to content from textbooks largely developed and published before 2004. This may partly explain the great similarities in the representations of Europe of this with previous studies (e.g. Philippou, 2004; Philippou, Latif and Karahasan, 2008). If the presence of 'Europe' is to be strengthened, it is suggested that this is conducted by means of diversification, so that representations of Europe as 'developed', 'progressive', the source of civilisation and modernity are perhaps present, but also problematised through post-structuralist and post-colonial critique as a concept historically linked with exclusions (c.f. Delanty, 1995; Said, 1993; Coulby & Jones, 1995). Such problematisation can diversify 'Europe' in the sense that they could acknowledge its historical and current diversity (e.g. referring to the different European states now comprising the EU; north-south divisions; diversity within European countries across time); its fluidity (e.g. changing frontiers across the centuries; changes focusing on the sociopolitical changes in the 1990s) and hybridity (e.g. cultural exchanges during the Crusades; problematisation of East and West divisions). Such conflictual representations need to be put forth for discussion and debate by students, rather than for rote learning. 'Europe' as a pedagogical tool would then provide ample ground for the student's own constructions of representations of 'Europe', rather than for their repeating of representations as constructed for them in the curricular documents analysed in this study.

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