

Global Perspectives on the Role of Dialogue in History Education

Socio-cultural, Psychological, and Digital Dimensions

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Chapter 3

Contested history teaching and dialogue in divided Cyprus

Charis Psaltis, Meltem Onurkan-Samani, Marina Kyprianou, and Hasan Samani

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3 Contested history teaching and dialogue in divided Cyprus*

*Charis Psaltis, Meltem Onurkan-Samani,
Marina Kyprianou, and Hasan Samani*

Heritage and history

Numerous scholars have evaluated the diverse methods through which history education, particularly at the school level, is approached. Lowenthal's (1998) differentiation between "heritage" and "history" holds particular relevance in the context of Cyprus, where historical narratives are deeply intertwined with identity politics and the conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. When school curricula present "history" as "heritage" in Cyprus, they often perpetuate the selective myths of origin and lineage favored by each community. Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots have their distinct versions of historical events, which are often deeply entrenched in their respective collective memories and nationalist ideologies. These narratives, rooted in belief-driven representations, not only overlook certain elements of the past but also fuel prejudiced pride and reinforce divisive identities. In contrast, a more multiperspective approach to history suggests that no single group has an exclusive right over specific narratives or truths. However, achieving multiperspectivity is challenging in Cyprus, where historical interpretations are often politicized and manipulated to serve nationalist agendas. Scholars like Wertsch (1997, 2002) and Seixas (2000) further highlight the dichotomy between "collective memory" and "history," underscoring the importance of distinguishing between narratives shaped by belief and those based on knowledge. In Cyprus, the challenge lies in reconciling these divergent narratives to promote

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understanding and dialogue across the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities. Moscovici's (1984, 1988) distinction between social representations based on belief and those based on knowledge is particularly relevant, as it elucidates how history education in Cyprus can either perpetuate division or serve as a catalyst for reconciliation.

Heritage and nationalism

Teaching history as an unwavering doctrine—or rendering it as heritage rooted in belief-driven representations—has detrimental implications for education, particularly in the context of Cyprus. The dictation of a singular, “correct” interpretation of the past relegates students to become passive receivers of information, inhibiting their critical thinking and analytical skills. As Seixas (2000, p. 23) points out, the rich, often contentious process of historical investigation, rife with debates over truth and meaning, gets distilled into a rote set of facts to be merely memorized. In Cyprus, where historical narratives are deeply intertwined with identity politics and the conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, nationalism exacerbates this issue by favoring one perspective over another. This perpetuates exclusionary and essentialist constructs, further deepening the divide between communities. Since youths are pivotal in developing national identity, and these constructs often take root within the educational space, the impact is profound. By promoting a nationalist agenda, history as heritage constrains educator–student relationships to a rigid one-way transmission, inhibiting the exploration of diverse perspectives and curtailing the possibility of open dialogue. Such teaching methods can exacerbate existing divisions between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, making it harder to foster mutual understanding and reconciliation. Efforts to promote a more inclusive and nuanced approach to history education are essential for overcoming these divisions and building sustainable peace in Cyprus.

Moral judgment and social relations

The way we approach the past, whether as history or heritage, implies different ethical positions in interactions between participants, such as educators and students. Drawing from Piaget's work on children's moral judgment (1932), we find two orientations in social interactions: constraint and cooperation. A constrained social relationship, often seen in nationalistic education, promotes a singular historical perspective that hinders intellectual and moral growth. This approach fosters conformity and passive learning, limiting students' ability to engage critically and understand multiple perspectives.

Conversely, cooperative interactions foster genuine dialogue and intellectual exchange, translating to an open forum where educators and students actively share and debate various perspectives, reshaping their understanding of the past. Such cooperative settings prioritize shared discovery over one-sided ideas, allowing students to reconstruct knowledge actively. This approach develops autonomy, critical thinking, and innovation. In history teaching,

knowledge becomes fluid and shaped by discussions, free from the constraints of an authoritative master narrative. Piaget emphasized that for optimal intellectual and moral development, students need freedom from oppressive influences, guided by logic, mutual respect, and intrinsic curiosity.

In the context of Cyprus, the way history is approached holds significant implications for societal cohesion and reconciliation efforts. Nationalistic teachings can narrow students' understanding of the world and exacerbate societal divisions, particularly in a region where historical interpretations often serve as tools of political manipulation. To foster an inclusive society and promote mutual understanding, education in Cyprus should engage with multiple narratives, question established beliefs, and encourage critical examination of the past. By adopting a cooperative approach to history teaching, educators can help students overcome entrenched divisions and develop the critical thinking skills necessary to understand and appreciate diverse perspectives. This emphasis on cooperation and critical engagement is essential for fostering a culture of reconciliation and mutual respect in Cyprus, ultimately contributing to efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace and stability in the region.

Decentering: overcoming polarization

The pedagogical shift toward overcoming both naïve realism and naïve relativism offers a nuanced approach to history education (Lee, Dickinson & Ashby, 2013; Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2004). This balanced perspective encourages students to value various historical interpretations, fostering mutual respect and understanding. When students and teachers present their interpretations and the rationale behind them, they acknowledge the reasoning capabilities of others, treating them as equal participants in dialogue. This engagement aligns with social constructivism, where knowledge is constructed through dialogue and interaction.

Decentering, or moving away from one's entrenched perspective to appreciate alternative viewpoints, is essential for cooperative interactions, as described by Piaget. Recognizing that their perspective is one of many, students can synthesize diverse viewpoints, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of historical events. In the context of Cyprus, this approach can be pivotal in addressing the long-standing division between Greek-Cypriots (GCs) and Turkish-Cypriots (TCs).

The "heritage vs. history" and "constraint vs. cooperation" dichotomies serve as tools to understand various pedagogical approaches, seen as endpoints on a continuum that allows for diverse teaching methods. These frameworks are particularly relevant to the Cyprus peace process, as they help educators navigate the sensitive and contested narratives of both communities. By fostering an educational environment that values multiple perspectives and critical thinking, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of Cyprus's complex history.

Habermas (1985a, b) emphasizes the importance of cooperative interactions for genuine understanding and societal progress, aligning with the modern pedagogical shift in history education. By co-constructing knowledge, educators prepare students to navigate a complex world, valuing diversity and

mutual respect. Decentration, essential for fostering an inclusive and democratic society, opposes the reductive instrumental rationality of modernity and the authoritarian impositions that stifle democratic growth.

In Cyprus, where historical narratives are deeply intertwined with identity politics and the conflict between GCs and TCs, this pedagogical shift can contribute to peacebuilding efforts. By encouraging students to engage with and respect multiple historical perspectives, educators can help dismantle entrenched biases and promote a culture of reconciliation. This approach not only enriches students' understanding of history but also equips them with the skills needed for constructive dialogue and conflict resolution.

The role of the educator

History education is not conducted in a vacuum; competent educators are crucial for establishing effective teaching practices and developing essential life skills like critical thinking and perspective-taking (Seixas & Peck, 2004). Teachers' epistemic beliefs shape their teaching aims and influence how history lessons are conducted (Brauch, 2017; Sakki & Pirttilä-Backman, 2019). Their practices frame the complex classroom reality, impacting how students form their historical understandings. Specifically, teachers are responsible for the contextual triangulation of the history teaching process (Makriyanni et al., 2011). In the context of Cyprus, educators who foster representations of belief in the classroom reinforce existing master narratives, enhancing nationalistic understandings that shape students' interpersonal and intergroup relations.

These triadic relations occur at both micro- and macro-levels (Doise, 1986), where representations available to students (belief or knowledge) can legitimize broader societal contexts. This process influences intergroup interactions and personal relations (Makriyanni et al., 2011). Educators play a critical role in shaping students' perspectives, particularly in a divided society like Cyprus. Their approach to teaching history can either perpetuate the divisions or help bridge the gap between GCs and TCs. By promoting critical thinking and perspective-taking, teachers can challenge the entrenched master narratives that have long fueled the conflict. This can lead to a more nuanced understanding of history among students, fostering empathy and mutual respect.

Teachers who emphasize the importance of multiple perspectives and critical analysis in history education can help students move beyond simplistic, nationalistic narratives. This approach can encourage students to view historical events from various angles, understand the complexities of the past, and appreciate the experiences and viewpoints of the other community. In Cyprus, where historical narratives are deeply tied to identity and conflict, such an educational shift can be instrumental in securing peace.

By integrating critical thinking and perspective-taking into history education, teachers can help students develop the skills needed for constructive dialogue and reconciliation. This not only enriches students' understanding of history but also prepares them to engage in the ongoing peace process in Cyprus, contributing to a more cohesive and harmonious society.

National identification and narrative formation through history education: the case of Cyprus

A short historical background of Cypriot history

Cyprus has a history marked by diverse rulers. In 1571, the island fell under Ottoman rule, which lasted until 1878 when the British took administrative control. During British colonial rule, Greek Cypriots (GCs) made up 80% of the population, while Turkish Cypriots (TCs) comprised 18%. Nationalist agendas from Greece and later Turkey strained this coexistence. Initial intercommunal tensions emerged between 1957 and 1958, against the backdrop of the GC-led EOKA movement for independence from the British and unification with Greece (*enosis*). Concurrently, the TC leadership, led by TMT, pursued “*taksim*” or the partition of Cyprus between Greece and Turkey.

In 1960, Cyprus achieved independence, establishing the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), but this did not align with the aspirations of nationalist leaderships. Tensions culminated in inter-ethnic clashes in 1963, prompting the deployment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP) in 1964. Despite their presence, sporadic inter-ethnic confrontations persisted until 1967, with TCs suffering significant casualties and the displacement of about one-fifth of their community.

The ascent of a military junta in Greece led to a shift in the GC leadership’s objectives. Departing from the goal of *enosis*, they aimed to insulate Cyprus from Athens’ political machinations. Although clashes between TCs and GCs dwindled after 1967, internal strife within the GC community intensified. In 1974, the Greek junta, with the local help of the extremist ultranationalist group EOKA B, staged a coup against President Archbishop Makarios, aiming for the “*enosis*” (union) of Cyprus with Greece. This act prompted a military intervention/invasion (depending on the master narrative employed by each community) by Turkey, resulting in the division of Cyprus and the relocation of populations: GCs to the south and TCs to the north.

On November 15, 1983, the TC leadership unilaterally proclaimed the formation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in the north, which only Turkey recognized until today. In 2003, travel restrictions between the two sides were eased, and checkpoints were opened on April 23, 2003, allowing crossings between the communities. In 2004, both communities participated in separate referendums regarding the Annan Plan. While 65% of TCs approved it, 72% of GCs rejected it.

After 2008, dialogue resumed intermittently between representatives and leaders of both communities, aiming for a settlement rooted in a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation (BBF). Another effort was made between 2015 and 2017 by TC leader Mustafa Akıncı and GC leader Nicos Anastasiades. Despite negotiations in July 2017 at Crans Montana, Switzerland, they failed to reach a solution on the basis of the UN Secretary-General Guterres’ “Guterres Package.” After this, a new nationalist TC leadership under Ersin Tatar,

supported by Turkey, shifted policy toward “sovereign equality” for the TC community, interpreted by GCs as a two-state solution, which is incompatible with the UN-supported BBF model.

The nature of the Cyprus issue and the role of history teaching

National identification and narrative formation

The Cyprus issue is a complex conflict involving internal tensions between Greek Cypriots (GCs) and Turkish Cypriots (TCs), exacerbated by external interventions. These dimensions implicate identity politics within and between the communities (Papadakis, 2003; Psaltis, 2012). Social identity dynamics, including relations with “motherlands” Greece and Turkey, affect the prospects for a solution (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016), shaping students’ identities as ethnocentric constructions with GCs promoting a Greek identity and TCs a Turkish identity, each viewing the other as the enemy (Perikleous, 2015; Perikleous, et al., 2021).

Geographical division has resulted in distinct collective memories and historical narratives, with GCs and TCs perceiving themselves as victims (Psaltis, 2016). GC narratives begin with Greek arrival in Cyprus and portray Turks as the enemy, while TC narratives start with the arrival of the Ottomans in Cyprus and portray Greeks as the enemy (Papadakis, 2008a). GC narratives suggest peaceful coexistence challenged by Turkey and its “barbaric invasion” in 1974, whereas TC narratives view Turkey’s 1974 arrival as redemption or a “happy peace operation” (Lytras & Psaltis, 2011; Psaltis et al., 2014). Political elites in both communities promote these narratives (Onurkan-Samani & Tarhan, 2017).

Every attempt in changing the official master narratives within Cypriot historical texts in both communities has been met by political pushbacks (Makriyanni & Psaltis, 2007; Makriyianni, Psaltis & Latif, 2011; Hálfdanarson, & Kızılyürek, 2010). With joining the European Union, the RoC made various attempts at reforms regarding the aims and ways of history teaching (Makriyanni & Psaltis, 2007; Makriyianni et al., 2011; Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013); however, there has been a gap between the theoretical aspirations and the actual practice of teaching the curricula (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013).

In the GC community, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church heavily influenced decisions vis-à-vis content of history books and resisted any suggestions for substantial changes (Makriyianni et al., 2011). Within the TC community however, a transition between governing administrations in 2004 provided an opportunity to implement a social constructivist approach within history textbooks in order to mitigate the status quo of the divisive political narrative. The then (2004) newly elected government commissioned a group of academics, historians, and teachers to revise the nationalist ethnocentric orientation of the textbooks and instead move toward a more Cypro-centric orientation, combined with the values of a culture of peace (Perikleous et al.,

2021). The commission undertook a pedagogical approach in addressing underlying assumptions by shifting from knowledge transmission to skill cultivation such as critical thinking and multiperspectivity (Papadakis, 2008b). Under this auspice, master narratives emphasizing the “*bad*” and “*good*” guy were challenged and replaced by a joint narrative that shared blame (Papadakis, 2008b). The newly revised text also promoted notions of a united, federal Cyprus based on political equality—iterated in maps depicting the island without dividing lines (Perikleous et al., 2021). Despite these significant achievements, a right-wing government elected in 2009 severed all efforts of a comprehensive revision and the content of history books shifted back to the old master narrative presentation (Makriyianni et al., 2011).

Different social representations of the Cyprus issue are reinforced through rituals, national symbols, memorials, and media propaganda, cultivating monoperspectival victim narratives in both communities (Psaltis et al., 2014; Makriyianni, Psaltis, & Latif, 2011). These narratives contribute to prejudice and distrust (Psaltis, 2016), linked to perceived symbolic and realistic threats (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009), which hinder progress toward a UN-supported bicommunal, bizonal federation solution (Psaltis, 2012, 2016).

Bi-communal civil society initiatives

The role of AHDR and H4C

The opening of the checkpoints on April 23, 2003, marked a significant moment, allowing Greek Cypriot (GC) and Turkish Cypriot (TC) teachers and academics to meet outside peacebuilding workshops. This led to the formation of the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) on December 19, 2003, as the first bi-communal NGO. AHDR aimed to promote productive dialogue and research on history teaching to foster peace, stability, and democracy and to critically analyze educational policies on both sides.

AHDR's board included GC and TC historians, teachers and social psychologists. The organization sought to ensure that history teaching was free from political distortion, promoting true historical understanding. Its educational materials encouraged active learning, self-assessment, and multiperspectivity, incorporating local, European, and international contexts. AHDR emphasized understanding history as a discipline, respecting evidence, and appreciating the limitations of historical knowledge.

Soon after its establishment, AHDR partnered with the Council of Europe (CoE) on history teaching programs in conflict and post-conflict societies. The board often met in the UN Buffer Zone at the Ledra Palace Hotel. After five years, AHDR secured a grant to refurbish a building near Ledra Palace, creating a bicommunal educational center called the Home for Co-operation.

AHDR challenged ethnocentric narratives in both communities, meeting resistance but creating a “third [bi-communal] space” (Makriyianni, Psaltis & Latif, 2011) was indeed made possible. Despite this, the dominance of

ethnocentric narratives has limited its influence on the two educational systems (Perikleous et al., 2021). AHDR continues to offer inter-communal history teaching training, provide supplementary materials, facilitate dialogue-based knowledge exchanges, and offer policy proposals (AHDR, n.d.). Initially, it avoided controversial issues but published on topics like Cyprus's Ottoman past and life in mixed villages but it later also published material related to the missing persons in Cyprus and abroad.

The Home for Co-operation (H4C) revitalized the buffer zone by restoring a historic building into a multi-communal center for training, education, and co-operation (inspired by the Piagetian notion of relations of co-operation). This transformed the buffer zone from a symbol of division to one of co-operation. Preparations for the grant and building purchase began in 2008, and by May 2011, the renovated building opened as a conference venue with NGO offices and a café. H4C had support from local authorities, teacher unions, and the leadership of both communities and has recently won a number of international awards.

The role of the bicommunal technical committee of education

On November 15, 2015, 32 years after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of the TRNC by nationalist leader Rauf Denktaş, public school students in the Greek Cypriot community of Cyprus organized protests. Despite the ongoing peace negotiations, members of the far-right party ELAM threw stones at Turkish Cypriot (TC) cars in south Nicosia on November 16, 2015. This incident was condemned by the Greek Cypriot (GC) leader, the Ministry of Education, the student union, and all political parties except ELAM. TC leader Mustafa Akıncı demanded the perpetrators' arrest, resulting in four student arrests on November 18, 2015.

This event spurred public discussions about the need for educational systems to promote reconciliation. It created a political opportunity for an institution to bring together students and teachers from both communities. In the following week, Dr. Meltem Onurkan Samani, Dr. Charis Psaltis, and Rena Choplarou lobbied for a bicommunal committee of education. A proposal was drafted, and on November 23, 2015, a UN representative announced the establishment of the Bicommunal Technical Committee of Education. The committee's mandate included the following:

- 1 Reviewing research and good practices in education to promote peace, reconciliation, and counter prejudice, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and extremism.
- 2 Devising mechanisms for confidence-building measures in schools and promoting contact and cooperation between students and educators from both communities.
- 3 Recommending policies for coordinating the two educational systems to support a viable, sustainable, and functional bi-communal, bi-zonal federation.

The committee achieved notable successes, including launching the bi-communal peace education project *Imagine*, which brought over 5,000 students together at the Home for Cooperation. It facilitated head-teacher meetings and buffer zone activities for primary school children, attended by community leaders and praised by the UN Secretary-General (UN, 2018). The committee also produced a report proposing revisions to textbooks and curricula, though these proposals were not adopted by the leaderships as of late 2023.

Despite these positive signals, the committee also faced resistance, particularly from the GC community, on history education issues. This resistance is attributed to concerns about reactions to changes that might threaten official narratives (Perikleous et al., 2021). The dominance of conflicting ethnocentric narratives has hindered changes in history teaching. After the 2020 election of TC leader Ersin Tatar, the committee's work nearly halted, and the *Imagine* project was stopped unilaterally by the TC leadership. Nevertheless, the committee's efforts persevere through local avenues among civil society actors. Organizations such as the Cyprus Peace and Dialogue Center facilitate workshops in a bicomunal fashion focused on presenting history and the peace process through a social constructivist approach. Engagement with progressive teacher unions has also paved the road for alternative opportunities to reconstruct the historical narrative, identifying innovative ways to reorient students' understanding of historical context outside the traditional classroom model.

A new civil initiative: Cyprus Peace and Dialogue Centre (CPDC)

In 2021, two of the authors (M. Samani and C. Psaltis) embarked on an initiative aimed at uniting pro-solution federalists from both sides of the Cyprus divide. Drawing upon their combined expertise in successive political peace processes, history education, and grassroots peacebuilding, they established the Cyprus Peace and Dialogue Centre (CPDC). The CPDC is dedicated to fostering lasting cross-community solutions to the Cyprus problem, focusing on four key areas: policy, grassroots dialogue and cultural reconciliation, cross-community civil society networking, and economy and commerce. Within these areas, CPDC members have employed a "track 1.5" model, blending core negotiation issues with civil society dialogue and traditional confidence-building measures (CBMs).

A central tenet of CPDC's CBM strategy is the incorporation of spaces that promote historical dialogue in a bicomunal fashion. These spaces provide a forum for interlocutors to exchange diverse accounts of their lived experiences and memories of conflict in Cyprus. The goal is to transcend official Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot narratives, enabling participants to deconstruct ethno-nationalist identities and confront biases. This informal dialogue serves as a crucial platform for exchanging fears, traumas, concerns, and hopes, facilitating a meaningful healing process that has yet to be institutionalized in

Cyprus. These initiatives are pivotal to CPDC's overarching mission of cultivating a culture of peace essential for a lasting resolution to the Cyprus problem.

CPDC strategically leverages its bi-communal identity to bridge gaps in understanding between different perspectives. For example, Turkish Cypriot facilitators may present the Greek Cypriot perspective, recognizing that neutrality fosters greater openness within the community. Additionally, CPDC regularly conducts workshops for a bi-communal group of Cypriot teens through the Cyprus Friendship Program. Using a question-led methodology, facilitators tailor the curriculum to students' interests in Cypriot history. During these workshops, students engage in critical analysis of official Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot narratives, highlighting discrepancies and fostering nuanced understanding.

These educational engagements often reveal gaps in historical knowledge and perceptions among participants. For instance, many students were unaware of the reasons behind the deployment of UN Peacekeeping forces to Cyprus in 1964. Through guided research and discussion, participants acknowledged their limited awareness of opposing viewpoints and recognized the need for a more comprehensive understanding of Cypriot history. This realization inspired many students to continue their engagement with CPDC, appreciating the opportunity to openly explore and challenge prevailing narratives.

Despite initial biases and resistance, participants gradually develop a more nuanced understanding of historical events and their implications for the Cyprus problem. CPDC views these educational and academic engagements as essential for fostering innovative and sustainable pathways to peace. Rather than solely focusing on the differences between potential solutions, CPDC emphasizes the importance of addressing how contrasting historical narratives perpetuate division and hinder progress. By providing opportunities for historical dialogue and encouraging participants to engage openly with history in a safe environment, CPDC seeks to bridge divides and broaden Cypriot perspectives to encompass national, regional, and international identities.

CPDC's efforts are informed by ongoing research into societal perceptions, fears, and hopes regarding the Cyprus problem. Recent findings highlight disparities in attitudes between different demographic groups, with women and youths in the Turkish Cypriot community more inclined toward a solution compared to their counterparts in the Greek Cypriot community. Additionally, concerns persist regarding the potential resurgence of nationalism and racism, particularly within education systems and other institutions shaping national identity. Moving forward, CPDC aims to address misrepresentations of history, confront past traumas, increase empathy, and find common ground in historical interpretations to facilitate progress toward reconciliation.

In conclusion, CPDC's reconciliatory projects and activities are integral to preparing communities for a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem. By uniting peacebuilders and fostering common understanding through a social constructivist approach to education, CPDC endeavors to pave the way for lasting peace and inter-communal integration in Cyprus.

Conclusion

In places with complex histories like Cyprus, emphasizing the values of cooperation and decentration becomes even more critical. It is paramount in aiding students to develop skills such as critical thinking and multiperspectivity and in encouraging future advancements toward resolving the Cyprus issue (Psaltis, 2012). The “dialectics of co-operation” can enable opposing groups with long-standing animosities and mistrust to engage in constructive dialogues, fostering understanding of different historical narratives and paving the way for harmonious coexistence.

As Lowenthal (1998) and other scholars have highlighted, differentiating between “heritage” and “history” is essential. Teaching history as heritage perpetuates misconceptions and biases, whereas a more neutral and universal approach to history fosters evolutive discussion and minimizes biases. This distinction is crucial in Cyprus, where historical narratives can either perpetuate division or promote understanding and dialogue.

Drawing from Piaget’s work on children’s moral judgment (1932), the orientation toward cooperative interactions, rather than constrained, hierarchical relationships, fosters genuine dialogue and intellectual exchange. Cooperative settings prioritize shared discovery over one-sided ideas, allowing students to actively reconstruct knowledge and develop autonomy, critical thinking, and innovation.

The pedagogical shift toward overcoming both naïve realism and naïve relativism, as suggested by scholars like Lee, Dickinson, and Ashby (1998) and Van Boxtel & Van Drie (2004), offers a nuanced approach to history education. This balanced perspective encourages students to value various historical interpretations, fostering mutual respect and understanding. In Cyprus, this approach can be pivotal in addressing the long-standing division between Greek-Cypriots (GCs) and Turkish-Cypriots (TCs).

Educators play a critical role in shaping students’ perspectives, particularly in a divided society like Cyprus. By promoting critical thinking and perspective-taking, teachers can challenge entrenched master narratives that have long-fueled conflict. This can lead to a more nuanced understanding of history among students, fostering empathy and mutual respect.

Furthermore, democratizing the curriculum and involving civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in sharing multiple narratives and histories can challenge monolithic, state-sanctioned versions of history. Schools can play a pivotal role in nurturing democratic values by becoming spaces of inclusivity, teaching students to appreciate different narratives and promoting deliberative dialogues. This can cultivate a generation of citizens who value mutual respect and cooperation.

Ultimately, the essence of this philosophy lies in promoting genuine dialogue, free from hidden agendas or coercive forces, which has often been the reality in the context of Cyprus. Politically influenced curricula (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013) have helped perpetuate master historical narratives

presented in current history books (Zembylas & Karahasan, 2017). In contrast, an environment where conversations are based on mutual respect, where every participant's voice is heard and valued, not only enriches the educational experience but also serves as a foundational principle for a thriving democratic society. By integrating critical thinking and perspective-taking into history education, educators can help students develop the skills needed for constructive dialogue and reconciliation, contributing to a more cohesive and harmonious society. Reflecting on these insights, it becomes clear that a more critical approach to dialogue in history education can significantly contribute to peacebuilding in Cyprus. By creating spaces for open dialogue and promoting mutual understanding, educators can help students navigate the complexities of their shared history and build a more inclusive future.

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