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# ACCEPT PLURALISM

## The embodiment of tolerance in discourses and practices addressing cultural diversity in schools The case of Cyprus

Nicos Trimikliniotis, Corina Demetriou  
and Elena Papamichael  
SYMFILIOSI

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### ***3. National Case Studies - School Life Final Country Reports***



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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

**The embodiment of tolerance in discourses and practices  
addressing cultural diversity in schools**

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**Work Package3**

**D1.1 Country Reports on Tolerance and Cultural  
Diversity Discourses**

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## **Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)**

**ACCEPT PLURALISM** is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

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**Symfiliosi** is a non-profit non-governmental and non-partisan organisation registered in the Republic of Cyprus in 2005 which carries out research as well as activist work. Its research interests include immigration, asylum, racism, discrimination, homophobia, sex-trafficking, nationality and citizenship and reconciliation. Its activist work is centred around anti-racism and anti-nationalism with a focus on reconciliation between Cyprus' two large communities, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot community

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## Executive Summary

The report examines the processes, methods and practices of the Cypriot educational system as the embodiment of tolerance in discourses and practices addressing cultural diversity in schools. These are mediated by the perceptions of policy makers, the convictions of stakeholders involved in the processes and abilities of and tools made available to educationalists. In examining the nature of the educational system and particularly the way in which the system treats its minoritised individuals and groups, the philosophy which emerges is that of viewing diversity as a disadvantage and a deficiency that needs to be 'treated', against a backdrop of essentialising and reifying culture and ethnicity. The learning of the Greek language is prioritized, with assimilatory implications. The current model of intercultural education is based on contributions and additions by 'other cultures', whilst racism is construed as a pathologised individualistic attribute that may be challenged and combated through 'learning' about other cultures. At the same time, institutional and structural racism and inequalities are unacknowledged and ignored. Research shows that despite the rare instances of resistance and exhibitions of agency by some teachers and children to the dominant racist discourses and practices, institutional everyday racism operates in various ways and at various levels, negatively affecting the experiences of both the minoritised and majoritised groups and individuals involved.

The case studies examined in this Report highlight the policy responses, on the one hand, to the challenges posed by the integration of Roma children into the schooling system; and, on the other hand, to the problem of racial violence within schools. Interesting conclusions may be drawn from the way in which the authorities address these challenges which hardly go any further than the intensification of Greek language lessons. This approach is largely based on the deficiency model which assumes that children from a minority or migrant background are linguistically, culturally and socially 'deficient'. In the case of the Roma, the system appears inflexible and unable to adapt to their specialized needs, failing to recognise the Roma heritage as enrichment. This treatment must be understood in the wider context of the way the Greek-Cypriot schooling system deals with the ethnic 'Other' and the subordination of all to the ultimate cause of 'national survival'. In the case of the racial attacks, experts warn that the current impunity of the assailants, the tendency on the part of school authorities to ignore the racist element and to attribute violence to youth delinquency, will lead to intensification of the phenomenon. In any case, the Greek-Cypriot ideologies and discourses of ethnic hegemony which permeate the school curricula and the educational system as a whole are left intact and in some cases are aggravated by the politics of resentment against Turkish speakers.

The European debates and policy responses as regards migration have also informed the debates and policy responses in the field of education in Cyprus. There is educational knowledge derived from multicultural settings produced so that migrant and other ethnically different groups of students realize their educational potential beyond ethnocentric biases and thus opening up and creating the potential for a more tolerant pedagogic environment. Such logics and methods have been introduced via the Education Reform currently in the process of implementation. However, there are contradictions and structural barrier to change. For one, the tough immigration regime faced by migrants in Cyprus and the continuous and relentless hunt for irregular migrants has spilled over into education, in the form of policies essentially blocking access to education for the children of the undocumented migrants. Secondly, the political context of divided Cyprus haunted by historic ethnic conflict and the legalistic 'doctrine of necessity' subordinating education to 'national survival' is hardly the most accommodating environment for change. Thirdly, ethnic/racial, religious and cultural factors are conflated and intersected with social inequalities based on class and gender generating more complex biases and structural factors for the education system to address.

In Cyprus *national* politics at the micro and macro level are never far from policy development in the field of education. The comprehensive Educational Reform which begun to be discussed as from 2003, producing the major Report in 2004, was only effectively put to implementation in 2008, when a left wing pro-reconciliation candidate won the 2008 presidential elections and succeeded the previous

right wing nationalist president who had vehemently opposed the reform. The election of a left-wing president created fears amongst the far right elements of the political elite that another plan for the settlement of the Cyprus problem, similar to the Annan plan presented in 2004, would soon be tabled. In order to discredit such a plan and ensure its rejection, a number of political forces amongst the opposition began to undermine government policies as regards Turkish-Cypriots and migrants, using racist populism in order to label these policies as “too soft”. One of the policies attacked was the educational reform which was presented as an effort to ‘dehellenise’ education: the multicultural elements of the reform aimed to accommodate, accept and recognise ethnic, religious and cultural difference received the fiercest attack. The opposition to the reform quickly became organised and recruited members from across the board: the Church, the teachers, the parents association under the control of the nationalists and the Right, Ministry officials, party politicians and others.

The pace of implementation of the Reform was inevitably slowed down until it came to almost a complete halt under the current Minister of Education, who effectively acts as a caretaker minister pending the presidential elections in February 2012. The future of the Reform is thus left to be decided on the basis of the results of the next Presidential elections, the outcome of which cannot at this stage be predicted.

The economic crisis surfacing at the end of the 2010s raised the unemployment rate amongst the youth to unprecedented levels and produced discontent and frustration amongst the youth. The populist discourse of the right-wing politicians fell on fertile ground, as societal problems inevitably spill over into education. Schools are increasingly recruitment and breeding grounds for the far Right and Neo-Nazi groupings, spreading hatred and intolerance. There is however resistance in the increasingly multicultural school body and society. There is increasing polarisation; education is at the heart of the contestation, in what is a clash between opposite visions for the future as the Cypriot multicultural society and its educational institutions are reproducing duplets: tolerance *and* intolerance; multicultural *and* ethno-racist logics; respect for difference and resentment for the Other; emancipatory potential *and* social inequality/segregation. Research highlights the need for comprehensive reform of the education system rather than fragmentary measures such as intensive Greek language support lessons.

The report identifies an institutional tendency to adhere to formalistic, often legalistic and narrow interpretations of the principle of equality, ignoring or essentially rejecting special characteristics of the vulnerable and the historically disadvantaged groups that require special or preferential treatment. This tendency, a product of the conservative, legalistic and monolithic logic on which the ‘doctrine of necessity’ is premised, generates ideological intolerance based on an ethnically exclusionary and ultimately authoritarian logic.

The report concludes that it is essential to constantly rethink the methods and concepts, upon which educational policies are premised, particularly the concept of tolerance/intolerance, and to re-evaluate the situation and renew the conceptual tools to meet the new realities at Cypriot schools

## **Keywords**

Multiculturalism, citizenship, diversity, identity, migration, nationalism, religion, tolerance, Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots, Roma, Greek-Cypriots, community, minority, intolerance, racism, discrimination.



## 1. Introduction

This report examines cultural, ethnic and religious diversities in school life and in education, focusing mainly on Roma pupils as a special category of the ethnic-religious ‘other’ and the way the education system addresses the most extreme forms of intolerance and racial violence in schools. In the field of education, the issue of (in)tolerance, maltreatment of minorities and ethnic or ‘racial’ discrimination has not, for historical reasons, received the required attention, as education was deemed by the Cypriot Constitution to be a ‘communal’ affair, to be left to the ‘Communal Chambers’ of the two main communities of Cyprus, the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots to regulate. The Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture emerged in 1965 after the ‘withdrawal’ of the Turkish Cypriots from the administration in 1963-64. Education nevertheless remained ‘communal’ in character for all those citizens who were deemed to be part of the Greek-Cypriot community,<sup>1</sup> albeit it assumed a ‘national’ character for the Greek-Cypriots. Inevitably, the crisis resulted in a ‘politicisation’ of the monitoring systems and the collection of data is now deemed as ‘politically sensitive’. Moreover, the presence of migrant labourers and other migrants in Cyprus is a rather new phenomenon that started in the 1990s; thus, the policy concerns as regards non-Cypriot children remain rather undeveloped.

The debates over the comprehensive educational reform (‘the Reform’), which has been on the table for over seven years now, and the virulent reactions to it by sections of the conservative and nationalist Right illustrate the polarisation that cuts across Greek-Cypriot society. The Reform is comprehensive and covers all aspects of education at primary and secondary level. This paper deals only with aspects related to the aspiration to render Cyprus’ ethnocentric educational system genuinely multicultural and bring about reconciliation in an effort to render tolerance, acceptance and recognition of the ‘other’ as core values, mechanisms and means of educating citizens in the making. The relation between tolerance/toleration, multiculturalism, acceptance and reconciliation is not straightforward; on the contrary, it is shown by various studies, including some on the Cypriot context, these concepts are not necessarily positively interconnected between them but can be antagonistic, contradictory and contested.

Any study on the subject requires that we address the three interconnected but distinct levels of analysis over the reform as connected to questions of tolerance, acceptance and recognition of the ‘other’:

- First, there is the pedagogical level, which is about creating the structures and processes for reform i.e. the training of teachers, the creation of the toolkits (values, principles, tools, techniques and teaching practices etc.) and the preparation and introduction of the content-related materials (new curricula, textbooks and resources etc.).
- Secondly, there are the actual educational institutions which are made up of different actors within a highly bureaucratically centralized, but in practice contradictory education system. At the core of this, in terms of policy and decision-making is the Ministry of Education with its departments at each level (i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary) and the various educational institutions (schools and the attached services). This paper explores how the various systemic factors interact to (re)produce, as a matter of educational outcome, the dialectics of tolerance/intolerance, inclusion/exclusion, equality/inequality, cooperation/conflict etc. This requires a closer examination of the institutional processes and discourses, generalised/specialised and professional services dealing with intolerance, exclusion, segregation, and racism at each level of governance. Moreover, it requires an

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<sup>1</sup> This included the three constitutionally recognised ‘religious groups’, who opted to be part of the numerically larger Greek-Cypriot community (80%) rather than the smaller Turkish-Cypriot community (18%).

analysis of what is happening at the receiving end of the education i.e. at school, in the classroom and at the playground as well as during the school-related extracurricular activities.<sup>2</sup>

- The third level of analysis relates to the processes for the articulation, dissemination and the social embeddedness of the notions of tolerance/acceptance in social institutions, with a focus on educational establishments. One further needs to explore the extent to which education and schooling accurately reflect social realities outside the school. In this respect, the public debate over the Reform, at the unofficial and local level, needs to be scrutinised: one would need to address the *terms of the debates*, the processes and practices of censorship, exaggeration and distortion in the public representation of the nature, the methods, the processes and reactions to reform.

The three levels are designed to work towards the same direction, if the Reform is to succeed. However, this is not necessarily so; in fact there is a disjuncture and distortion as different actors, organised groups, representations and interests interact at each of the three levels.

The Reform is opposed by the church, right-wing conservative and nationalist sections of the teachers, the parents and political parties who view it as a ‘conspiracy’ to ‘de-Hellenize’ education.<sup>3</sup> The issue that attracted most of the controversy in the public debates is the curriculum revision and generally the way in which the lesson of History is taught at school. The existing History curriculum and textbooks, which the Reform has already begun to comprehensively revise, had been criticised by scholars and by international organisations such as the UN and the Council of Europe for containing offensive references and inflammatory language (High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2007; U.S. State Department, 2005; Makriyianni and Psaltis, 2007; Philippou and Makriyianni, 2004).

In 2010 there was a new twist to the progress in implementing the Reform. A blow to the efforts to legitimise the Reform in the eyes of the conservative sectors of Greek-Cypriot media and society was the election of a hard line nationalist at the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, who immediately upon assuming office scrapped the new (revised) history textbooks which had up until then been used in Turkish Cypriot schools and replaced them with the old style anti-Greek mould. This development strengthened the position of the opponents of the Reform, who are claiming that it is ridiculous to reform History teaching to comply with the logic of reconciliation, when ‘the other side’ is preaching hate. Despite the doctrinal centrality of forgiveness and unconditional love in the Christian teaching, the prevailing educational doctrine is that of leading ‘national struggles’ as part of the traditional ‘ethnarchic’ role of the church; hence the archbishop of the Orthodox Church is amongst the most ardent opponents of Reform and his rhetoric has a strong element of ethno-religious intolerance.

On the other side, there is increasing frustration and criticism from the supporters of the Reform over the pace and depth of Reform. At the time of writing, discussions amongst stakeholders on the future of the history teaching continued. On the face of it, it appears that the current Minister of Education, appointed about a year ago, has given up on the Reform, having essentially pulled the plug on the process in secondary schooling. The progress and process of implementing the Reform is not devoid of politics. In the forthcoming presidential elections of February 2012, the candidate of the Right

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<sup>2</sup> However, given that our research is only based on secondary research, rather than primary research, we can only draw on what is already researched.

<sup>3</sup> Indicative of the negative climate prevalent in 2009, when the Reform had just started to be implemented, was a circular issued by the primary school teachers’ union POED urging its members to refuse to implement the targets set by the Ministry of Education for the development of a culture of peaceful coexistence with the Turkish Cypriots, and especially the proposed measure of organising visits by Turkish Cypriot teachers and pupils. The circular had been criticised by the Equality Body. Following this, the teachers issued another circular reiterating their position against the exchange of visits with Turkish Cypriots.

which is opposing the Reform is leading the polls.<sup>4</sup> The current Minister of Education has already agreed with the secondary education teachers' union, the leadership of which has strong far right leanings, not to introduce the new curricula in the third year of secondary schools. In the current climate of intolerance and xenophobia, which is aggravated by the economic crisis, this kind of stalling will almost certainly impact negatively on the Reform and will be interpreted by the opponents of the Reform as a victory upon which they can build.

Trimikliniotis and Demetriou (2011) dealt with two major factors which condition the question of tolerance in Cyprus: The 'Cyprus problem' and migration (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou, 2011). Although education was affected by these two factors in different ways and at varying degrees, in essence the social tensions and ideological divisions developing as a result of the Cyprus problem have essentially shaped the debates, and eventually the policies and their implementation, as regards not only the ethnic communities of Cyprus but also the children of the migrants. The second major structural barrier is the social position of (subaltern) migrants and other marginalized groups, such as the Roma, (Trimikliniotis 2001a: 17-50). *Social position* refers to the combined effect of the way these groups are being stratified in society (economic, class, 'racial', cultural and legal status), all of which are matters for this study. This overall developing framework has also affected the education of the Cypriot Romani children, whose migration from north to south within the island in the 1990s created new challenges for the educational system. At the heart of Cypriot education lays the ethnocentric model, a major structural problem and a barrier in properly tackling discrimination in education against migrants and minority groups.

The Ministry of Education and Culture came about only after the constitutional crisis of 1963, when the Turkish-Cypriots withdrew from the administration of the Republic. As a result, the Ministry's very existence is premised upon the "doctrine of necessity"<sup>5</sup> (see Persianis 1996). According to Cypriot constitution, educational matters are classified as 'personal laws' and are thus left to each of the two communities to regulate under the Communal Chambers. In fact education had been divided since the British colonial rule, which took over and "modernised" the Ottoman millet system and allowed for separate education on the basis of religion, under the leadership of the Orthodox Church. The Church or the '*Ethnarchy*' was the traditional political leader, whose head, the Archbishop, led the flock under the millet system. Today, the public schools in Cyprus are as ethnocentric and religious as they were decades ago, as the (Christian Orthodox) religion forms a central part of the educational system. All schools are involved in activities of collective worship and each classroom has a Byzantine icon on the wall. Confessions are regularly carried out in most schools, some of which have a church and/or a confession room inside their premises. Many schools are named after saints, who are pictured on the schools' emblem and uniforms.

Both primary and secondary education is compulsory and free for all persons, irrespective of their financial situation, racial or ethnic origin, colour or religion or belief. At a formal or official level, as far as the 'right to education' is concerned, 'equality before the law' is upheld as a cornerstone of the 'rule of law'. Article 20 of the Cypriot Constitution provides for the right to education for Cypriots and foreigners alike.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, various intolerant practices as well as various types of discrimination may well persist at the level of practice and everydayness. More 'sophisticated'

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<sup>4</sup> This means postponing the reform indefinitely – finishing off the hope of reform will lay such foundations in the ground that even if the candidate of the right were to win, it would be difficult to reverse it.

<sup>5</sup> In 1963 the Cypriot President Archbishop Makarios proposed 13 amendments to the Constitution, limiting the communal rights of the Turkish Cypriots, who withdrew from the administration of the State in protest. Since then, the administration of the Republic has been carried out by the Greek Cypriots. In order to cope with this anomaly, in 1964 the Supreme Court ruled that the functioning of the government must continue on the basis of the "doctrine of necessity" (Attorney General of the Republic v Mustafa Ibrahim (1964) CLR). A decade later, this doctrine was extended to cover the measures adopted in order to address the situation created by the Turkish invasion.

<sup>6</sup> The Attorney General of the RoC issued an Opinion to this effect on 06.08.2002. The constitutional provision of Article 20 was held to be in line with Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

informal policies or social processes, particularly at a micro level, may produce indirect discriminatory results.

This is nowhere more aptly illustrated than in the authorities' persistent policy of demanding from all non-Cypriot children to declare the address of their parents in order to enrol at school, so as for the immigration authorities to check the legality of their stay. This policy remains in place in spite of repeated criticisms from the Equality Body (Anti-discrimination Authority, 2011) and from ECRI (ECRI, 2006). The policy assumption is that the exercise of the Republic's sovereignty is superior to the children's right of access to education, which is sacrificed for the benefit of the 'higher value' of state sovereignty. The rigid immigration regime and the relentless hunt for undocumented migrants are deemed by the authorities as elements necessary for the smooth operation of the state, as the blurred situation regarding legitimacy in Cyprus' state of exception has produced an overt preoccupation with the question of sovereignty. The consequences of this policy, although by their very nature hard to quantify, can be devastating: all children of undocumented migrants are inevitably not attending school, prey to traffickers and drug dealers during the long hours of unsupervised waiting for their parents to finish work, eventually developing into an 'army' of illiterate youth and adults living in the margins of society, unemployed or performing low status and low paid jobs that no-one else wants, surviving in whichever way they can, which can potentially include crime. Within the same frame, the first ever National Action Plan on Integration of Migrants adopted by the government in 2010 excludes from its scope undocumented migrants, i.e. the persons who mostly need to integrate suggesting that the authorities are losing sight of the fact that undocumented migrants are a part of society that will not disappear in the wake of the lack of measures addressing their vulnerable situation.

**Table 1: Number and percentage of foreign pupils attending Greek Cypriot schools 2005-2010**

School year	Number of foreign pupils	Percentage
2005-2006	3,759	6,7
2006-2007	3,951	7,3
2007-2008	4,040	7,7
2008-2009	4,605	9,0
2009-2010	5,916	11,7

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, Annual Report 2010.

Historically, the issue of tolerance, maltreatment of minorities and ethnic or 'racial' discrimination in education did not receive the required attention, as the field of education was deemed by the Cypriot Constitution to be a 'communal' affair and left to the 'Communal Chambers' of the two main communities of Cyprus, the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots to regulate. The issues of intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination were inevitably overshadowed by the historical conflict on the island. The 'economic miracle' of Cyprus in the 1980s, the resulting labour shortages, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the opening up of the borders between north and south of Cyprus in 2003 which had been sealed for over 30 years and, finally, EU accession, all had their impact in rendering the school population 'multicultural'. The concern as regards the needs of the migrant children in education is rather recent, since migration into Cyprus is a rather new phenomenon that started in the

1990s. Reflecting the recent demographic changes, the foreign population of Greek-Cypriot schools is steadily rising from 2005. The increasing trend follows partly the increasing migration flows but also the fact that the migrants residing in Cyprus are gradually acquiring a more settled and permanent existence.

Over the past two decades, this 'inter-ethnic' mix of the school population opened up the scope for 'inter-cultural education' at schools, however this is confined to a school-wide or micro-level and not at a level of macro planning. Soon enough, however, a conflict emerged between the notions of 'inter-cultural education' on the one hand, and the ethnocentric core of the educational system on the other. Initially, the Ministry recognised the need for 'inter-cultural education', but historically opposed moves to create a genuinely multicultural system at the national level that treats all cultures as equally valuable. In fact, the Education Minister at that time was frank: although adamant about the need for 'inter-cultural education', rejected vehemently any move to create a genuine multicultural system that treated all cultures as equal and valuable stating that he would never even consider taking steps to "discolour Cypriot education", since Greek children of Cyprus need to know who they are and where they must go" (Trimikliniotis, 2001: 30-31). In the 2000s, in recognition of the fact that the school population was going to be permanently multi-ethnic, discussions about comprehensively reforming the educational system culminated in 2003 in a proposal for educational reform. The reform proposal aimed at creating an inclusive education system that does not discriminate or exclude non Greek-Cypriots, abandoning its "Helleno-ethnocentric" and "Orthodox-Christiano-centric" orientation which, in spite of the various reforms initiated, remained to a great extent intact and traditionally knowledge-centred (Commission for Educational Reform, 2004a:16). The aims and structure of the national curricula were considered to require "renewal and modernisation". The proposal noted that there were texts with "many elements of traditional Helleno-ethnocentric philosophy" which needed to be reformed in light of the accession of Cyprus to a multi-cultural globalised and democratic European union", the multi-cultural make up of the Cypriot student population and the prospect for the reunification of Cyprus (Commission for Educational Reform, 2004a:82).

The debates over the Reform and the virulent reactions by sections of the conservative and nationalist Right of the political spectrum over the past eight years illustrate the polarisation that cuts across Greek-Cypriot society. The history of the Greek-Cypriot education is a strong case of "using education for political ends", in other words the legitimisation of Helleno-centric education (Persianis, 1996: 26).

The process of implementing the Reform has highlighted the contradictions and obstacles ahead, as it hit on structural factors of the 'order of things' and the conservative syndicates at the Ministry of Education bureaucracy, right-wing teachers and the parental lobby who oppose change. This became particularly evident in 2008 with the election of a new President of the Republic, who pledged to proceed more decisively with the implementation of the Reform. Thus, during the same year, the Council of Ministers approved the "Policy Report of the Ministry of Education for Multicultural Education", which was based on the Report of the Educational Reform, providing for a number of measures. However, even though the measures were aimed at "integrating foreign pupils" into the "democratic school", they were mostly addressing the linguistic difficulties of the non-Greek speakers amongst the pupils. Despite the fact that the new left-wing government considers the Reform to be the flagship of its policies which will leave a lasting imprint of its five-year term in office,<sup>7</sup> the curriculum measures which were in the process of implementation, have been stalled due to the lack of political will at Ministerial level. The school curricula which have been revised are being used only in primary school and in the first two years of secondary school (Ministry of Education, 2010a:328).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This is often re-iterated in the Council of Ministers meetings. In the final review of his presidency, President Christofias referred to this at the same time as announcing that he does not intend to contest the Presidential elections in February 2013.

<sup>8</sup> The measures are: Parallel classes for fast acquisition of the Greek language through intensive instruction; in-service training for teachers teaching Greek as a second or/and a foreign language organised by the Pedagogical Institute; preparation of a test that will be used by all schools, in order to rank and classify pupils to the appropriate level; preparation of an

The linguistic support offered to non-Greek speaking children focuses on teaching Greek as a second language. Newly-arrived migrant students are placed in a mainstream classroom a year lower than their age level as ‘auditors’, excluded from their peers. They attend mainstream lessons regularly, except for two weekly periods of 40 minutes, when they are offered Greek language support lessons for two years. These were traditionally taught by teachers with little training in second language or bilingual education; however the Pedagogical Institute is increasingly involved in training for these purposes and the picture is therefore beginning to change for the better (Trimikliniotis, 2012). Children are organized in small groups based on their level of Greek knowledge, including various ages and linguistic backgrounds. Beyond the Greek language classes, the provision for the non-Greek speakers and the non-orthodox Christian students is usually exhausted in ad hoc measures such as exemptions from certain lessons (e.g. Religious Instruction), the offer of Turkish lessons for the Turkish speakers in selected schools, or state subsidies in order for selected pupils to attend one of the private non-Greek speaking schools.<sup>9</sup> Only two of the national minorities (the Armenians and the Maronites) have special curriculum taught at their schools to address, at least partly, the particular features of their identity and culture. A third recognised minority, the Latins, do not have own schools or special curriculum offered at the schools which they attend. The same applies to the Roma who, although they are since 2009 recognised as a national minority, they are not taught their own history or culture. Like the Latins, the Roma do not have their own schools either but their enrolment at schools is not spread throughout the country, as is the case with the other national minorities: their housing segregation inevitably leads to their school segregation.

The key question to address in the two case studies is how the education system addresses the groups in society who are considered or become racialised at school and in society at large. The notion of acceptance/tolerance in education is intimately connected to the ways in which the non-privileged groups, and in particular the ethnically different from the majority groups, are incorporated in the system. We focus on the three most under-privileged groups which are racialised, otherised and minoritised:<sup>10</sup>

- The Turkish-Cypriots and the Roma.<sup>11</sup> The latter are considered to be part of the Turkish-Cypriot community.
- The subaltern, or the underprivileged as opposed to the privileged, migrants.

The treatment of these groups raises questions of racism and of how the education system addresses racism and racial/ethnic violence in schools. To analyse this, we focus on two interconnected dimensions of the subject: first *the current state of affairs* as regards the policy and praxis of (in)tolerance/acceptance and incorporation/exclusion of these groups; and secondly, the promise and praxis of the Reform, which pledges a very different approach to dealing with such matters.

(Contd.) \_\_\_\_\_

induction guide for the new coming foreign pupils which is translated in eight languages (English, Turkish, Russian, Georgian, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Ukrainian and Arabic), with basic information for the pupils and the parents about the educational system of Cyprus; addition of intercultural elements to the new Curriculum and the school textbooks that will be prepared within the framework of the changes on the structure and the content of education; production and creation of appropriate educational and pedagogical material, as well as the usage of material that has been produced in Greece.

9 For details on the measures introduced, see the 2010 Annual Report of the Ministry of Education at [http://www.moec.gov.cy/etisia-ekthesi/pdf/Annual\\_report\\_2010\\_EN.pdf](http://www.moec.gov.cy/etisia-ekthesi/pdf/Annual_report_2010_EN.pdf)

10 This paper will not embark on a semantic distinction between the three terms. The crucial element that underlies any conceptualisation is the process of marginalisation and exclusion of the ethnic/social groups under consideration.

11 Estimates place the total Roma population in the whole of Cyprus between 500-2500, of which around 560-570 are speculated to be living in nomadized groups in the south (Symeou, Karagiorgi, Roussounidou, & Kaloyirou, 2009; Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2009b).

## **2. Case study I: The Roma - Reproducing Racism, Ethnic/Racial and Social Inequality and Exclusion**

### **2.1. [Turkish-Cypriot] Roma in the Greek-Cypriot schooling system<sup>12</sup>**

A number of studies demonstrate that, in essence, there are strong elements of intolerance towards 'the Other' 's religion, ethnicity and language in the very way the ethnocentric education system is constructed: the absolute segregation between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in the Republic's Constitution which is supposed to provide due recognition to each of community as a separate entity, has been and remains a central locus of contestation over state legitimacy and a source of intolerance. The dialectic is between two alternative and conflicting types of intolerance: on the one hand, the Greek-Cypriot ideologies and discourses of ethnic hegemony, whose goal has been the subordination the Turkish-Cypriots as a mere *minority* by *de-recognising them as a community*; on the other hand, the intolerant Turkish-Cypriot separatist trend has led to the creation of an ethno-racial segregation in a territory of hegemony in the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC).<sup>13</sup> The few hundred Turkish-Cypriot and Roma children who attend Greek-Cypriot schools in the south follow the Greek-Cypriot curriculum except for the lessons of language, religious education and history (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2009a). For the year 2009/2010 the Statistical Service of the Republic has recorded 158 Turkish- Cypriot students in primary education, 246 in secondary education and 61 in tertiary education. In spite of the fact that Cyprus has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) since 1966,<sup>14</sup> which obliges states to "prevent, prohibit and eradicate all practices of racial segregation", as expressed in General Comment 19 of ICERD, there is still segregation of the Roma. In part this appears to be an unintended consequence of policy and in part reflecting discriminatory attitudes, the 'cultural capital' and socio-economic and family conditions of the Roma in Cyprus. The Roma children continue to be treated as pupils with special language requirements, in spite of the fact that Cyprus has ratified a number of international conventions on human rights<sup>15</sup> as well as on specific rights in the field of education.<sup>16</sup>

The officially declared policy is to take action to combat segregation and on occasion the Ministry of Education has been particularly drastic in taking measures to avoid segregation and the creation of ghetto-based schools. However, there is a high concentration of Turkish-speaking pupils (mainly Roma and Turkish Cypriots) in particular schools, attributed mainly to the concentration of migrants, Turkish-Cypriots and Roma in certain (impoverished) residential areas. More than half of the Roma pupils attending public schools today are concentrated in one school, the 18th Primary School in Limassol, which is the second largest city in Cyprus, with more than 50 Roma pupils out of a total of 166 pupils. There is generally little connection between policy-making and the fact that the Roma are Cypriot citizens with rights under the anti-discrimination/ human rights laws. At local level, some elements of multicultural education and teacher training for primary and secondary education have

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<sup>12</sup> Policies and measures adopted are intended to address the needs of the 'Turkish speakers'. This category includes mostly the Roma, who are constitutionally part of the Turkish Cypriot Community but in reality a separate community with its own socio-cultural characteristics, but also other Turkish speakers such as the Kurds, the Turks (from Turkey) and the Turkish Cypriots. In the education statistics, all Turkish speakers are treated as one single unit; no separate data is kept for the different national/ethnic origins comprising this unit.

<sup>13</sup> This entity is not recognised as a state by any country or organisation except Turkey.

<sup>14</sup> The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) of March 7 1966, was ratified and incorporated as Law 12/67, as amended by Laws 11/92, 6(III)/95 and 28(III)/99.

<sup>15</sup> Convention of the United Nations against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (ratified by Law 235/90 and Law 35(111)/93). Also Cyprus ratified the European Convention against Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, together with Protocols No. 1 and 2. (Rat. Law No. 24/89 and 8(III)/97).

<sup>16</sup> The Convention against Discrimination in Education (ratified by Law 18/1970).

been introduced to cope with an increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural setting, but this is still at an early stage.

Overall, children from the migrant communities, especially from the communities of the subaltern migrants which form over 90% of all migrants coming from EU and third countries, remain in a marginal position, are segregated. There is systematic denial of racism as a systemic problem that needs to be combated. Despite the Ministry's policy of promoting non-segregation, there are instances of intense segregation between Greek-Cypriot and minoritised groups within and between schools. For example, the Faneromeni Primary School of Nicosia consists of non-Greek-Cypriot pupils in 2010 and many inner-city schools are attended by high percentages of vulnerable pupils due to the concentration of migrants and asylum-seekers in areas where rents are inexpensive.

According to a case study from 2007, Greek-Cypriot parents try to move their children to other schools when they see that in the school attended by their child there is a high concentration of migrant or non-Greek-Cypriot pupils;<sup>17</sup> if they fail to move their children to another school, they instruct them to avoid contact with Roma children. According to the school's headmaster, Greek-Cypriot parents react very negatively to the fact that Turkish-Cypriot and Roma students are studying there, claiming that "gypsy children have something violent attached to their character" (Trimikliniotis 2003), whilst many Greek-Cypriot children's construction of the Roma children demonstrate racial prejudice (Trimikliniotis 2003; Spyrou 2004; Zembylas 2011). The majority of school teachers (80%) believe that, although knowledge of the language is the key to underperformance, it is not the only contributing factor. It is apparent that 'family and socio-economic problems' penetrate school life with a vengeance. Studies show there is segregation between schools, in part reflecting the wealth or poverty of the surrounding neighbourhood with certain schools becoming the schools of the poor, the migrants, the Turkish-Cypriots and the Roma. A large number of children attending these schools come from families under the supervision of the Social Welfare Services (e.g. families with divorced parents or where a parent is serving prison sentences), with problems that had been in existence before the arrival of large numbers of Turkish-speaking children (Spyrou, 2004).

In another study from 2003, the headmaster of the 18<sup>th</sup> primary school, which is the school with the highest Roma concentration in the country, rejected any claims of discrimination but was at the same time was critical of the systemic failure, recognising that many children were unable to integrate into the school system: "A lot of gypsies learned to read and write but up to a point. What puzzles us is that they don't integrate. They don't feel that this school has rules which they have to obey" (Trimikliniotis, 2003).

Studies conducted between 2008 and 2011 illustrate that serious problems of intolerance, racial segregation and multiple forms of racial exclusion and prejudice persist (Trimikliniotis 2008; Symeou, Karagiorgi, Roussounidou and Kaloyirou, 2009; Zembylas 2010; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2011; Zembylas and Lesta, 2010). Efforts to develop inclusive education as regard the Roma and promote reconciliation with Turkish-Cypriots, including the Cypriot Roma, meet with resistance from segments of the teachers, some of whom would openly admit to being racist:

"Greek-Cypriot teachers perceive Turkish-speaking children in racialised, ethnicized and classed ways, and the socio-political structures in Cyprus influence teachers' negative discourses and practices towards these children. ... [I]n this study several teachers say they are racist, claiming that they are justified to act in these ways in light of the political situation in Cyprus; in other words, there is not a 'mismatch' between spoken account and actual practice. Teachers' perceptions, then, entail a sense of 'right' to be racist,

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17 Their research is based on an empirical study of one primary school in Limassol with a high concentration of non-indigenous pupils. To quote the research: "the head teacher reported that the observed school used to be: a high profile school and everyone in the area considered it to have high standards where children could acquire the necessary academic skills. More recently, due to the increasing number of registrations from non-indigenous pupils, many Greek Cypriot parents have stopped sending their children to this school" (Panayiotopoulos and Nicolaidou, 2007:69).

because this ‘right’ is perceived as a defence mechanism against Turkish efforts to dominate all over Cyprus and change its demographic character” (Zembylas, 2010c).

Another study<sup>18</sup> illustrates that Roma children tend to be marginalized in school, despite official policies of non-segregation and the introduction of supportive measures. Teacher accounts reflect anxiety and prejudice when teaching Roma children, as they feel ill-equipped and trained to deal with practical, everyday classroom challenges. As it takes place at the moment, and despite progress made as a result of the Reform, exclusion mechanisms operate against Roma children. They conclude that “for education to become inclusive for all pupils, teacher training must face, deconstruct and bring to the fore teacher prejudices and processes of discrimination, thus considering teachers as reflective individuals and professionals who can make a difference.”

A serious problem is the resentment amongst large sections of the Greek-Cypriot population, including teachers, students and parent. Measures which form part of policy reform aimed at including and encouraging tolerance, acceptance and understanding are often mediated, even obstructed by the politics of resentment. After all, there is some truth in Stalin’s infamous insistence that “cadres decide everything.”<sup>19</sup> In one of his studies, Zembylas (2011: 394) quotes a school principal admitting:

‘The Turkish-speaking children are not completely accepted here because of the Cyprus Issue and ‘the negative feelings of Greek-Cypriots against the Turks’. In fact, she acknowledged that this situation was simply ‘tolerated’ at this school against the will of Greek-Cypriot teachers and students, because it was a political decision of the government to allow the enrolment of Turkish-speaking children. ... These children have a different culture, different habits. They are becoming more and more accepted, but their ethnic origin always sticks out. They have a Turkish origin, you know . . . with the occupation of our country, this influences our feelings about them. They come here and they have all these benefits from the government. We don’t like that . . . We don’t really have a choice, we simply tolerate this situation.

Illuminating is the school principal’s perception of ‘tolerance’:

I mean we don’t like that these children receive all these benefits from the government and take advantage of the system, but there is nothing we can do about it. I, as a principal, have complained to the Ministry many times, but I have been told that this is a political decision that no one seems to like and yet everyone is forced to accept it . . . We respect that these children are different . . . they have different religious and cultural beliefs and habits that we cannot accept, because this is a Greek school . . . but we have to enculturate them, if possible. We teach our [Greek-Cypriot] children to respect them, but up to a point. We are the majority and they are the minority and they also need to learn to respect us, but I don’t see this happening. We need to tolerate their culture but there are limits to our tolerance.

The research findings as regard sharing school space among Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-speaking students are rather bleak. There is strong evidence of social segregation; Turkish-speaking students consistently sit by themselves in homogeneous groups, isolated during the breaks and school excursions, whilst the majoritised Greek-Cypriot students strongly resist or simply refuse to sit next to Turkish-speaking students, despite some teachers’ efforts who eventually give up. Zembylas (2011, 394-395) finds that

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18 The study reflects on the experiences gained from the implementation of a training project (INSETRom) in the Greek Cypriot educational system, see Symeou et al (2009), available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/gYv4xuTmPdSQQdaRk7pD/full>

19 See Stalin (1935/1976).

“the majoritised students used humiliating and insulting language towards Turkish-speaking students, particularly towards the Roma; they resented even being near those students and used the expression ‘Yiax’, an indication of disgust and intense dislike”.

The issue is not confined to the treatment of the Roma, but extends to the way Turkish-speakers in general, but also poor migrant children are dealt with in education institutions from nurseries to universities.<sup>20</sup> Research in three primary schools considers children’s construction and experience of racism and nationalism among a sample of Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-speaking children. These children’s identities are racialised and ethnicized from a young age, connected to specific social processes relating to the development of understandings about racist and nationalist practices. Notions of tolerance, acceptance and inclusion of the Turkish-Cypriot and Roma children must be understood in the wider context of the way the Greek-Cypriot schooling system deals with the ethnic ‘Other’. Research conducted over the last decade explores issues related to diversity, exclusion and racism in the sphere of everydayness; mostly qualitative, studies are preoccupied with children’s constructions of ‘self’ and ‘other’; teachers’ understandings of diversity; and, racialization processes and discrimination practices within schools. Tolerance of diversity is met at low levels in the representations of and discourses about diversity found in participants’ accounts.

Studies have extensively explored Greek-Cypriot children’s constructions of the ‘other’. Fifth- and sixth-grade children interviewed about their views of Sri Lankan and Filipino domestic workers demonstrated understandings that included stereotypes, prejudices and ignorance (Spyrou, 2009). A quantitative study with children of the same age (Spyrou, 2006c) showed that they had an overall negative picture of foreigners; only a minority were positive towards living with ‘foreign’ people in Cyprus. Another study combining quantitative and qualitative data, focused on ten-year-old Greek-Cypriot children’s social representations of various ethnic out-groups (Philippou, 2006). Greeks and Turks held the exact opposite positions of absolute positive and negative attributions, a binary often used as a tool to evaluate other groups. Even migrant children’s choices of their favourite and least favourite countries reflected stereotypical dichotomies of the progressive West-North and the backward East-South which also appeared to influence their everyday relationships (Theodorou, 2011a).

A study combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies investigated the ideological perceptions, stances and feelings of 1,281 Greek-Cypriot students aged 10-16 towards migrants and identified a polyphony of repertoires (Zembylas & Lesta, 2010). More than half of the participants (54%) expressed negative feelings about migrants such as ‘antipathy, indifference, disgust, avoidance and fear’, and constructed them as ‘dirty, bad, dangerous, uncivilized and criminals’ and ‘a threat to national identity’ (Zembylas & Lesta, 2010, p. 7). While some recognized and named their behaviours and discourses as racist and discriminatory, others did not realize their racist effects. However, a quarter of participants referred to respect, appreciation, admiration, compassion and sympathy towards migrants, whom they considered to be equal to Cypriots and were willing to relate to them interpersonally (Zembylas & Lesta, 2010). Reports about racialised incidents in a school with a diverse pupil population are also met in a study by Panayiotopoulos and Nicolaidou (2007), who highlight the manifestation of racist incidents and bullying because of dress, financial status and skin colour that were described in their interviews with children and parents from various ethnic backgrounds.

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20 Indicative of this is the decision by the majority of the secondary teachers union, OELMEK, responded to issued a Ministry circular declaring year 2009-2010 year of reconciliation between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots: they issued a statement condemning the policy calling upon their members to refuse to implement the relevant Ministry circular. See Zembylas et al (2010).

Most studies focusing on a single vulnerable group concern Turkish-speaking<sup>21</sup> pupils, including Turkish-Cypriots and Roma, attending Greek-Cypriot schools in the south (Demetriou & Trimikliniotis, 2006; Spyrou, 2004; Symeou et al., 2009; Trimikliniotis, 2003; Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2009a; Zembylas, 2010a, 2010c, 2010e, in press). Spyrou (2004) identified serious problems due to the inappropriate curriculum, the lack of a common language for communication, teachers' and Greek-Cypriot parents' essentialist views of Roma culture and Turkish-speaking children, as well as racist practices of scapegoating, exclusion, name-calling and labelling. Other research (Demetriou & Trimikliniotis, 2006; Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2009a) pointed to the implications of such assumptions and practices for the Roma children's poor educational performance and school attendance. The study also found that policymakers' perceptions of Roma children are similar to their perceptions of migrant children, even though the Roma are Cypriot citizens and are entitled to education in Turkish – one of the two official languages of the Republic of Cyprus. The Third ECRI Report on Cyprus (2006) also reported that prejudice and rejection from the local communities resulted in discrimination of Roma children in access to education.

Ethnographic studies in three primary schools with mixed school population and particularly with large numbers of Turkish-speaking pupils, examined children's and teachers' discourses, highlighting the intersection between emotion and race/ethnicity and the processes of racialization and ethnicization at the school level (Zembylas, in press). Drawing on data from the same project, Zembylas (2010a) analysed Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-speaking children's constructions of racism and nationalism and shows how these intersecting processes result in particular identity positions becoming institutionalized. Elsewhere, Zembylas (2010f) demonstrates how the racialization and ethnicization of school emotional spaces, embedded in institutional, teacher and children discourses and practices, contributes to the promotion of 'an emotional culture of resentment' towards Turkish-speaking students, especially the Roma, loaded with racial and ethnic markers. Although previous research on intercultural education excluded interethnic conflict from its scope (Gregoriou & Michael, 2008), Zembylas' (in press, p. 8) analysis explicitly shows that 'the ethnic division of Cyprus is rescaled down to classroom and school life through the creation of toxic and politically charged emotional geographies'. Overall, it appears that despite the introduction of supportive measures and the official policies of non-segregation, the marginalization of Roma children continues (Symeou et al, 2009). Spyrou (2000; 2001b; 2002; 2006a; 2006b) extensively analyses how nationalistic discourses in education affect children's identity constructions, by creating essentialised identities and leading to the identification of Turks as the 'Other' and the 'eternal enemy'. The few teachers who present children with messages that oppose the official Hellenocentric nationalistic educational discourse, do so indirectly or ambiguously (Spyrou, 2001a). Since teachers themselves were educated in a nationalistic school ethos it is not surprising that they reproduce ethnic stereotypes (Spyrou, 2001b). There are many examples illustrating that minoritised students such as the Greek Pontian children<sup>22</sup> are being subjected to racial discrimination within the school and are faced with problematic home-school relations, segregation tendencies within and outside the school, institutional monoculturalism and lack of teacher training for multicultural education (Trimikliniotis, 2001). The absence of a social

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21 Turkish-speaking is used in the relevant studies to refer to Turkish-Cypriot and Roma populations residing in the south of Cyprus and attending Greek-Cypriot primary schools. There is evidence that Turkish-Cypriots try to distinguish themselves from the Roma to avoid even more negative racialized identity ascriptions. However, the term Turkish-speaking is preferred (Zembylas, in press) because it is more inclusive and avoids possible mistakes in distinguishing between who is 'ethnically' Turkish-Cypriot or Roma.

22 These are children born to families of Pontian Greek origin (also known as Pontic Greeks), an ethnically Greek group who traditionally lived in the region of Pontus in the Caucasus region. Many of the Pontian Greeks living in Cyprus are Greek passport holders, whilst some have Georgian nationality. They speak a distinct form of Greek which, due to the remoteness of Pontus, has had a process of linguistic evolution different from that of Greece. Currently, they form Cyprus' largest migrant community.

integration policy and intercultural education leads to the ‘increased racialisation of Pontian students and the normalization of multiple forms of exclusion and marginalization in schools’ (Gregoriou, 2008, p. 37). Theodorou’s (2008; 2010; 2011a; 2011b) ethnographic study in another diverse school of Cyprus also identifies the ethnicized and classed exclusion and racialisation of Pontian children.

Few studies have looked at teachers’ assumptions about immigrant groups. A recent ethnographic study in a multicultural primary school (Theodorou, 2008) found that, despite the teachers’ good intentions, misconstrued notions of parental indifference, lower expectations, and lower quality relationships with immigrant families prevailed in teacher practices, confirming the existence of a cultural deficit model guiding teachers’ practices. Even as late as March 2012, the magazine of the all-trade union federation of teachers POED, “ΠΑΙΔΙΚΗ ΧΑΡΑ” which is addressed to children published racist jokes about Pontian people. More seriously, when challenged for being racist, the editor claimed that there was no such intention, that it was innocent humour doing no harm, that these jokes are widely in circulation in schools and society anyway and that the magazine will not carry such jokes systematically but presumably only on occasion.<sup>23</sup>

In its Fourth Report on Cyprus published in 2011, ECRI was very critical of the situation in the 18th Primary School. Although in 2006 this school was a prize winner in the Commonwealth Education Good Practice Award for actions that enhanced access to quality education for the good of all and had been hailed as a ‘beacon’ of successful bi-communal education, the ECRI delegation which visited this school witnessed a very different reality. In the first four out of five classes, the majority were Turkish Cypriots. For the school year 2010-2011, only Turkish Cypriots had enrolled. The school had one interpreter. None of the teachers were specially trained to teach non-Greek speaking pupils and no extra teachers had been assigned to teach Greek. The curriculum was taught in Greek and there was no formal teaching of the Turkish language. Two teachers were Turkish Cypriots, but they were employed for other subjects, not language. The staff interviewed deplored the fact that they could not communicate with their pupils. In addition, despite the small classes, maintaining discipline was a major challenge. ECRI was deeply concerned by the school’s failure to meet the educational needs of the children concerned and found that the pupils are effectively being denied the right to education, as enshrined in Article 2 of the Protocol to the ECHR, with serious consequences for them in terms of future social marginalisation and exclusion and called on the authorities to take remedial action, by employing Turkish speaking teachers and classroom assistants to work alongside and assist the Greek-speaking teachers, as well as specialist Greek language teachers.

In itself, the ‘concentration’ of a certain ethnic group in a particular area is not necessarily negative, if this ‘concentration’ (a) was the result of the free movement of populations utilising their local affinities, family networks, ties and support, (b) the local area which they reside is not deprived but vibrant, multicultural and open to persons of different ethnic mix for cultural exchange; and (c) the multi-cultural mix of the school itself would act as a solid basis for developing expertise and innovative teaching geared towards a multicultural environment and not as the basis for a marginalised, deprived and second rate school. The current policy has resulted in the ghettoisation of the residential area and of the school located in it, with the typical manifestations of exclusion and poverty, and has reinforced and cemented the prejudice demonstrated by the inhabitants of the neighbouring areas, who had from the beginning objected to the settlement of these communities in the vicinity.

The available statistical data suggests there are discrepancies in the implementation of educational policies. Whilst the official policy is in favour of desegregating the schools by allocating the minority children in several schools to prevent ‘ghettoisation’, there is a failure in dispersing minorities, and in particular the Roma children across the country. Not only have the numbers of minority children

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<sup>23</sup> See “Καταγγελία του περιοδικού “Παιδική Χαρά” για ρατσιστικά στεότυπα”, [http://thetrim1.blogspot.co.uk/#!/2012/04/blog-post\\_13.html](http://thetrim1.blogspot.co.uk/#!/2012/04/blog-post_13.html) and “ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΗ ΠΟΕΔ ΣΕ ΚΑΤΑΓΓΕΛΙΑ ΓΙΑ ΡΑΤΣΙΣΤΙΚΑ ΑΝΕΚΔΟΤΑ: Το περιοδικό «ΠΑΙΔΙΚΗ ΧΑΡΑ» δεν έχει πρόθεση να συνεχίσει να δημοσιεύει, ιδιαίτερα σε τακτική βάση, ποντιακά ανέκδοτα”, [http://thetrim1.blogspot.co.uk/#!/2012/04/blog-post\\_324.html](http://thetrim1.blogspot.co.uk/#!/2012/04/blog-post_324.html)

slightly risen at specific schools, but there is also an inverse relationship between the increased concentrations of students with a specific ethnic minority background correlated to a decreased enrolment of Greek Cypriot pupils in the specific schools. The Third ECRI Report on Cyprus (ECRI, 2006:25) notes,

“...the Cypriot authorities have used language and displayed attitudes vis-à-vis these persons that were not conducive to defusing tensions and promoting acceptance of the Roma by the local communities.”

In the case of the Roma, school segregation is inevitably linked to the housing policies implemented in respect of this community. The specially designated Roma settlements of pre-fabricated houses are all located in segregated settings, with the exception of a number of Roma families living in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol where, although impoverished, are residing in the same neighbourhood as Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and migrants. This is not to say that Roma families residing in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol are necessarily well-integrated into the local communities, as relations are often strained and the Roma are sometimes shunned by the other inhabitants.

Measures for the integration of Romani children are taken in the field of education, albeit targeting all “Turkish-speaking” pupils and not the Roma specifically; there is nothing in the school curriculum on Roma culture or history. The measures adopted consist mainly of Turkish language support teaching, pursuant to the government’s constitutional obligation to provide education for the Turkish Cypriot community in their mother tongue. A few other measures are also in place, such as free school uniforms, lunch offered at school, transport to school etc, in order to encourage school attendance.

In 2008 there was a complaint submitted to the Equality Body regarding the situation of the Roma children in education alleging, inter alia, insufficient support and integration measures for Roma pupils in education. The Equality Body report in response to this complaint, revealed that although since 2009 the Cypriot Government recognised the Roma as a minority within the meaning of the FCNM, the Ministry of Education does not consider the Roma as a separate ethnic group but as belonging to the Turkish Cypriot community, which explains why no measures were ever taken to enhance their Roma identity and culture. In the process of the equality body investigation, the headmaster of the 18<sup>th</sup> School in Limassol, with the highest Roma concentration in the country, told the Equality Body that there were specific problems regarding the integration of the Roma children in the school, which include the fact that they have difficulties in staying within one room for a long time, they view the school as a game and they tend to leave school before completion, particularly the girls the majority of whom do not enroll into secondary education. In its conclusions, the Equality Body urged the Ministry of Education to actively involve the members of the Roma community in a dialogue on the design and implementation of teaching methods and programs, pointing out that teaching methods must be adapted to the special characteristics of the Roma and not vice versa.

Finally, the report refers to the Fourth ECRI report on Cyprus, published in 2011, which deplores the fact that none of the Roma children residing in a particular Roma settlement attend school, since the nearest school is too far away and there is no transport; in this respect the Equality Body adopts the ECRI recommendation that transport be provided without delay for these children to attend school (Anti-discrimination Authority, 2011a). However, one would have to question the adequacy of the measure of providing transport for the Roma children to attend a far away school, when there is research suggesting that the long journey on the bus takes its toll on the children’s ability to concentrate. The proposed measure of the provision of transport needs to be contrasted with the equivalent measure that would have been adopted had the children been Greek Cypriots, in which case the answer would probably be that the Greek Cypriot children would not have been facilitated (or, worse, forced) to settle far away from schools, as the Roma children often are.

## ***2.2 Conclusions on the Turkish speakers/Roma Case Study***

There is no comprehensive system of properly evaluating the strategies and measures adopted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The evaluation process consists of the occasional inspection visits to the school carried out by Ministry inspectors. The only specific measure that involves some sort of a feedback, to the extent that it has a system of calculating how many pupils are receiving it, is the provision of the free school meals and the payment of the allowances given for each child. As far as all other measures are concerned, they are of a high degree of generality and lacking specific targets. They seem to be concentrated more on the attendance of the Roma children, in making them behave and not be obstructive for the other (i.e. Greek-Cypriot) pupils. There have been no targets set for the education and advancement of the Roma children themselves, which constitutes a great educational failure.

Generally speaking, all measures adopted by the Ministry of Education and Culture are obviously new, evolving and rather ad hoc and the 'strategies' are only now being formulated. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there are no content-based targets about Roma education; one perhaps ought not to speak about 'strategies' but ad hoc policies designed in order to tackle specific problems. It is therefore hard to develop an evaluation and monitoring methodology when the goals themselves are short-term and lacking targets as to the curricula and content.

The strategies employed are based on a general approach which classifies children in accordance with their level of competency in the Greek language. As a result, the issue of Roma education is seen as part and parcel of the Turkish-speaking children' education; their linguistic diversity is seen as a language difficulty or deficiency and not as a cultural characteristic, to be enhanced and promoted. The constitutional provision which recognise Turkish as an official language and which renders all members of the Turkish community citizens of the Republic has made the policy makers more conscious of their responsibility towards the Turkish speakers. In addition the long standing non-settlement of the Cyprus problem adds caution for the Ministry of Education to avoid potential tensions in Greek-speaking schools as a result of the attendance of Turkish speaking students. Nevertheless, there is no will or plan to include Roma history or culture into the school curricula; in fact the school curriculum makes no provision whatsoever for the inclusion of the history of culture of any community or minority other than the Greek-Cypriots. Even measures such as the employment of a Turkologist, although positive up to an extent, would have been more effective if the person appointed was a specialist in Roma culture and identity and/or preferably originating himself from the Roma community.

Education participation and achievement is only monitored to the extent that grade and evaluation is made for all students. Monitoring and studying as regards attainment, drop-outs, exclusion, discrimination is only now beginning. This is crucial for the Roma and for the other minoritised and excluded pupils. So far, a number of studies show a very low participation and performance level for the Roma.

In general, strategies should be properly linked to anti-discrimination policies/strategies, for example Council Directive 2000/43/EC and be effectively related to language policies in conformity with the European Charter of Regional or Minority languages of the CoE. In essence the whole issue of Roma education must be closely linked to the policies for social integration, equal participation of all groups and individuals, the processes of the Reform and a strategy for national anti-discrimination in general. The debates around education reform and the scheduled curricula revisions should address the issue of the specific needs of the Roma.

### **3. Case study II: Dealing with Racism at schools**

#### ***3.1 The Content of Education: Helleno-cyprio-centricist, Nationalist and Exclusionary***

A major problem in incorporating and properly including migrant communities relates to the content of Greek-Cypriot education. In 2004, the Commission for Educational Reform (2004b, p.4) stated:

“The ideological-political context of contemporary Cypriot education remains helleno-cyprio-centric, narrowly ethnocentric and culturally monolithic and the current ideological context ignores the interculturalism and multiculturalism of Cypriot society, as well as the Europeanization and internationalization of Cypriot education.”

The above Commission (2004b) as well as ECRI (2006) both suggested that the existing efforts in the field of intercultural education in Cyprus be emphasised and strengthened. Numerous studies on the Greek-Cypriot education system emphasize its nationalistic, ethnocentric, hellenocentric, traditionalist, monolingualistic, and monocultural character (Angelides et al, 2003; Trimikliniotis, 2004), which overshadows European citizenship perspectives (Philippou, 2007, 2009); hinders mutual respect and reunification of the Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot communities (Makriyianni, in press); and assimilates non-Greek-Cypriot pupils into the Cypriot culture through the textbooks and the curriculum (Angelides et al, 2004). Additionally, it is argued that constructions of the Cyprus Problem in textbooks are one-dimensional and result in the cultivation of hatred, as children only learn about violations perpetrated by the ‘Others’ (Constantinou, 2006; Philippou & Varnava, 2009). The Commission for Educational Reform (2004b) also reported that teachers are troubled about their abilities to respond to their duties when working in diverse schools with a traditional ethos. Specifically, the teachers ‘acknowledge the danger that, in a traditional school, children with a different cultural background are at risk of falling behind and/or facing many psychological problems because of the ignorance or contempt towards their cultural specificities’ and are ‘troubled by the relations of the local children with the migrants’ children and the specific problems that the latter face in an unfamiliar environment which is not always characterized by elements of an open society’ (Commission for Educational Reform, 2004b, p. 287). Until very recently, those teachers who were willing to implement intercultural education could not do so because of the lack of appropriate training and teaching materials (Trimikliniotis, 2001).

Research over the last decade shows that teachers were either unaware of or in denial about racism, despite evidence of everyday racial discrimination ignorance or denial of institutional racism (Trimikliniotis, 2005; Theodorou 2010 and Zembylas 2010a); teachers’ perceptions of diversity found that student teachers held prejudiced assumptions about people from the African and Asian Mediterranean regions (Theophilides & Koutselini-Ioannides, 1999). Furthermore, primary school teachers seem affected by media representation, drawing on a variety of repertoires regarding diversity which construct the ‘Other’, particularly Muslims, in predominantly essentialist and negative ways (Papamichael, 2011). At the same time, institutional and teachers’ constructions and denials of racism inhibit them from recognizing, intervening and challenging racialising discourses and practices and their impact on vulnerable children’s everyday realities. Teacher education in relation to intercultural education and issues of diversity and racism is almost non-existent.<sup>24</sup> Regarding in-service intercultural training, the Ministry’s Department of Primary Education, in cooperation with the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, offers a number of voluntary seminars promoting intercultural education (Nicolaidis, 2005). Apart from these, the Ministry does not seem to emphasize in-service teacher training, possibly due to lack of awareness of international trends in the field (Angelides et al., 2003). In sum, the Greek-Cypriot Education Curriculum has been monocultural and Christian-

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24 While some postgraduate modules on multiculturalism and globalization are offered at the University of Cyprus, no module on intercultural education is obligatory for the undergraduate programme, from which many Greek-Cypriot teachers graduate. A large number also study at Greek universities.

oriented, addressing a uniform, homogeneous population of Greek, White, Greek-speaking, Christian-Orthodox children.

Cyprus is a member of, and has subscribed to treaties, recommendations and declarations of international and European organizations like the United Nations, UNESCO, the Organization on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Union, which carry obligations and responsibilities to implement intercultural education (Batelaan & Coomans, 1999). Consequently, through a circular, the Ministry of Education (2002) introduced the rhetoric of intercultural education as an acknowledgement of the increasing diversity of Cypriot society. Various circulars and policy documents constructing the official discourse about intercultural education were published since (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008b, 2008c), some focusing on the Year for Intercultural Dialogue, as the year 2008 was assigned by the Council of Europe (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007a, 2008a, 2008d).

Intercultural education does not pervade the normal routine of schools and is not part of the mainstream curriculum (Allemann-Ghionda, 2009), but is based on policy guidelines for school initiatives. One aspect of intercultural education policy and practice in Cyprus, though not officially framed as such, is the institution of the Zones of Education Priority (ZEP). Following the French model of state educational provisions (Zembylas, in press), schools of socially and economically deprived areas form networks and collaborate through joint programmes for the socialization of pupils and for special support measures. Eight nursery schools and ten primary schools belonged to the ZEP networks in 2009 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009). These schools receive additional help through measures such as lower numbers of pupils in each class, free breakfast, extra teachers for Greek language support lessons, and, help to develop programmes for the prevention of school exclusion and violence. As these schools usually have large numbers of 'foreign' pupils, ZEP schools have become an important initiative of good practice in terms of intercultural education (Trimikliniotis, 2008). However, many schools with highly diverse populations are not part of the ZEP network. For mainstream (i.e. non-ZEP) schools, information regarding initiatives for the implementation of intercultural education is obtained through 'circulars letters published by the Ministry of Education, discussed below.

The early introduction of intercultural elements (Roussou and Hadjiyianni-Yiangou, 2001:27)<sup>25</sup> was problematic; the first definition of intercultural education in Greek-Cypriot policy discourse was:

'education which prepares people for the social, political and economic situations that they will have to face in a multicultural society and at the same time offer them the opportunity to develop the necessary abilities for critical thought and way of behaviour in various cultural/social environments, aiming to create such circumstances which will help the other-language children to become naturally and evenly integrated in the Greek-Cypriot Public School, giving them, at the same time, opportunities to develop and nurture their own language and civilization'.

The definition above is based on a pragmatic perspective of intercultural education as a means of preparation for life in a multicultural society, where critical thought and intercultural ways of conduct are valued as useful. The aim for minoritised pupils' 'natural' and 'even' integration into the majority culture reveals the assimilationist assumptions of the policy (Papamichael, 2011). The above extract and the Ministry's discourse in general typically refer to minoritised pupils as 'other-language'<sup>26</sup>, focusing on language and discursively ignoring other aspects of their identities. The term is not met anywhere else in international literature on multicultural education and thus indicates the hegemonic prevalence of Greek language (Zembylas, 2010b). 'Other-language' is used interchangeably in official

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25 Though not an official policy document, this report set the basis for the circulars and policy guidelines distributed by the Ministry.

26 In Greek: *αλλόγλωσσοι* [alloglossoi].

policy texts with ‘alien’<sup>27</sup>, ‘foreigners’<sup>28</sup>, and ‘foreign-language’<sup>29</sup>. According to Zembylas (2010b), all these lexical choices create and maintain particular everyday ideologies and popular discursive conceptualizations of minoritised groups, revealing implicit ideological assumptions and power/knowledge relationships. Thus, segregation amongst minoritised and majoritised groups is enhanced on a discursive level on the basis of their language.

A summary of the aforementioned report (Roussou and Hadjiyianni-Yiangou, 2001) was disseminated to all schools through the Circular on Intercultural Education and Schooling (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2002), which set intercultural education as a priority objective, encouraging schools to become involved ‘in activities which reinforce this aspect of education and create attitudes of tolerance and respect for diversity in both pupils and teachers’ (Nicolaidis, 2005, p. 71). The circular offered guidelines for the linguistic, social and cultural support of ‘other-language’ pupils. The teaching material is prepared in Greece and does not necessarily meet the needs of children attending Cypriot schools. Studies have shown that most teachers consider this measure insufficient, both in terms of the time afforded to it as well as in terms of the suitability of the material (Angelides et al., 2003; Papamichael, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Trimikliniotis, 2001). Furthermore, placing newly-arrived children in mainstream classrooms and occasionally removing them for support lessons normalizes their marginalization (Gregoriou, 2008).

The philosophy and practice of intercultural education in Cyprus are based on the inability of non-indigenous children to speak Greek, constructing them as deficient and inferior, ignoring first language and bilingual education, and aiming at their assimilation in the majority linguistic community (Zembylas, 2010b). The measures suggest that educational practices in Cyprus treat diversity as a type of deficiency which needs to be treated (Panayiotopoulos and Nicolaidou, 2007). Such compensatory approaches were used in Britain in the 1960s when minority ethnic pupils were construed as educationally problematic, in need of compensation for their cultural and linguistic deficiencies, while whiteness and British culture were normalized (Archer, 2003).

### ***3.2 In Denial of School Racism: Breeding Intolerance and Obstructing Reform***

The conception of tolerance/acceptance in the school system can be deduced from the way racism and ethnic/racial exclusion/discrimination is understood and dealt with. The concept of racism as such, which is generally overlooked in the official policy discourses, is referred to as ‘*xenophobia and any racist tendencies*’, which the celebrations of diversity are able to ‘*combat*’. Thus, racism is conceptualized as individually learned prejudice and is assumed to be challenged through learning about and accepting other cultures. It is also worth noting the use of the term xenophobia instead of racism and the addition of ‘any’ in front of ‘racist tendencies’. Both discursive strategies result in the minimization of the significance of racism by employing the more acceptable term of xenophobia<sup>30</sup> and by constructing racist tendencies in an indefinite manner, thus adding a cloud of doubt as to whether they are really present in Greek-Cypriot schools (Papamichael, 2011). There is a distinct lack of comprehensive data regarding monitoring and addressing racist incidents in schools, insisting that there is no serious problem of racism (Trimikliniotis, 2008; Demetriou 2011). In 2010, the Minister of Education and Culture at the time undervalued the existence of racism in Greek-Cypriot schools, stating:

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<sup>27</sup> In Greek: αλλοδαποί [allodapoi].

<sup>28</sup> In Greek: ξένοι [ xenoi].

<sup>29</sup> In Greek: ξενόγλωσσοι [xenoglossoi].

<sup>30</sup> Discursive research in Belgium and Austria has shown that the term xenophobia generally carries less negative connotations than racism (Blommaert & Verschuere, 1998; Gotsbachner, 2001). The Greek origin of the term may also be contributing to its acceptance in the Greek-Cypriot context (Papamichael, 2011).

[W]e do not think we have a serious problem ...[O]n occasion some minor incidents can occur, but we do not think we really have any serious problem (Heller, 2010).

Institutional racism is neither mentioned nor impliedly covered by the policies adopted. Also, there is no antiracist policy in schools. Qualitative research in three highly diverse Greek Cypriot primary schools concluded that systemic, institutional or structural racism seems to be deeply and routinely institutionalised to such an extent that it has become part of everyday normality. Racism has thus been *normalized* (Trimikliniotis 2004a:107).

Furthermore, successive ECRI Reports point out that despite the few existing training opportunities, there is a “lack of thorough understanding of and genuine sensitivity to human rights by many teachers” (ECRI 2006, pp. 15-16). The Ministry responded negatively to this criticism but, at the same time, did not deny that there are instances of discrimination on behalf of some teachers against minoritised pupils:

“The official policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture is the awareness of human rights by educators and pupils alike. Possible traits of discrimination among some teachers may reflect *individual opinion*, which, in no way, interferes with the formal teaching, which abides with the Ministry’s official policy’ (ECRI, 2006, p. 69, our emphasis).

The Ministry’s argument is in line with the individualistic perceptions of racism as the result of isolated acts of people who are the ‘bad apples of society’, an assumption expressed in public discourses by politicians and religious leaders. The educational authorities ignore or deny the presence of institutional racism processes and attribute responsibility to individual teachers (Papamichael, 2011). Some training seminars held to assist teachers in promoting awareness of racism and racial discrimination among pupils are insufficient and teachers continue to be inadequately equipped to address such manifestations (ECRI, 2006).

At the school level, the development and implementation of antiracist policies is highly urgent. A policy banning the use of racialised discourses and a mechanism for the reporting of racial incidents should be combined with an in-depth examination of the causes and consequences of existing phenomena. Particular attention needs to be paid to acts of physical retaliation from vulnerable children in reaction to acts of harassment, with a focus on their causes, in order to comprehend the racialisation processes (Phoenix, 2002). Further guidelines on intercultural education were disseminated through a circular (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008b) situating intercultural education in the context of the aims identified by the Commission for Educational Reform (2004b). The circular states that the aims of education are the creation of a democratic school, integration, equal opportunities, the acknowledgement of and respect for diversity, multiculturalism and pluralism (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008b). In line with previous policy, the measures for the attainment of these goals focus on the teaching of Greek as a second language and the teacher training for it. New elements are included, such as the preparation of a *Guide to Education in Cyprus* for the newly-arrived pupils and their families in Greek as well as in the eight foreign languages most commonly met in schools<sup>31</sup>(Ministry of Education and Culture - Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2010), which is expected to improve home-school communication. An additional Ministry publication was prepared by the Ministry’s Pedagogical Institute, entitled “Intercultural Education for the smooth integration of pupils with migrant biographies in the schools and society of Cyprus” (Kyriakidou, 2010). Supported by EU funds, it is published in Greek, Arabic, Georgian, Ukrainian, Russian and Turkish and asserts the Ministry’s five priority axes in terms of intercultural education: the learning of the Greek language, the reception of newly-arrived ‘other-language’ pupils, teacher training, collection and analysis of data regarding the needs of other-language pupils and incorporation of an intercultural approach in the new curricula.

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31 English, Turkish, Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Arabic.

Despite these changes in discourse, which construct multicultural education as addressing all children and acknowledge the need for curricular changes, there is still no explicit reference to challenging racism and discrimination, while the term ‘other-language’ is maintained and continues to essentialize linguistic diversity (Papamichael, 2011). Furthermore, the suggestion for the ‘addition of intercultural elements’ in the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008b, p. 3), reveals the continuing additive approach to multicultural education based on the hegemonic knowledge of the majoritised group’s language (Zembylas, 2010b). In sum, intercultural education policy in Greek-Cypriot primary schools views minoritized pupils based on a deficit model of diversity as a disadvantage that needs to be treated; essentializes and reifies culture and ethnicity; prioritizes the learning of Greek language with assimilatory implications; promotes a model of intercultural education based on contributions and additions by ‘other cultures’; constructs racism as a pathologizing individualistic attribute that may be challenged through ‘learning’ about other cultures; and, ignores institutional and structural racism and inequalities (Papamichael, 2011).

In a qualitative study focusing on 17 Greek-Cypriot principals’ perceptions about diversity and multicultural education, Zembylas (2010d) found that half of them adopted a conservative multicultural approach and an assimilationist frame, while linking their ‘foreign’ students with the social problems of Cypriot society and the ‘national’ problem. The few principals who displayed critical and multiculturalist views appeared open to change and diversity within their school and the wider social context. Papamichael’s (2011) study of intercultural education discourses and everyday practices in a Greek-Cypriot primary school identified low levels of tolerance towards diversity in the form of institutional and individual discourses and everyday practices, which contributed to the differential ethnicized, gendered, and racialisation and to the exclusion of minoritised children as individuals and groups, regardless of intentions. As a result, many of these children, mainly Iraqi-Palestinian asylum-seekers and Eastern European migrants, experience school in an environment of harassment, characterized by frequent name calling practices, exclusion, isolation and segregation in the classroom and the playground. Papamichael (2011) concludes that, despite rare instances of resistance and exhibitions of agency by some teachers and children to the dominant racist discourses, institutional everyday racism operates in various ways and at various levels, negatively affecting the experiences of both the minoritised and majoritised groups and individuals.

### ***3.3 Dealing with racial violence in Schools: From the English School to the Vergina school attack***

In November 2006, Cypriot society was shocked to hear the news of an unprovoked racist attack against Turkish Cypriot students at the prestigious English School of Nicosia by hooded youth holding bats. This was the first organised attack against Turkish Cypriots since the de facto ceasefire at the end of the 1974 war. At the time of the English School attack, the general perception was that this was an isolated incident by a group of brainless youth, condemned by politicians and public persons across the board. It soon emerged however that this attack was only the first in a series of events that would be perpetrated by a newly emerging far right movement, which had laid firm foundations amongst the youth and particularly amongst the student population.

In the years that followed, one would see many more racist attacks both within and outside the schools, perpetrated by organised groups of far right youths, targeting Turkish Cypriots and migrants. The election of a left wing pro-reconciliation president at the leadership of the Republic in 2008 created fears amongst the far right elements of the political elite that another plan for the settlement of the Cyprus problem, similar to the Annan plan presented in 2004, would soon be tabled. In order to discredit such a plan and ensure its rejection, a number of political forces amongst the opposition began to undermine government policies as regards Turkish Cypriots and migrants, using racist populism in order to label these policies as “too soft”.

Soon enough, the economic crisis surfacing at the end of the 2010s raised the unemployment rate amongst the youth to unprecedented levels and produced discontent and frustration amongst the youth. The populist discourse of the right wing politicians fell on fertile ground and had its impact on the far right groups which felt justified and sufficiently backed to take to the streets and, occasionally, to the schools, recruiting members from amongst the student population. Three particular incidents of racist violence at schools stand out for their aftermath and repercussion in society: the attack against Turkish Cypriot students at the English school mentioned above; the attack against a black Cypriot student in December 2008; and the attack against Iraqi and Palestinian asylum-seeking students at the Vergina High School in Larnaca in February 2011.

This attack did not occur in vacuum. The government backed ‘resounding NO’ to the UN plan for the resolution of the Cyprus problem in 2004 had created conditions of irredentism and intolerance in society, which had reached uncontrollable levels. This atmosphere was quickly picked up by populist politicians and sensationalist and nationalist media outlets who saw this as an opportunity to expand their influence and cement their political position. Only days before the attack, two particular right-wing newspapers<sup>32</sup> printed articles with titles such as “climate of unrest” and “injustice against Greek-Cypriots”. The articles referred to the school’s Code of Conduct which banned the use of insulting symbols, such as the swastika. Oddly enough, this provision was interpreted by the journalists authoring these articles as banning *religious* symbols at school. The headline “He Spat on a Pupil’s Cross -Incident with a Turkish-Cypriots Assailant” (*Simerini* 20.11.2006) referred to a school yard incident of three weeks earlier between two students at the school, a Turkish-Cypriot and a Greek-Cypriot, printing inaccuracies about the incident and failing to report that the incident had been resolved to the satisfaction of all persons involved. On the day of the racial attack (22.11.2006), the same newspaper printed the headline ‘The English School is a Minefield –Students considering measures after T/C bravado’ essentially calling on students to take ‘revenge’. A similar line was taken by a private TV channel and other newspapers in their reporting of the racial incident. The role of the media was criticised by the school deputy head as inciting racial hatred, whilst the Journalistic Ethics Committee (*Epohi*, 27.11.2006) condemned the stand of the newspapers in question. In an unusual self initiated intervention, the Journalistic Ethics Committee issued a statement “calling on the media family to show adequate sensitivity and adherence to the rules of journalistic ethics” taking into account “the seriousness of recent events pertaining to intercommunal relations”.<sup>33</sup>

The English school has been at the centre of political debates since 2003 when it opened again its doors to Turkish Cypriot pupils after 30 years. It is the only school in Nicosia historically attended by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot students, who now form 13 per cent of the school’s student population. The school’s multicultural agenda and initiatives to address the tensions between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot students were met with suspicion by right wing MPs, who attempted to curtail the school’s inter-cultural activities by blocking the state subsidy which was annually paid to the school. When on 14.09.2009 the English School announced its decision to adopt the Muslim Bayram Holidays of 21<sup>st</sup> September and 27<sup>th</sup> November as official school holidays in order to foster a climate of mutual respect and inclusiveness at the school, the Parliamentary Finance Committee decided to block the approval of the €320,000 state subsidy earmarked for the school, over unsubstantiated allegations of school board mismanagement, allegedly manifested in the school’s decision to adopt the Turkish Bayram as a school holiday and in teachers travelling abroad three years before in order to attend seminars on multiculturalism and tolerance.

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<sup>32</sup> *Simerini* and *Mahi*

<sup>33</sup>The statement noted that it is “the duty of the media ... within its social mission to provide accurate information, to respect the provisions of the Code of Practice and demonstrate special responsibility when they address issues related to the coexistence of communities and other social groups,...to respect and promote democracy and other universal values, to respect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms of all and avoid references ... containing elements of prejudice based on race, color, language, religion, national or social origin.”  
[http://www.cmcc.org.cy/Decisions/index\\_2006\\_files/27\\_2006.html](http://www.cmcc.org.cy/Decisions/index_2006_files/27_2006.html)

### *3.3.1. The group attack against a Cypriot black female student*

In December 2008 a Cypriot black female pupil was attacked by a group of about 30-40 other Cypriot white pupils who were shouting racist insults following a volleyball match between her school and another school. The victim was severely injured and had to be taken to hospital. When the police arrived on the scene, the school headmaster informed them that the matter would be handled internally between the two schools. No arrests were made and no charges were brought against anyone. The police who initially refused to accept a statement from the victim's father, subsequently agreed to do so following the Equality Body's intervention. A statement issued later by the school's teachers rejected the allegations of racist motives and described the incident as the manifestation of youth delinquency. The only measure taken by the school was to permanently expel one pupil who initiated the attack against the victim but cited as reasons for the expulsion her involvement in the incident and her shouting insults against the teachers; the school's decision made no mention of racist behaviour. The Equality Body (Anti-discrimination Authority, 2008) criticised the school authorities for refusing to attribute racist motive to the attack and for stressing the allegedly provocative behaviour of the victim, in an apparent effort to shift responsibility from the assailants to the victim. The report also criticised the decision of the school to permanently expel one of the assailants stating that this measure is not only inadequate in that it failed to address the racist motive of the pupil but it was also lacking educational sensitivity, as the repercussions from the permanent expulsion are likely to intensify the problem. The Equality Body also criticized the attitude of the police who failed to take an active stand against racism in spite of the victim's unequivocal position that she wanted the case to go to Court, and stated that the lack of commitment of the police against racism will lead not only to the intensification of the phenomenon but also to the vulnerable groups losing faith in the police. The report concluded that as long as educationalists do not take an active stand against racism and prefer the oversimplified interpretation of youth delinquency and as long as incidents are not addressed and handled and assailants go unpunished, the phenomenon of racist violence will be reproduced and multiplied. The problem becomes more serious when the victims are migrant children who form a particularly vulnerable group and even more so when they were born or raised in Cyprus or acquired Cypriot nationality. For this category of children, there are serious issues of integration of second generation Cypriots and thus racist incidents must be faced decidedly in order to reinstate their feelings of security and social acceptance.

The Equality Body report fell short of recommending concrete measures to be taken in order to address racism in school, despite its own admission that the phenomenon is on the rise. Similarly, the Ministry of Education expressed its regret over the incident and its solidarity towards the victim but failed to take decisive measures for this incident or for the phenomenon in general. The report accepted the logic of setting up of the monitoring mechanism promised by the Minister of Education as exhaustive of the measures that may be taken. In addition, although the report hints on the fact that teachers essentially disregard state policies over the handling of racist incidents and apply their own decisions, it does not recommend any measures to be taken against the teachers. This is a wider problem facing Cypriot society in recent years, as conservative segments of the teachers are openly opposing the Reform and go as far as urging other teachers to disregard the circulars issued by the Ministry of Education.

### *3.3.2. The attack against Iraqis and Palestinians at Vergina High School*

In February 2011 there was another racial incident in a secondary school. A group of 20 to 25 Greek Cypriot pupils from an unknown school arrived at the Vergina Lyceum in Larnaca, were joined by about 100 pupils from Vergina Lyceum and all together attacked 15 Arabic-speaking pupils from the specific school (Agathocleous, 2011a). The fight started in the school yard but soon spread into the school building, where teachers had to step in to protect a small group of foreign pupils from the angry mob. After the immediate intervention by the police, order was restored. One Greek-Cypriot and two Palestinian children were injured slightly and treated on the school grounds, while another Greek

Cypriot was taken to Larnaca General Hospital, where he was treated for cuts and bruises. Following the incidents, the 15 Arabic-speaking students were taken to police headquarters, for their own protection and to give statements. Following a decision by the school and the Parents Association, the 15 Palestinian students were asked not to go back to the school until spirits had ‘calmed down’ – a decision heavily criticized by the Minister of Education, as discussed below. The next day the police spokesman announced that one Palestinian and five Greek-Cypriot students would be charged for the violent clashes (Agathocleous, 2011b).

The incident sparked a series of statements, observations and interpretations by several stakeholders, including the Minister, the school’s Parents Association, the Cyprus Parents Federation, school teachers, NGOs,<sup>34</sup> individual and organized Greek-Cypriot students, the Larnaca Mayor, MPs, the Palestinian Federation of Human Rights and the ‘Hope for Children’ UNCRC Policy Centre representatives. This broad coverage of the incidents and the reactions that followed for several days in press, TV, blogs and other media justifiably constructs the incidents as highly publicized and significant in terms of notions of (in)tolerance, cultural diversity and racism in contemporary Greek-Cypriot education and society.

The initial publicized reactions were those of the president of the Parents’ Association who offered limited ‘backing’ to the Greek-Cypriot pupils:

‘The fact that there is provocation on behalf of the Palestinians is true. But both sides are to blame; it isn’t just the Arabic speakers and we need to find an immediate solution’ (Agathocleous, 2011a).

The Parents Association decided that Arabic-speaking students should stay at home for some time until the tension is minimized. Following the Ministry’s intervention the next day in the face of the students’ preliminary exams, the Parents Association President stated she was confident the ‘crisis was over’ and the ‘whole matter has been resolved’ (Agathocleous, 2011b).

The Minister of Education at the time visited the school immediately upon hearing of the incident, accompanied by psychologists and other officials. He unreservedly and categorically condemned the violence stating that the events ‘stigmatize society, civilisation, democracy and our education and they can never be accepted’ (Agathocleous, 2011a). He stated that those responsible should be punished and explained the events as the reflection of “racist and xenophobic phenomena, especially in Larnaca, transferred from society to the schools” (ibid.). The Minister also emphasized that many share the responsibility for aggressiveness in Cypriot society and added that unless society “changes mentality, the cost will be high for everyone” (Phileleftheros, 2011). The Minister said that such episodes should have been expected, considering the tension that existed in Larnaca for months, due to the high concentration of Iraqi-Palestinian asylum-seekers and the recent violent incident in a government building.<sup>35</sup> He also attributed the events to the “inflammatory discourses and actions of many”, meaning the anti-immigrants protests and clashes with anti-racists in Larnaca in November 2010.<sup>36</sup> The Minister was highly critical of the decision of the Parents’ Association to distance all Arabic-speaking students from the school for two weeks as, he argued “such a course would exacerbate problems, not solve them, and I am calling on the parents to calmly cooperate with us” (Agathocleous,

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<sup>34</sup> KISA – Action for Equality Support Antiracism.

<sup>35</sup> The incident, which largely provoked the attack against the Arabic speaking students at Vergina, involved the forced entry of a group of Palestinian asylum seekers into Larnaca’s Welfare office to protest against the delay in receiving their state subsidies. The protesters violently attacked one of the Welfare officers. The incident, which had been televised, was played repeatedly by several TV channels and was widely debated upon, mostly criticising the government’s policy of paying state subsidies to asylum seekers. For details, see Cyprus Mail article entitled “Nine Palestinians arrested over protest violence” reproduced in ‘Signalfire’ at <http://signalfire.org/?p=7327>

<sup>36</sup> The clashes between anti-immigrant protesters and anti-racists

2011b). He further criticized the parents' suggestion for extra policing of the school, arguing that "turning schools into fortresses isn't the answer".

Members of the Ministry's rapid intervention team, including psychologists and educational officers, spent the day at the school, consulting with teachers and parents to find solutions to the problem internally. The Ministry announced that it would intensify Greek language support lessons for foreign students at the school, to begin as soon as the Arabic speaking students return to the school (Hami, 2011). The Minister argued that these lessons "aimed to better integrate Arabic-speaking children in the school".

The evening news of TV channels on the day of the event also included interviews with some anonymous Greek-Cypriot students (but no Palestinians) who claimed that the attacks were a reaction to the continuous provocations by the Palestinian students. However, no specific explanations were given regarding what form these provocations took, although it was alleged the Palestinians often carried knives on them; one student went as far as to blame the lyceum teachers for discriminating in favour of the Palestinians. The Central School Student Council convened and presented their statement to the media, in order to explain the sequel of events because there were distortions and inaccuracies in the media reports (Fileleftheros Newspaper, 2011). The students' representative told the press that

"the whole body of Vergina High School students condemns yesterday's events in the school setting. We condemn all violence from the Greek-Cypriot as well as the Arabic-speaking students. We also condemn the fact that the media presented the majority of the Vergina High School students as having participated in the appalling incidents of 16th February, while in reality those who became involved were few and isolated".

The press statement stated that the incident was "strengthened by the systematically provocative behaviour of some Arabic-speaking students, without disclaiming our own responsibilities". The students of Vergina High School stated:

"We are not immature, we are not xenophobic, we are not racists – as some have called us – and we call upon all stakeholders to take responsibility and to stand next to the school so that this functions in harmony and performs its educational work without distraction" (Phileleftheros, 2011).

In agreement with the Minister's interpretation of the incidents as organized from outside the school, the Pancyprrian Coordinating Students Committee (PSEM) issued the following statement:

"It is not the first time that the organized students movement has warned about the upsurge of nationalism and racism within the schools through the activities of various far-right extremist organizations...It is clear that yesterday's incident was not spontaneous, neither random, but, on the contrary, was an organized attack" (Kathimerini, 2011a).

Thus, contrary to the Vergina School Student Council, PSEM does not hesitate to refer to far right extremist organizations and to the recent rise of nationalism and racism manifestations within schools.

A deputy head teacher attributed the violent incidents at the school to "the recent troubles in Larnaca – the policeman's beating, but also violent clashes a few months ago between festival goers at the annual Rainbow festival and participators in a march against illegal immigrants" (Agathocleous, 2011a). Another teacher speaking to national radio mentioned that 'everyone feels shame and sadness' and attributed the incidents to individuals from outside the high school. She called for collaboration between parents, teachers and the state in order to face phenomena of hatred, fanaticism and anger such as those observed at their school for the benefit of society.

The Mayor of Larnaca also described the incidents as a ‘pre-planned action’ and called on all political parties “to position themselves responsibly so that the observed paroxysm is eliminated” (Politis Newspaper 2011). The Mayor also referred to a peaceful demonstration by citizens in Larnaca against violence, but directed against immigrants and asylum-seekers, arguing that statements made during the demonstration do not contribute to the smoothing of the situation. He attributed such incidents to cases of xenophobia in Larnaca, where most asylum-seekers are gathered, as a result of a general xenophobia climate which some political parties and extreme groups create.

Further statements from politicians included a condemnation of the violence.<sup>37</sup> The Chairman of the House Education Committee recommended restraint, and noted that ‘Greek education and Greek civilization never tolerated such behaviours’ and added that this needs to be heard by ‘some who raise the Greek flag and national banners in the name of racism and xenophobia’.<sup>38</sup> Other politicians argued that the incidents reflect the reactions of Larnaca residents as it has “become the dumping ground for all illegal immigrants’ and that ‘violence was the direct result of the absence of government policy for immigrants’”. Reactions were also expressed from NGOs.<sup>39</sup>

### **3.4 Conclusions on Case Study II: Dealing with Racism in Schools**

The most critical reflections upon the events at Vergina High School were offered by a group of academics and educationalists specializing on issues of intercultural education, diversity, migration and racism in Cyprus (Choplarou, 2011; Gregoriou, 2011; Theodorou, 2011c; Zembylas, 2011).<sup>40</sup> Zembylas (2011) argues that the debate that followed the events was limited to generalized condemnations and failed to take advantage of the opportunity for a critical reflection upon the politics of an ethics that is responsible for the increasing phenomena of violence and social exclusion. In his view, this politics is based on oversimplifications deeply rooted in social and educational perceptions and practices such as the imaginary construction of our identity on the basis of the binary ‘We-the-Good-and-Ethical as opposed to Them-Foreign-Evil’ (ibid.). In his article, Zembylas repeats his criticisms of intercultural education policies and practices in Greek-Cypriot schools as they construct other-language children as a ‘problem’ and emphasize Greek language learning instead of the effective use of the diverse cultural and linguistic background of the minoritised pupils for their own and the social benefit. The Ministry’s reaction to the event, which was to intensify Greek language support lessons for Arabic-speaking students once again fails to consider and deal with factors shaping the vulnerable children’s and groups’ experiences such as social, economic, political and institutional factors. Zembylas suggests that intercultural education founded on antiracist principles may contribute to the deconstruction of social practices that tolerate discrimination and racism towards specific groups

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<sup>37</sup> From the Palestinian Federation of Human Rights representative, the Chairman of the House Education Committee, DIKO Vice President and others.

<sup>38</sup> Highly critical of intolerance discourses, but still using nationalist discourse, Tornaritis suggested that ‘it is important to analyse what patriotism means, how we can defend our country in the right way and how to demonstrate the important aspects of our civilization’ (Fileleftheros Newspaper, 2011)

<sup>39</sup> KISA – Action for Equality Support Antiracism. KISA added that they considered politicians, other public personalities and the media to be reinforcing discourses of racism and xenophobia in Cypriot society, resulting in a catastrophic climate not only for Palestinians, refugees and migrants but for Cypriot society as a whole (Agathocleous, 2011a). Furthermore, the ‘Hope for Children’ UNCRC Policy Centre, the representative organization of children’s rights in Cyprus emphasized the need for non-formal education in order to decrease and eliminate such incidents. They suggested the use of modern tools and methods created by the Council of Europe for education in human rights, such as the COMPASS (Michael, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Along with Zembylas, Theodorou and Gregoriou, Choplarou pointed to the silences observed in the various reactions to and interpretations of the incidents in terms of institutional racism and inequalities. Gregoriou (2011) attempts to deconstruct the public debates preceding and surrounding the Vergina incidents related to the benefits claimed by asylum-seekers in Cyprus according to EU regulations. Choplarou (2011) raises the question of whether a debate about intercultural education in general is possible without reference to and consideration of the relations between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots.

Theodorou (2011c) offers the ‘Vergina Decalogue’, which can be summarized as follows:

- Violent incidents such as those at Vergina can no longer be presented as ‘isolated’ or denied, as they reflect an undeniable problem in the coexistence of various ethnic groups in Greek-Cypriot schools. Rather than attributing responsibilities, the focus should be on admitting that this problem exists and on prevention and intervention measures as part of a holistic and comprehensive intercultural antiracist education policy.
- There is a need for comprehensive reform of the education system in order to face the existing problems, such as the incidents at Vergina, rather than fragmentary measures such as those announced by the Ministry for intensive Greek language support lessons. Problems within schools reflect those of society and need to be treated as such.
- Intercultural and immigration policies need to be multi-directed and must relate to all kinds of diversity, including ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, class, ability and age. It is highly important that we learn to know ourselves as well as the other. Though socially constructed identities and stereotypes are not based on real facts, they still have real consequences upon the lives and experiences of the vulnerable groups and individuals.
- There is a need for alternative voices to be heard as opposed to dangerous discourses of intolerance. As schools also shape tomorrow’s society, one needs to reconsider what kinds of citizens, and therefore society, we aim to create. The Vergina incidents may teach us a lot, if one wishes to see the lessons to be learned.

Overall, apart from the critical writings of the aforementioned academics on the incident and of its media coverage, the reactions of public officials attempted to minimize the racialised aspects of the violence, confirming the already popular denials of racism, particularly of institutional forms, as identified in recent critiques of intercultural education policies and practices mentioned earlier in this report.

On the question of the measures to be adopted, the setting up in 2010 by the Ministry of Education of an observatory for school violence, using the methodology developed by and in close cooperation with the *International Observatory of Violence in Schools* and the *European Observatory on School Violence* is a step in the right direction, although it is still too early for this to yield results.. The observatory which commenced operation in 2011 is mandated to cover all types of violence, including racist, religiously motivated and homophobic violence. It collects and analyses data concerning the extent and types of school violence, including qualitative and quantitative data on good practices as regards prevention and handling of school violence and national and international research on the school environment, school violence and youth delinquency. In doing so, it works closely with the education partners (organisations of parents, teachers and pupils) as well as the media. During 2011 it carried out a study on victimisation through questionnaires completed by pupils anonymously. Simultaneously with identifying victimisation, the research sought to locate the interviewees’ perceptions of the school climate in accordance with the prevalent form of research in this field.

On the other hand, the fact that many teachers essentially disregard state policies over the handling of racist incidents and apply their own decisions requires measures to be taken against the teachers. The absence of any measures in that direction suggests an attempted approach of ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘consultation’ on the part of the authorities, which in effect normalizes impunity. This is a wider problem facing Cypriot society today which, in the absence of any measures beyond the teaching of the Greek language, breeds nationalism and perpetuates racism and intolerance in education.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There are two interconnected themes underlying the case studies. One has to do with an institutional tendency to adhere to formalistic, often legalistic and narrow interpretations of the principle of equality, ignoring or essentially rejecting special characteristics of vulnerable groups that require special or preferential treatment. The official reaction to calls for special teaching curriculum, special teachers, special subsidies, special treatment of groups at risk, with the exception of language support

classes, was invariably a reference to the measures and rules applicable to *all*, invoking equality before the law, failing to recognize that the majority or the host population do not share the same needs as the vulnerable groups.<sup>41</sup> This tendency demonstrates a conservative, legalistic and monolithic approach, running contrary to trends at EU level which recognize and promote positive action in favour of historically disadvantaged groups, in line with the reasoning of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Thlimmenos v. Greece* which ruled that equal treatment can also mean the different treatment of unequal persons. This monolithic approach (combined with political expediencies) is what shaped and expanded the ‘doctrine of necessity’.<sup>42</sup> Whilst the Supreme Court expressly and specifically restricted the suspension of constitutional provisions to only what was necessary in order to allow for the effective functioning of the state in the absence of the Turkish Cypriots pending a political settlement,<sup>43</sup> successive administrations stretched this doctrine to include areas which were never meant to be affected by the doctrine. It is no coincidence that the justification projected by the teachers’ union for refusing to implement the instructions from the Ministry of Education for promoting exchanges between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schoolchildren and school teachers was that this would “disturb the smooth operation of the schools”, a phrase reminiscent of the aim underlying the doctrine of necessity, which is the smooth functioning of the state in the absence of the Turkish Cypriots: in both cases, the aim of achieving “smooth operations” is classified as paramount over values such as tolerance or respect for human rights and diversity.

The other theme has to do with a perception of the presumed ‘universality’ of Greek Cypriot traditions such as religious confessions and the teaching of religious instruction at schools. Underpinning these traditions is the ethnocentric character of Greek Cypriot education that leaves little space for “otherness” to develop or be respected. Thus, the authorities consider it legitimate to subsidise and encourage minority school children to attend ethnocentric public schools, in an effort to inject them with ethnocentric values, but are unwilling to subsidise their attendance to secular schools. Also, issues such as confessions and the teaching of religious instruction at schools are treated by the authorities as a *sine qua non* for all children; thus those who seek to be exempted have to be somehow ‘reprimanded’ by not being afforded the opportunity for creative activity.

The Roma, being the most marginal group of Turkish-Cypriots face the brunt of their marginality and exclusion. They get the worst deal in both worlds, rejected both by the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots, as they are situated within the cleavage of the so-called ‘Cyprus problem’, which is omnipresent. The inflexibility and monolithic nature of the educational system is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the Roma who come from very different traditions than the rest of the vulnerable groups and, unlike the other vulnerable groups, find it difficult to adapt to the system. Instead of rending the system more adaptable to their needs, educational authorities are convinced that the problem lies not with the system but with the Roma. As a result, the system to a large extent rejects the Roma children who tend either to leave school early or, if they stay on, underperform and underachieve.

In a broader context, the debates around the prospects and problems of the Reform are closely interconnected to the ethnic conflict in Cyprus. Therefore to discuss the potential of tolerance, acceptance and inclusiveness of the ‘Other’ requires that we engage in the ideological and social aspects of both the content and process of education in this divided country. The study of these processes and practices has revealed an essentially ideological intolerance based on an ethnically

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41 For years, the Cypriot Courts would declare void and unconstitutional any quotas granting priority to employment in the public sector to persons with disabilities, based on an interpretation of Article 28 of the Constitution that such priority discriminates against other candidates eligible for appointment in the public service. For years, the government and the parliament were reluctant to introduce quotas in employment for fear that these would be deemed to violate the non-discrimination principle set out in Article 28 of the Constitution, based on the ECJ decision in *Kalanke* (Case No. C-450/93).

42 For further details on the doctrine of necessity, please see Trimikliniotis and Demetriou (2011).

43 The case was *Attorney General of the Republic v Mustafa Ibrahim and Others* (1964), Cyprus Law Reports 195.

exclusionary and ultimately authoritarian logic, which derives from the *educational state of exception*. At the heart of these processes lies the ‘nature’ of the Cyprus problem as a kind of a “meta-conflict”, to use the terms of the highly contested debate over the nature and meaning ‘conflict’ (McGarry and O’Leary 1995), referring to the shaping of the ‘us’ i.e. the national self. In the Cypriot context, *History* must be told, retold and taught from within the ‘Cyprus problem’ in ways which are subordinated to the cause of ‘national survival’ and through a system of ‘states of exception’ (see Constantinou 2008; Trimikliniotis, 2010). Over and above the usual European debates about migrants and migration, which are also reproduced and localised, the Cypriot educational system has at its core the making of the national ‘us’; this inevitably extends to the creation of the ‘them’ and the ‘others’, i.e. who is included/excluded, how and via what methods are the ‘otherised’ and ‘minoritised’ also subordinated to this over-arching and all-embracing ‘national problem’. These debates are affecting the reality of the Reform in the schools and in society at large, where tolerance/intolerance are reshaped and reproduced as a result.

The very notion of the educational ideals, culture and universal values are ingrained in and corrupted by the very ethnocentricity and nationalism of the education system, which is supposed to be reformed. Efforts to *universalise* education by enhancing tolerance, understanding and mutual respect would require what Wallerstein refers to as ‘universal universalism’ (2006); but to do so would first require to reverse the ‘euro-centric or relative universalism’, which is but ‘rhetoric of power’. Whilst, on a global scale imagining the tiny Republic of Cyprus as a power post would amount to an absurdity, nonetheless there is an abundance of studies showing that microstates and small countries can be just as authoritarian, majoritarian and imposing as powerful states. Hence, in Cyprus, the state exercises power over its own vulnerable ‘Others’ by construing its own ‘Hellenic’ and ‘Christian’ values’ as a priori universal values in which the ‘other’ must adopt to be ‘educated’. A research paper based on Critical Discourse Analysis of Multiculturalism and Intercultural Education Policies in the adopted educational policies (Zembylas, 2009) uncovered problematic and contradictory ideological assumptions made about multiculturalism and intercultural education. There are serious implications of those assumptions for the education of non-indigenous children as the policy documents examined illustrate how the construction of culture and diversity re-establish and conserve power asymmetries. This is where the Cyprus problem comes in. McGarry and O’Leary (1995) point out that by the very explanatory frame of a conflict, the meta-narrative of the conflict is often *an essential part of the conflict itself* as it carries with it policy recommendations as to its resolution. Therefore the meta-narrative of the conflict becomes a kind of *war by other means*, in that by describing it and relating it to one set of examples rather than another, the narratives are essentially prescribing a particular kind of solution to it.

Wallerstein’s ‘universal universalism’ can be connected to Balibar’s notion of ‘*ideal universality*’ where the histories of struggles of workers, women, anti-racist and other situated anti-oppression struggles are inscribed in. A crucial dimension of universality (Balibar, 2002: 167) is ‘the ideal non-discrimination and non-coercion’ which has re-emerged over time and has shifted continually in history. The struggles are condensed in the dialectic between violence and identity, in what Balibar (2002b: 30) abstracts as ‘civility’ which ‘excludes extremes of violence, so as to create a (public, private) space for politics, emancipation and transformation and enable violence itself to be historicized’.

If the Reform is to succeed, it requires an effective system of combating discrimination, particularly the severe forms of discrimination, exclusionary practices and manifestations of racial hatred, intolerance and violence. Drawing on extensive research over the last five years in many schools, Zembylas provides an articulate critique of the operation of tolerance/toleration in the Cypriot educational setting. His work focuses on the primary and secondary schools, working from a pedagogical rather than a general sociological perspective. He illustrates the shortcomings, if not outright failure of promoting toleration-as-respect, perceived as a means of fostering coexistence in education. Zembylas’s (2011: 390) basic critique emanates from the foundation point in Hayden’s

(2002) notion of “antagonistic tolerance”; he goes as far as arguing that “toleration and coexistence may be in tension or even incompatible”:

The political and ideological context of tolerance is clearly obvious in UNESCO’s (1995) Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (issued as part of the UN Year for Tolerance in 1995) and the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000. A brief critique of the interpretive claims made in these two documents is valuable partly because of the political impact that such documents often have on governments and school curricula. In UNESCO’s declaration, tolerance is defined as follows:

§1.1. Tolerance is respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty; it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace (Zembylas 2011: 387-388)

Zembylas (2011: 391) points out that:

“my argument does not imply that toleration is something that is not needed in educational efforts to promote peaceful coexistence. Toleration will cease to be necessary in educational efforts, if intolerant practices promoting violence and conflict become extinct, which means that toleration will always be necessary in some form or another.

Coexistence, of course, does not always create a need for toleration; yet, as I have already noted, not all coexistence is like that. Linking toleration and coexistence, then, needs to focus on the pragmatic context and the reasons that sustain conflict and intolerance: the suffering and injustice caused by intolerance; the need for humility in the way that one’s own beliefs are asserted and others’ views are rejected; the consequences of using power to impose beliefs upon others.”

The basic underlying notion of tolerating what one dislikes by being virtuous, just and prudent has been made by various scholars (McKinnon 2006). As the different approaches on the meaning and praxis of tolerance, particularly insightful are Walzer’s (1991) four distinct analytical positions referred to by Zembylas: (i) resigned acceptance of difference for the sake of peace; (ii) positive indifference permitting the ‘other’ to be different; (iii) principled recognition of the Other’s right to be different, when the right is exercised in an attractive manner; (iv) positive recognition and respect whilst not necessarily endorsing the Other’s belief or practices. These take us back to the classical debates between Lock’s pragmatic justification of non-interference versus Mill’s more positive endorsement of diversity as ‘good’. Zembylas offers a great insight and synthesis blending the Cypriot context on the ground, i.e. what is happening inside the schools with the state-of-the-art global and European debates on the subjects of tolerance, acceptance, reconciliation and multiculturalism. The empirical findings are a bleak reminder of the difficulties, barriers and contradictions of the Reform. The resistance to change, resentment and the backlash from the majoritised community of Greek Cypriot educators, pupils and parents is well illustrated. The findings provide very thorough insights into the particular forms, manifestations, processes and mutations of intolerance, often disguised as tolerance. Thus, positions urging for a slow-down of the Reform or proposing a degree of toleration towards the opponents of the Reform may in fact produce the opposite result of that initially aimed at, which is the successful implementation of the Reform. The seemingly concession to the opponents or spoilers of the Reform, as suggested by Zembylas (2011) may in fact have the undesired effect of producing more disillusionment amongst the supporters of the Reform and serve as encouragement to the opponents to continue their spoiling tactics.

Zembylas is in favour of “enriching educational theorisations of toleration and its links to coexistence in conflicting societies” grounded in two positions:

The first position is the ethics of responsibility (Levinas 1985) which views the encounter between the self and the Other as giving birth to an infinite ethical responsibility. This means, for example, that one's assessment of the interpretation(s) of (in)tolerance is grounded in the foreseeable consequences of an (in)tolerant act; thus, a foreseeable negative consequence (e.g. a racist or discriminatory action) cannot be regarded as moral. The ethical responsibility of teachers and students in a classroom, then, is to respond to (in)tolerant acts by stimulating and inspiring reflections in new directions – directions that will enable themselves to develop their capacities in discovering the interpretation(s) of (in)tolerance in each context.

Antagonistic tolerance in a Greek-Cypriot school, therefore, will have different consequences than antagonistic tolerance in a school in Israel or one in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[...]

Attention to alternative positions such as the ethics of responsibility and hospitality can encourage openness to new perspectives of tolerance and coexistence, by taking into account the wider context of vulnerable others. At the same time, it is worthwhile to remember that even the notions of responsibility and hospitality, if not interrogated enough, are vulnerable to hegemonic perceptions of tolerance.

The critique offered by Zembylas and others is sound: it is essential to constantly rethink the methods, re-evaluate the situation and renew the conceptual tools that would enhance the goals of the project of realising “the promise of pedagogy”, to utilise the term coined by George Tsiakalos (2002), the current chair of the Reform committee.

Freire's insistence that to be a pedagogue one has to necessarily be political, whilst at the same time be an artist can and inspire those committed to an open, democratic and equal society that accepts and recognises all.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Referred to in Tsiakalos, 2002; see also Giroux, 2010.

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