

THE ROLE OF PEACE EDUCATION IN POST-CONFLICT ZONES OF CYPRUS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY

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Abstract

Cyprus has attracted the attention of several civilizations from past to present due to its geopolitical location in the Mediterranean. The fact that different states ruled in the island throughout its history has left a variety of traces in social, cultural, economic and political life. Due to the background of Cyprus, which goes deep into history, it is possible to see the different characteristics of the powers that ruled there, especially the traces of the education policies formulated by the British, who held the administration of the island in the 19th and 20th centuries, among the islanders today. Cyprus, one of the former British colonies with prolonged conflicts resulting in geopolitical division, has unique cultural characteristics compared to other British colonies (in Africa and Asia). In addition, it is seen as a place where different colonial policies were applied, since the political structure greatly influenced the educational structures and practices after the British period. The education system in Cyprus has always been intertwined with changing political developments both at home and abroad. In this island with two different ethnic groups which is governed from outside, education system inevitably became the reflection of debates and disagreements. As a result, in addition to being an effective institution where political outlooks and interests are reflected, education should be considered as one of the mechanisms through which governments can be successful in the post-conflict period. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explain the importance of peace education in a post-conflict environment, in the light of the foreign language education policies pursued in Cyprus from past to present, and to define a few strategies that post-conflict societies can implement. This study is based on the qualitative analysis of governmental archives and empirical studies taking into consideration political developments at the focus of foreign language education policy. As a result, education in conflict-affected situations is more than providing services to the community. Because it is a means of socialization and identity development through transmitting knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes across generations. Education can hence be both a driver of conflict and a way to contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Keywords: Foreign language education policy, post-conflict zone, peace education, Cyprus.

1. Introduction

Language policy is crucially ethical, political, and legally relevant to all authorities worldwide. For this reason, Spolsky (2004) contends that language policy is a consequence of traditions, ideas, and preferences in society, which, although separate from one another, are connected. Thus, language policy is sometimes thought to be transparent, accompanied by declarations made by government agencies, laws, regulations, and constitutional requirements. Most of the time, the language policy is secret and can only be retrieved from observed applications (Bamgbose, 2020). The multifaceted nature of language politics, whose creation and implementation are claimed to have been primarily influenced by political, social, economic, and cultural influences (Spolsky, 2004, p. 6; Baldauf, 2006, p. 149), is further revealed in post-colonial nations when conflicts develop over problems of language, identity, and power (Phillipson, 1992, p. 110). A linguistic and cultural legacy from colonial eras persists in certain post-colonial societies at the cost of the local language. In others, policies are changed to favor local language and foster national identity and unity. English was especially adopted in numerous nations during colonialism. In addition, the global spread of English has made it a significant factor affecting the language policy of governments worldwide (Spolsky, 2004; Bamgbose, 2020). A country's foreign language education policy decision includes which foreign language to teach, for what purposes, and for how long. Indeed, it is indisputable that the priority assigned to foreign language education differs from country to country. For instance, in

Cyprus, the significance of the English language is tied to linguistic ideology due to the country's British colonial heritage.

Due to its geopolitical location in the Mediterranean, Cyprus has drawn the interest of various civilizations from the past to current. As several nations dominated the island throughout history, distinct imprints have been left in the island's social, cultural, economic, and political life. Two of these results have been multiculturalism, which is the mingling of diverse cultures, and multilingualism. The authority, the ruler of the era, introduced modifications and practices in Cyprus's administration and education system in keeping with its national policies. Cyprus, one of the former British colonies, is considered to be a place where different colonial policies were applied, as it had very different cultural characteristics from all other British colonies (Africa and Asia), and the political structure greatly influenced the educational constructs and practices following the British Period (Persianis, 1996, p. 45). Considering all this history, it is apparent that some of the relics representing the civilizations on the island, which is home to numerous states, have remained to the present day. In Cyprus's long and tumultuous history, notably in the 19th and 20th centuries, the United Kingdom, which governed the island, left significant effects on the islanders with its education policies. According to Zembylas (2002), Cyprus can be thought of as a developing postcolonial country struggling to strike a balance between local traditions and global influences. Thus, the education system in Cyprus has always been interwoven with shifting political developments both at home and abroad. The school system has unavoidably become a mirror of discussions and controversies on an island of many races, governed from outside the nation and now divided into two. As a result, education has been an influential institution in which political expressions and interests are represented (Heraclidou, 2012, p. 47). In addition, education should be seen as one of how governments that may succeed in the post-conflict period. Therefore, this study aims to explain the necessity of peace education in a post-conflict society.

The island has been divided since 1974 between a Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the north, which is only recognized by Turkey, and a Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus in the south, which is recognized by the rest of the world. The 1974 Green Line cease-fire line, which cuts through the center of the capital Nicosia, is protected by UN troops. But since 2003, travelers are welcome to travel freely between the two halves of the island. Eight hundred thirty-seven thousand three hundred people were living on the island in 2004, of whom 651,100 (77.8%) were Greek Cypriots and spoke Greek, 88,100 (10.5%) were Turkish Cypriots and spoke Turkish, and 98,100 (11.7%) were international residents living in Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot community includes three small, long-established religious and linguistic groups: Armenians, Latin-rite Christians, and Maronite Christians who speak traditional Arabic (Ratcliffe, 2005).

2. Background of the study

Historical documentation and archeological evidence date back to antiquity for Cyprus. The history of the English association with the island is likewise ancient. During the Third Crusade in 1191, Richard, I of England, sometimes known as "The Lionhearted," captured the island from the Byzantines. Following Richard, Guy de Lusignan, a Frankish warrior and explorer took control of the island. His descendants maintained it until 1489 when it was handed down naturally to the Venetians. The locals, who continued to be Greek-speaking and Orthodox, did not embrace either French, Italian, or Latin Christianity at this time. However, at this time, Levantine Latin-rite (Maronite) Christians who spoke Arabic immigrated to other countries. They have maintained their distinctive Arabic dialect up until recently, which has been greatly influenced by interaction with Greek. The island was taken from the Venetians in 1571, and the Ottomans theoretically held control of it until 1923. But Great Britain governed the island through a treaty with the Ottomans starting in 1878, took control of it during World War I, regained sovereignty over it in 1923, and declared it a crown colony in 1925. Greek and Turkish, the island's two separate language groups, had different ideas about the post-colonial future, which hindered the independence movement in Cyprus after World War II. The majority of Greek Cypriots supported joining Greece, while Turkish Cypriots supported partition (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 252-253).

Since 1931, the British, who were exposed to the revolts instigated by the Greeks, replied to the Turkish and Greek sides by putting penalties on the Turkish and Greek sides, first and foremost in the sphere of education. The administration, which only restricted the education of both populations a bit before the Greek insurrection, adopted a different stance following the revolution. Thus, in 1931, the British Colonial Period witnessed the effect of the language employed by the colonial power (English) on the education systems of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The colonial government's objective was to drive Greek and Turkish Cypriots away from their ethnic centers and toward Cyprus under the British administration. The nationalist groups formed with the internal tensions between the two communities from the mid-1950s onwards stopped using Greek as a lingua franca. Between 1956 and 1959, this phase

culminated in a breach of the Greek language in Turkish Cypriot educational institutions. Internal disputes and civil instability between the two communities marked the end of Greek as the opposing side's language in Turkish Cypriot schools (Uysal and Çağanağa, 2022).

Great Britain, Greece, and Turkey were designated as guarantor powers to maintain peace among the communities when Cyprus attained independence in 1960. In 1963, inter-communal conflict erupted, prompting UN troops to intervene and construct the Green Line separating the communities. English, Turkish, and Greek have all been recognized as the official languages since the Republic's founding, strengthening it even more. As one of the three guarantors of the Republic required by the Cyprus Constitution, Turkey intervened in the island when the military government in Greece attempted to overthrow the Cypriot government in 1974. Moreover, a third of each ethnic group had to flee their homes before a ceasefire was quickly formed (Ratcliffe, 2005).

The opening of the border gates in 2003 enabled the two communities to re-establish a connection with one another. This predicament carried with it the language dilemma as the two ethnolinguistic communities of Cyprus re-established communication after 29 years of division. In 2003, the new generation could no longer speak the other group's language, prompting English to be utilized as a 'lingua franca'. This abrupt transformation has also contributed to the expansion of English as a common language across the two populations in Cyprus. This can be regarded as a rare event, especially considering Cyprus is a post-colonial state. Today, English remains the only common contact medium between the two populations. The translation of Cyprus Law is also employed in public activities like policy choices, inter-group communication, and tourist activities. More specifically, although the majority of key official documents are now published in Greek or Turkish, English continues to predominate in announcements and marketing in the commercial sector (Uysal and Çağanağa, 2022).

3. Peace education

Etymologically the term 'peace' originates (11th century) most recently from the Anglo-French *pes*, and the Old French *pais*, meaning "peace, reconciliation, silence, agreement" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2013). The question which this paper is trying to answer is what the role of peace education in post-conflict zones of Cyprus in the light of the foreign language education policies is. The article's primary aim is to explore the terms 'peace', 'a culture of peace' and 'conflict zones'. It is concerned with how a culture of peace can be constructed that underlines the use of communication. This focus on peace has been motivated by the belief that it is necessary to understand as fully as possible the processes by which people internalize a knowledge of a foreign language. Such an understanding will contribute to foreign language policy research and serve as a basis for peace education. The focus on foreign language policies is additionally motivated by the conviction that a theory of peace education needs to be explicitly formulated so that statements about how people learn a foreign language and how peace education ought to be taught can be subjected to critical scrutiny.

A good starting point, then, is to try to define 'peace education'. The term exists in opposition to violence: peace and violence. The difference between the two concepts can be examined from a sociological, psychological, and an educational viewpoint. Sociologically, the distinction between peace and violence can be viewed as one of the domains. Domains are constellations of factors that affected by language and how people interact with each other. The domains of a culture of peace may be affected by language and the way people interact with each other. History, the spirit of the time, people, people's understanding, perception, and feelings are all crucial factors shaping society's way of looking at certain concepts and accepting to live them. The differences in each of these dimensions are fairly evident and need little comment. Psychologically, the critical distinction is between 'formal' and 'informal' peace processes. Formal peace processes involve some kind of state activity. For example, an attempt to learn about the culture of the 'other' by obtaining information explicitly. Informal one may take place through observation and direct participation in communication.

Educationalists often distinguish the idea of 'peace education' and 'a culture of peace'. 'Peace education' typically occurs in classrooms. It involves some deliberate attempt to shape the learning atmosphere in the belief that by so doing, the people will be able to acquire the knowledge of peace and reflect it on their behavior. The people are the most excellent resource for building a culture of peace. Peace education, which fosters a culture of peace, is fundamentally transforming. "It cultivates the information foundation, skills, attitudes and values that strive to modify people mindsets, attitudes and behaviors that, in the first place, have either produced or aggravated violent conflicts". The intervention must cater to official peace procedures, namely peace education. Peace education include learning about conflicts and their peaceful resolutions. It also entails engaging young people in expressing their thoughts and working together to decrease violence in society. Peace education is defined by UNICEF as "the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to bring about behavior change

that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace whether at an interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level" (Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace, 2010, p.xiii). It is critical to consider the social and cultural circumstances, as well as the demands of the nations. Values help individuals live their lives and structure their society. "Being a decent human being" is one of the universal ideals that extends beyond this definition. We need international cooperation institutions that are powerful enough to insist on universal ideals. The purpose of universal values is not to eradicate all differences, but rather to assist us in managing them with mutual respect. Tolerance and conversation are crucial because without them, there can be no peaceful exchange of views or agreement on solutions that enable various civilizations to grow in their own manner. In today's linked society, there is another method to discover universal ideals, which we can name the dialectic. This strategy is participating in argument and conversation with those who have different points of view in order to achieve an agreement on what we all agree on. Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher, is one modern-day supporter of this method (1929-). Habermas created the concept of "an ideal speech situation" to describe how ethical and political debate takes place. This is an envisioned technique of dialoguing about complicated subjects in which all participants may discuss and argue their perspectives equally. In such a circumstance, the goal is to reach some kind of agreement so that the community may promote its views and ideals (UNODC, 2017).

4. Results and discussion

How can we develop our understanding of peace education? How can we build a society full of people with tolerance, respect, cooperation, understanding and respect for diversity?

One way is to accept that peace education or a culture of peace is transformative. In other words, to build awareness and understand each other, people are to live, relate, and create conditions for nonviolence, mutual respect, and tolerance. It is essential to understand the perspectives. The way people look at the world may change the world. Currently, considerable attention is being paid to reflection, observation, and perspective-taking techniques. A key parameter has at least one foreign language to communicate well. All this provided a basis for foreign language teaching. Considerable importance, therefore, was attached to having a common language to solve the conflict. These emphasized the foreign language policies for conflict resolutions. It was argued that communication via a foreign language could be a step toward conflict resolution. Neither one side nor the other one can insist on its own language to be used. Peace education could best be fostered with a common language in conflict zones. Although it is not entirely accurate to say that a common language may provide a resolution for a conflict, it is undoubtedly true that the decade saw a remarkable growth of such ideas. A second way of constructing peace via education is to assume that peace education is best understood with a holistic approach. By saying holistic approach, we mean learners' cognitive, active, and affective dimensions. Question and discussion sessions may provide concerns, challenging, eliciting, and encouraging.

Neither of the first two approaches involves going inside the classroom to try to teach peace education. It is much easier to start teaching peace education in kindergartens. Age is another issue that should be thought about carefully. Peace education aims to develop conflict resolutions in which society gains knowledge, digests it, and reflects as behavior change. Not the starting age, but the process of teaching peace should be thought carefully. Although the concept – of peace education cannot be explained clearly, teaching and learning methods of peace education is more visible. There is a broad consensus that peace education should stimulate reflective and critical dialogue in the classroom (Aspeshlagh and Burns, 1996; Shapiro, 2002; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). In addition to practicing role-plays, games, and group activities, children should learn about negotiation, cooperation, and working together. 'A teacher who tries to convey a peace culture without some practice is like a moral rascal teaching ethics' (Bretherton, Weston, and Zbar, 2003, p. 13).

5. Conclusion

Peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict states such as Cyprus are typically met with tremendous antagonism from those who desire to maintain the status quo under the pretense of defending cultural heritage, national identity, and security. Every effort to implement peace education in shattered cultures involves awareness of the complexities that characterize the current conflict, politics, and cultural groupings in that unique environment; there is no "one size fits all" strategy for teaching for a culture of peace in broken civilizations. In divided countries, residents are frequently so entrenched in their own sociopolitical identity that any progressive demand for education to engage in intentional attempts to

promote diverse ways of knowing and being on the part of the nation's children falls on deaf, if not hostile, ears. Because the pursuit of social cohesion among peoples who have been engaged in long-term inter-ethnic fighting, when social identity demands combine with significant political, value, and power differentials, is a difficult undertaking. Peace education presents a unique challenge in Cyprus since the different G/C and T/C groups have identity-based views on the purpose of education. Much of the problem occurs in the household, as young people absorb their parents' ethno-politically ingrained ideas. A dynamic sort of peace education that includes the family, community, and school is therefore critical.

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