

# Investigating Teachers' intention for Research in Rural schools

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to present some preliminary theoretical considerations about teachers' professional development in rural areas. Additionally a theoretical model will be introduced in order to investigate the effects of specific factors on teachers' intention for research in rural context. Rural areas worldwide are diverse in terms of many physical, socio-economic, as well as institutional factors (Kelly and Fogarty 2015). In this special context schools face their own challenges and hardships (Bouck 2004) whereas teachers themselves experience professional isolation as a barrier to their own professional development. Considering the fact that teachers are the most critical school-based variable in improving student learning (Hattie 2009), it is easy to conclude that both what and how they teach is equally important (Smith and Gillespie, 2007). Thus, providing them with a reliable way of professional development, such as educational research, seems to be of critical importance.

## **Introduction**

Education in rural areas matters. Rural areas are home to 46% of the worldwide population and 27% of the European population. Focusing on Greece and Cyprus the percentages of the rural population are 22% and 33% respectively (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2014).

Despite these numbers, serious educational inequalities have been reported between rural and urban schools (Lingam and Lingam 2013). These inequalities refer to the distribution of education in these areas and create the rural – urban gap which is a troubling social issue. It provokes serious long-term social and economic consequences and remains robust despite the decades of research and efforts for its reformation (Braun, Wang, Jenkins, and Weinbaum 2006). Although there is general agreement on the seriousness of this gap, there is no consensus on its causes or solutions (Fram, Miller-Cribbs, and Van Horn 2007). Therefore, research reveals that it grows even bigger especially in the middle-income countries (Ibourk and Amaghous 2012).

From an economic perspective, the level of education and its distribution within the population plays a crucial role. It regulates the income distribution and consequently the economic growth. An increased level of education of a population leads to increased skills held by the workforce, which in turn makes it possible to improve labor productivity and therefore economic growth (Aghion and Howitt 1998; Barro and Lee 1993). If education is not equally distributed among the population, a large part of the income will be owned by a well-educated minority. This status will raise inequalities in the distribution of incomes, which in turn will cause more poverty (Lopez, Thomas, and Wang 1998). For all these reasons all schools must have quality and effectiveness to help a nation flourish (Bouck 2004).

## **Rural Schools' Context**

Rural schools cannot be considered akin to non-rural schools. The education offered in these schools is impacted by many variables. The poverty faced by schools in rural areas is greater compared to those in non-rural areas (Hatfield 2002). Research reveals that students in rural schools face many personal and education hardships – from living in poverty to having less opportunity and sophistication in technology. Additionally, school variables, such as school size and school location, matter. School size and location impact many areas of education, including the characteristics of the school, curriculum, and post-school outcomes. Rural schools also have fewer course offerings (Bouck 2004) and are poorly resourced, exhibiting a minimum standard in school resources. They lack a wide range of physical facilities, equipment, teaching and learning resources (Booth et al. 1998; Lingam and Lingam 2013). However, the link between the availability of reasonable quality facilities and resources, on the one hand, and student learning experience on the other, is very strong (Barrett et al. 2007; UNESCO 2008). Therefore these deficiencies have negative impacts on how and what children learn (Thomson 2002).

Teachers' professional development in rural context is another major issue. Their need for professional development increases 'substantially' in relevance to the distance from metropolitan and provincial cities (Panizzon and Pegg 2007) and plays a main role in the success of high-performing, high-needs rural schools (Barley and Beesley 2007). A strong connection between effective professional development, learning programs and improved student outcomes has been consistently demonstrated (Hattie, 2009; Smith and Gillespie 2007). Professional development has the capacity to shift teachers' beliefs and attitudes about themselves and their students. It assists in defining the goals teachers have for their students. This in turn influences their classroom practices (Young 2001).

The difficulty of providing effective professional development for teachers compounds the distinct challenges facing rural schools (Hunt-Barron et al. 2015; Mollenkopf 2009). The professional journeys of rural teachers can be fraught with obstacles that their urban counterparts on the other hand, do not have to contend (Warren, Quine, and DeVries 2012). Research reports feelings of geographical isolation, professional isolation and social isolation (Hellsten, McIntyre, and Prytula 2011). Because of these teachers in remote schools are six times as likely to report high staff turnover as their metropolitan colleagues (Panizzon and Pegg 2007).

Physical distance has been identified as the major deterrent for rural teachers (Hansen 2009). It results in experiences of increased difficulties when teachers try to gain access to appropriate professional development because of their location (Stokes, Stafford, and Holdsworth 1999). A lot of professional development is provided centrally in the capital cities of each state following a "one size fits all" metro-centric model to teacher preparation which is inadequate for the needs of rural schools (White et al. 2011). Therefore teachers are required to travel for lengthy periods to get access to professional development, incurring extra travelling costs which are not always met by central budgets. Due to the geographic isolation of their remote location teachers find it difficult to continue with further tertiary studies and keep in touch with the latest teaching issues. This is because of the decreased opportunities to travel to the places that the examinations are held, or because of decreased contact and networking with teachers from other schools (Stokes, Stafford, and Holdsworth 1999).

In addition to being geographically isolated, challenges to rural teaching include a lack of professional support (Ralph 2002) which inevitably results in

teachers' professional isolation (Plunkett and Dyson 2011; Reid et al. 2010). They have to deal with a lack of teaching resources, insufficient instructional materials (McCoy 2006), as well as out-of-date classrooms and labs (Lynch 2000; Marlow and Cooper 2008). Teachers in rural areas also experience the limited availability of staff to support their PD efforts such as coaches, consultants, substitute teachers for teacher released time (Hansen 2009; Rude and Brewer 2003).

Moreover teachers in rural spaces experience social isolation. They often "teach multiple grades, sometimes in multi-grade, mixed-age classrooms" (Barley, 2009, p. 10) and multiple subjects (Beesley et al. 2010) and wear many hats within the school (Minner et al. 2003). This may increase class size, planning time and work load for them (Hellsten, McIntyre, and Prytula 2011). Lack of facilities as the lack of Internet access and opportunities for socialization seem to make feelings of isolation worse (Kelly and Fogarty 2015).

Research has recognized the need for specialized teacher education in rural contexts (Hudson and Hudson 2008). Yet the implementation of such programs by universities has been uncoordinated, random or limited (Sharplin 2002; White and Reid 2008). In addition professional education programs for in-service teachers have all too often been undertheorised and therefore have proved inadequate in terms of meeting the challenge of professional practice in and for rural schooling (Reid et al., 2010). Therefore this paper proposes the model of teacher-researcher as a means of teachers' professional development.

## **Educational Research**

Educational research is defined as a systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers who seek to examine their own teaching in their classes (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1990). However there has been criticism about the role and value of research in education. The main issue is the gap between theory and practice in educational research (McIntyre 2005; Oancea 2005). In any case, some researchers argue that educational research is too theoretical and has no or little impact on practice and practitioners (Bevan 2004; Mortimore 2000). On the other hand, others claim that the knowledge base in educational research always leads the implementations of the educational theory in schools (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2005; Goldstein 2002). This knowledge base keeps growing and educational practitioners should be aware of it, value it, or apply it in their work (Gall, Gall, and Borg 2007).

Despite this ongoing debate, the importance of teachers' research has been established. Long before, Dewey(1929) already described teachers as the most important members into the successes and failures of the school. Later Stenhouse (1975) presented his "teacher as researcher model" and Schön(1983) followed advocating his ideas of teachers as reflective practitioners. More recent studies have focused on teachers' research as a way to close the research to practice gap (Holincheck 2012), to help teachers change and foster their professional development (Ritchie 2006).

Educational research may offer different functionalities which could affect teachers' practice. First of all research can enable teachers to realize a critical, reflective attitude towards their own practice (Hall 2009). Secondly, research has the ability to provide teachers with the knowledge and evidence of what and why it works in practice (Ponte et al. 2004). Thirdly, it can foster the transformation of the scientific research results into improvements in classroom practice (Gore and Gitlin

2004). In order to fulfill these aims, teachers need to develop sufficient research knowledge, positive beliefs regarding research and a positive attitude towards research (Linden et al. 2015).

### Theory of Planned Behavior

The investigation of the factors which affect teachers' intention for research in a rural context requires a solid theoretical model. For this purpose Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen 1991) was introduced as a useful framework to consider how attitudes and related constructs might predict intention to embed research in everyday school practice. Ajzen's theory describes three major factors that are instrumental in predicting whether a particular behavior is demonstrated: attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms (Figure 1). Attitude toward the behavior is evaluated in terms of being positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable), and reflects beliefs about the consequences of performing the behavior. Perceived behavioral control reflects beliefs about the perceived ability to perform the behavior. The subjective norm reflects personal beliefs that are influenced by the perceived societal expectation regarding the performance of the behaviors. These factors mainly influence the formation of a behavioral intention. However the weight of each factor in determining the intention can differ not only among behaviors of any individual, but also among groups of people. Intention to perform the behavior, is a good predictor of actual performance of the behavior (Ajzen 2005).

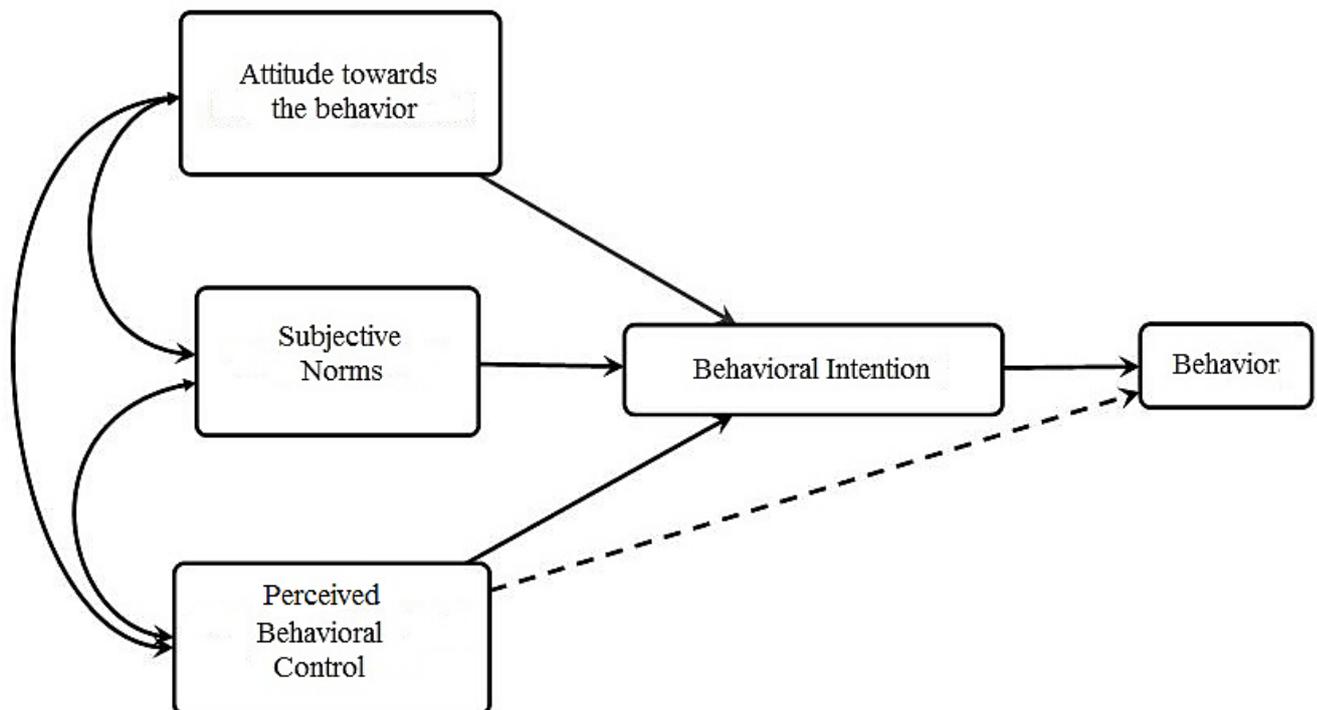


Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior has been criticized. One of the main issues is its ignorance for the emotional determinants of behavior such as threat, fear, anxiety, and mood. (Conner and Armitage 1998). This is because the TPB assumes all behavior is rational. However, humans don't always act based on rational thinking. Besides the criticism some limitations of the TPB have been reported. These limitation are actually related to research design flaws, and not the theory itself (Knabe 2012). In some cases, researchers fail to operationalize the required variables (Halfhill 1998), and eliminate key constructs from the original model, hoping to simplify the theory (George 2002).

Yet the theory's parsimonious model, understandability and recent track record in research indicate its increasing utility in the future (Knabe 2012). According to Ajzen (2011) TPB provides a straightforward way to look at a targeted behavior as well as the factors that influence the performance of that behavior. The flexibility of this conceptual model extended its successful application to hundreds of different studies over the last two decades (Ajzen 2011). Morris and Venkatesh (2000) used TPB to study workers' attitudes toward adoption of technology as well as their decisions about technology usage. TPB has been also inducted to study consumer acceptance of online video and television services Troung (2009), and to examine online shopping behavior (Hsu et al. 2006). In an educational setting, this theory was applied in order to examine teachers' intentions to use computers to create and deliver lessons (Lee, Cerreto, and Lee 2010), to predict university students' use of podcasts (Moss, O'Connor, and White 2010) and even to verify undergraduates' behavioral intentions to participate in aquatic sports (Wu 2015).

In the present study Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a useful framework for the investigation of the factors that influence rural teachers' intention for educational research. More specifically for the purpose of this research the term "Attitudes towards the behavior" is substituted by the factor "Attitudes

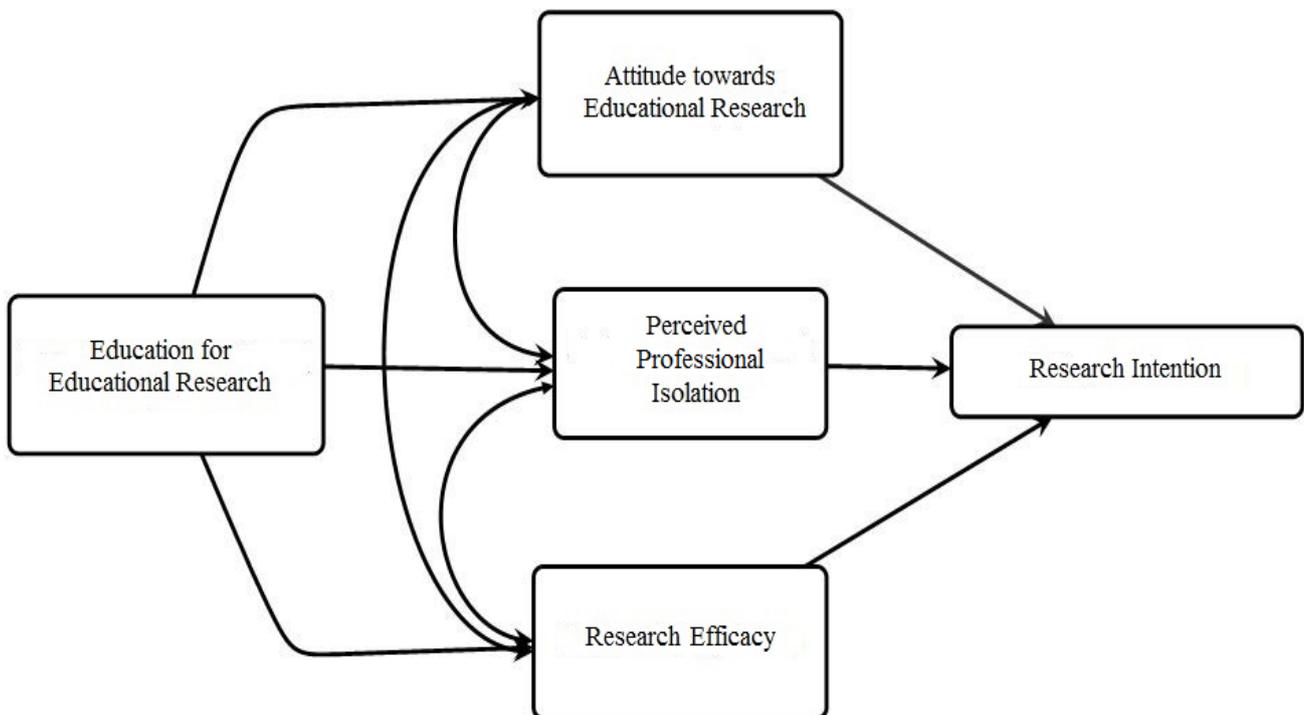


Figure 2: Research Framework

towards Educational Research”, the term “Perceived Behavioral Control” is replaced by the factor “Research Efficacy” and the term “Subjective Norms” gives its place to the factor “Perceived Professional Isolation”. Finally an external factor has been added to the model. This factor is “Education for Educational Research” and refers to the education and training a teacher had on educational research. All these factors are depicted in Figure 2.

## **Implications**

This paper aspires to add to the international knowledge about teacher’s intention for educational research in a rural context. The correlations between the constructs in the adapted model will shed light to the factors that will promote the use of educational research in everyday practice. The factor loadings of the Attitudes towards Educational Research, the Perceived Professional Isolation and the Research Efficacy will deepen the understanding of how each construct correlates between each other and how all of them correlate to the intention for educational research. These results will help educators, researchers, administrators and policy makers to obtain a baseline understanding of teachers’ intentions to engage in educational research and promote the “teacher-researcher” model in order to enhance teachers’ development. Moreover, the correlation between Education for educational Research and the previous constructs will generate implications for course integration both in undergraduate and graduate level, in order to prepare and educate teachers for research.

Location matters in educational outcomes and the need to support the professional development of teachers in rural places is vital. However, it may often seem that location is regarded irrelevant in educational literature since the urban setting is being taken for granted as the norm (Hargreaves, Kvalsund, and Galton 2009). The concept of location involves a lot more than simple geography (Bæk 2016). Thus with adequate support to the disadvantaged groups, especially those feeding into the rural schools, full and enriching satisfaction of their developmental needs is likely. (Lingam and Lingam 2013). Professional development through educational research constitutes a reliable way out of professional isolation fostering creativity and self-reflection. Perspectives from this study may stimulate further research in rural communities.

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## **Alterative educational spaces: the case of one-to-one English language lessons in Greece**

### **Physical places and educational space**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, I will discuss the interaction of space and human activity in one-to-one English language lessons in Greece. Physical spaces are usually connected with specific social practices, yet in late modernity due to various reasons, such as technological advancements, a single place can be the theatre of several functions resulting in a blurring of boundaries between various spheres of social activity. Specifically, in the educational setting I research, classes take place in either teachers' or students' homes; this poses the question of how an intimate space is transformed in a working place where educational practice becomes possible. I will also discuss the particularities of the one-to-one lessons and whether these have an impact on the relationships formed and consequently on the nature of the educational practice.

## **1. Introduction**

In Greece, private tutoring has been stigmatised in the public discourse about education as a parasitic phenomenon in terms of negating equal opportunities to education. It has also been criticised due to its remedial character and mimicking the local mainstream educational system, both in terms of curriculum, and teaching methodologies and approaches, and, finally, as being exam oriented. Although it is arguable that there is substantial truth in the above criticisms, this line of inquiry could lead to deterministic views about the nature of this practice that could obscure the process of inquiry and not further our understanding of the reasons of its popularity. Furthermore, the demand for supplementary education implies that there is discontent with the state educational system, which can stem from concerns about its effectiveness, but it can also suggest problematization about the ideologies that it serves and perpetuates, and its pedagogical value, goals and practices. In this light, it is worth asking whether supplementary education could also be catering for the need for 'alternative' education.

## **2. Space as a social construct**

The physical environment had been considered as a neutral parameter or a fixed background for a designated use, which facilitates the social proceedings at best. In particular, for the better part of the 20th century, school architecture has been treated 'as a mere background phenomenon, with limited power dimension, without considering the life inside the school' (Gulson and Symes 2007b). However, later, Foucault's work helped 'recast [school architecture] as central to the administration of the school population, providing the fabric of a disciplinary technology that, through the spectre of unremitting inspection and surveillance, enabled it to be normalized and classified on a day-to-day basis' (Gulson and Symes 2007), showing how our surroundings can produce and reproduce asymmetrical relationships. For example, McGregor (2004a in Ferrare and Apple 2010) comments: '[t]he almost ubiquitous orderings of classrooms, laboratories, staffrooms and playgrounds in secondary schools [...] obscure the way in which the setting is active in sustaining certain power relations' (p. 13). In Greece, this is further reinforced by the fact that attending a school is compulsory, and curriculums and other administrative aspects, such as the appointment of teachers, is centrally controlled.

Furthermore, drawing on Lefebvre (1991), who supported that space is socially constructed, recent studies (e.g. Soja 1996, Massey 1992) have theorised space as fluid and malleable (Gulson and Symes 2007). Pennycook (2010) also remarks that space is not a backdrop of human activity, a static element with constant and obvious meanings (p. 54). On the contrary, space is fraught with meaning, assigned to it by the people in the course of the practices which they have engaged therein over time. Consequently, it embodies historicity and, as a result, semiotic meanings which interact with the actors to create reality (Pennycook *ibid*). Therefore, it should be considered as a dynamic, meaningful factor in the process of the production of reality which can function as constitutive of social relations (Gulson and Symes 2007b). Consequently, on the one hand, the semiotic meanings of space can presuppose and (partly) govern the activities people apply themselves to, creating relationships of power and inequality (Baynham and Simpson 2010); on the other hand, activity can reinterpret spaces to produce local meanings and structures.

### 3. Educational practice in private spaces

In the case of private tutoring, lessons take place at the homes of the participants, and more often than not, in the case of adolescent students, the teenage bedroom is the room of choice. This environment comes in direct contrast with the institutional school building. Lefebvre mentions how, at least in the western societies, there is an extreme separation between the places that are designated for work, 'private' life and leisure (1991:38). This means that the school building is recognised as a public domain where the delivery of lessons take place, and also as a symbol of the appropriate place for such an activity. This pre-conceived image can also lead to questioning the legitimacy of a lesson taking place in alternative locations. Indeed, home-schooling was illegal to a considerable number of USA states until the 80s (Thiem 2007) and, in Greece it is allowed in the case of severe physical disabilities.

Thus, in the case of one-to-one lessons, a combination of institutional structures is introduced in private places. It could be argued that there is an intrusion of what is thought to be public (educational practice) into the private life (home); resulting into a blurring of functions. This blurring of the boundaries of social spheres is a phenomenon of late modernity, as Fairclough (1996) has noted, and, in the specific occasion, it could be described as the reverse process of the conversationalisation of public discourse, where the public discourse in the form of educational discourse invades the personal and intimate space of the students, such as the teenage bedrooms, which have been characterised as the 'context of self-sufficiency and control' (Livingstone 2007:8).

'Home' argues Cresswell (2004: 24) 'is an exemplary kind of place where people feel a sense of attachment and rootedness'. Cresswell discusses how this can be an idealised picture of home and indeed asymmetrical relationships can be produced in the 'home'. However, this description of home indicates and underlines the private and intimate character of the locality, where learning certainly takes place, but in ways that are different in organisation and delivery, compared to formal schooling. Kraftl (2013) researched home schooling in the UK and found that the main characteristics of home-schooling are slowness and spontaneity, in other words a child-led practice that follows the progress and development of the child as well as their interests. In addition, however asymmetrical the relationships may be, there are characterised by an affective nature, an aspect that parents underline in the study: "it was in this conceptual and moral distancing from the state that home schoolers articulated an 'alternative' theorisation of learning, and the right to provide learning, that was based upon a recognition of the role of intimacy, care and love" (p.446), something that is not prioritised in an institutional setting.

Home-schooling brings up the question of authority in relation to the educational activity and to the teacher. As Blommaert (2005) says, a place is saturated with 'senses of belonging, property rights and authority' (p.222) In addition, Kendon (1992) maintains that 'to adopt a space of a certain sort can be a way of adopting a "frame" of a certain sort [...] and expectations about what is possible can be set up' (p.330). It can be assumed the intimate places of private homes carry their own historicity and senses of belonging and property rights and authority. In this case, this authority belongs to the inhabitants of the abode and not the teacher, who, for example, does not have the same rights of access and use of the space in the same way she/he has in a school building.

Moreover, the school building, both in a physical and an abstract way, separates the classroom reality from 'everyday' (authentic) life, and as a result, has been characterised as

inauthentic since it involves experiences which do not fulfil 'real' needs (such as talking about hobbies, likes and dislikes); in contrast, the home is saturated with it. What the teachers strive to do, bringing in the classroom real life, especially if the subject taught is a foreign language and not a disembodied piece of knowledge, the setting of the home offers in abundance. So, the home is not only a personal, private place that has to be appropriated by the participants to become an educational space, but it can also act as a resource for the lesson in terms of content of a lesson (topics to talk about in the foreign language) and interpersonal relationships, which in turn can influence the interactional patterns used.

In conclusion, the organisation of the place, the number of the participants, the accessibility of the parents and the co-existence of the intimate and the institutional is a complexity that involves intricate interpretations and role/identity negotiations by the participants in order to create the conditions for the educational practice to take place. Investigating the affordances of the particular space, by looking into the turn-by-turn interaction of the participants, conducting an ethnography of communication (Erickson 1996), could reveal how everyday home practices, personal agendas and educational agendas combine to produce the particular educational space. To illustrate some of the concepts discussed in the next section I will focus on a short excerpt of my data, which consist of recordings of one-to-one lessons which I delivered.

#### **4. Offering refreshments: the guest ritual.**

The lesson took place every Saturday at 3 o'clock in the afternoon at the student's home. Andreas, who is about 15 years old at the time of the recording, and I are sitting facing each other at the dining table, a table with benches on either side, in a dining room which opened up to the hall, forming a semi-open space with visual access to the entrance of the house.

1. **T:** recording (.) me not you. OK? So do not worry about it.<sup>1</sup>
2. **S:** so(.) you'll speak (.) only
3. **T:** Hahahaha
4. **S:** (hh)
5. **T:** (in breath) (.)
6. **S:** OK.
7. **T:** No: because the:n (.) you know (.) it's not about (.) it's about er (.) communication(.) But it's about: what I do not about what you do that what's I mean [but it's] your contribution is important (.) because I ca-cannot teach in a vacuum (.) which means nothing (.) I-I teach a person (.) that's (smiling voice) wha(h)t's ni(h)ce about teaching after all but anyway=
8. **S:** =my pleasure

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<sup>1</sup>Transcription conventions can be found in the appendix

9. **T:** [(hhh)
10. **S:** [unintelligible]
11. **T:** (h) Anytime eh? (h) o(h)k. So tell me what are the: the main issues in this topic?
12. **S:** the: main issues. (.) e:r (.)
13. **M:** ((door opening)) *herete ti kanete?* ((door closing)) [Hello how
14. are you?]
15. **T:** *kala mia hara* [Fine thanks](low pitch almost whispering)
16. **M:** *kafe?* [Coffee?] (heard from a distance)
17. **T:** *ohi efharisto* [No, thanks]
18. **M:** *tsai?* [Tea?] (heard from a distance)
19. **T:** *ohi efharisto* [No, thanks.] (2) ok=
20. **S:** =now it's ruined I mean.
21. **T:** no it's not.
22. **S:** ok.
23. **T:** I can edit it. (.) (hh)
24. **S:** (hh) ok. e:r (2)
25. **T:** So what do you think are the main issues of this topic? (2)
26. **S:** er (2) it's the: (.)

The recording starts with me explaining the reason for recording the session, which was to monitor the implementation of an approach to teaching writing essays. Therefore, I act within the position of the researcher, introducing a new dimension in our lessons and my positionality as a researcher has become relevant along with that of the teacher. It could be argued that I seem eager to wrap up this issue of the research: the phrase 'so do not worry about it' (1.1) could be interpreted as my effort to downplay the importance of having the lesson recorded.

Interestingly, the student reacts playfully, 'so you speak only' (1.2), to the reassuring manner of the teacher and which the teacher accepts with a laugh. There is a variety of interactional goals that may be accomplished with this move. On the one hand, joking/playfulness is an invitation to intimacy and the teacher's laughter shows acceptance of the invitation and an act of affiliation, especially as the student joins her (Jefferson et al. 1987). On the other hand, since 'humour can be used to negotiate identities and subvert social norms' (Bell 2005), the joke could be seen as the student's attempt to question authority and reassert his right to agree or not to the request of the teacher/researcher. It could be argued that through this intricate interactional activity, the participants are able to negotiate the new positioning of the researcher which has surfaced, while at the same time preserve the established relationship.

Humour has the dual role of both challenging the emergent identity of the researcher and maintaining the relationship of trust. This allows the teacher to redirect finally the attention to the lesson 'proper' quite easily since the student readily accepts the invitation of the teacher to consider the essay topic (l. 8-9).

While the teacher's efforts to engage with the task seem to come to fruition, the mother of the student returns home. As she enters visual contact obliges us to acknowledge each other, for the sake of politeness at least, and I am offered refreshments, which I decline. The exchange is short, as she most probably would not want to impose and disrupt the lesson (and the fact that her voice comes from a distance shows that she swiftly went to another room, possibly the kitchen, reinforcing this reading); but she does take the role of the hostess positioning me not only as a teacher but also as a guest in her place.

By being positioned as a guest, not only an additional positioning become available, increasing the complexity of the situation, but the mother is also exercising the authority and property rights that she has over the place (Blommaert 2005). This episode could be treated as ritualistic, a brief interlude, a habitual action that does not bear any particular weight on the lesson and thus could be ignored. However, when the student comments that the recording is now ruined, implying that the exchange which has just taken place cannot be part of what is understood as 'lesson', Apostolis orients to the research process reframing the situation and suspending the contextual identities of teacher and student. This could also suggest that the student might have a set preconception of which activities consist a lesson and which specific actions and practices create the frame for the pedagogical space. The fact that I reply to his comment, denotes that I accept his right to be an authority on this issue. Despite the direct disagreement, no further explanation is offered why the recording has not been ruined and none is asked by the student. Instead, I resort to another humorous retort, which could be another effort to achieve affiliation and iron out the consequences of a disagreement.

To sum up, I have tried to explore and uncover the relationship between the teacher and the student, by looking into the various positionings and orientations of the participants, examining the moment-to-moment interaction and the specific communicative tools the participants employ. This excerpt is packed with incidents which result in shifts in the framing of the events. The research process seems to be at the centre of attention of Apostolis despite the initial efforts of the teacher to minimise its importance. First, he probably implicitly asks for further explanation by playfully refusing to be part of the research. In line 8, he gracefully and playfully gives his consent. His continuous humorous playfulness puts him subtly in a position of controlling the situation and retaining the right to have a say in the proceedings. The arrival of the mother and the offer of refreshments give the opportunity for an additional shift in the orientation of the participants. In line 19, Apostolis interrupts the teacher, and he once more shows his ability to initiate a topic and direct the interaction at a moment when the teacher is trying to reframe the events and assert her position as the teacher. The teacher acknowledges the student's assertion (l.3, 9) by responding to it (l.21) and using humour herself. The pauses and hesitations in line 7 show uncertainty on the part of the teacher about how to handle the situation, possibly as a result of her being a novice researcher. This might make her seem less authoritative, which allows the student to take up alternative positionings. The use of humour and playfulness to deal with the new situation shows a familiarity between the participants and an easy going atmosphere. To conclude, the aim of this section was to illustrate how local practices allow the emergence of a variety of identities and, in turn, how this can shift our perception of one-to-one lessons from considering them as one-dimensional procedure to viewing them as a complex rich process.

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## Appendix

### Transcription conventions

[        overlap

=        latched turns

#        Indicates that a turn of the same speaker continues uninterrupted although to his/her next one after an overlap by the other speaker

(.)      pause less than a second; a number between the brackets indicates the length of the pause in seconds

.        falling intonation

,        low-rising intonation

!        animated intonation

?        rising intonation

&        indicates where the smile voice begins and ends

\*        indicates where mimicking starts and finishes

:        lengthening of preceding syllable

CAPS    an utterance that is much louder

(( ))    descriptions

-        Cut-off/interruption

Me     underlining means emphasis

*Italics*    Greek in roman script

[word]    translation from Greek

[[unintelligible]] marks a stretch of talk obscured by noise or technical problems

## **Media Education Policy and Practice in Greek school system**

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### Abstract

This presentation is dealing with a case of Educational Policy in Greece referring to the introduction of a new subject into the school curriculum. Specifically, as part of last year's consultation on proposed educational reforms, launched by the Greek Ministry of Education, a so-called 'National Dialogue in Education' initiative was carried out. This led to the drafting of a White Paper, a series of recommendations for specific changes in education. These recommendations included for the first time on a governmental document proposals for the introduction of Media Education in school curricula.

Subjecting the proposal to a broad Discourse Analysis approach, my presentation aims at revealing trends, patterns, orientations, implications – explicit or implicit –, underlying assumptions and stances permeating the philosophy of the document, the suggested methods of implementation, the feasibility, concreteness, detail and specificity of the proposals.

General conclusions and suggestions will be drawn towards the end of the paper.

## **Introduction**

This presentation is dealing with a case of Educational Policy in Greece referring to the introduction of a new subject into the school curriculum. Specifically, as part of last year's consultation on proposed educational reforms, launched by the Greek Ministry of Education, a so-called 'National Dialogue in Education' initiative was carried out. This led to the drafting of a White Paper, a series of recommendations for specific changes in education. These recommendations included for the first time on a governmental document official proposals for the introduction of Media Education in the school curricula (Aggelidi *et. al.* 2016).

Media Education has been defined as the ability to access, critique and produce media (OFCOM, 2004). Increasingly, this is being morphed into a school subject and eventually incorporated as an entitlement at school curricula around the world.

For Greece, this development is of great significance as the subject is in its infancy and debates regarding the introduction of media education in schools have been going on only for the last few years. For that reason, it is initially encouraging that the Ministry seems to finally acknowledge that some action needs to be taken on the issue.

My presentation will examine the White Paper recommendations on Media Education ('Audio-Visual Education', as it is termed in the document) using a broadly discourse analysis methodology (Fairclough 1995) that looks at the prevailing discourses that the recommendations are drawing from. The aim is to reveal trends, orientations, implications - explicit or implicit - and the underlying assumptions that permeate the philosophy of the document.

In doing that, I will also be drawing parallels with the international experience and literature on Media Education and proposing principles for the implementation of the subject in Greek school system taking into account the country's specificities and requirements.

I will begin by pointing initially to general points that come out of the proposed recommendations and I will then proceed to examine more closely specific issues in the areas Aims, Curriculum and Pedagogy which are also the domains that need to be considered before introducing a school subject.

## **General Comments**

1. There is no sense or mention where these proposals are anchored on and what theoretical models or relevant research is invoked. There are no references or bibliography to substantiate the claims made throughout the document.
2. Similarly, there is no apparent logic of the structure of the document, nor coherence in the outline of the issues. We jump from aims to activities to priorities without a concrete linkage between them.

3. There is no explicit or underlying theoretical framework of media education or conceptualization of what the subject involves and what is for.

4. Jeff Share (2008) has identified four main discourses of media education in the history of the subject. Specifically these are the protectionist approach, media arts education, media literacy movement, and critical media literacy. The protectionist approach views audiences of mass media as dupes of the media, vulnerable to cultural, ideological or moral influences, and needing protection by education. The media arts education approach focuses on creative production of different media forms by learners.

In attempting to locate the document in any of these discourses, I would argue that it is closer to the media arts education with semi-protectionist overtones and elements – although, admittedly, less than other related documents in the past, that I have identified elsewhere (Voros 2008)

4. Under the title of ‘Audiovisual Education’, a number of priorities and discourses are being conflated. These are the need for technological competence (digital literacy), the need for skills for finding the appropriate information in a media world saturated by a plethora of information channels (information literacy) and the need for critical competence of the media (media literacy).

This conflation has led to the interchangeable use of the terms ‘media education’, ‘audiovisual education’, ‘audiovisual literacy’, ‘media literacy’. These terms are not being explained adequately and often one gets the impression that these amount to little more than the audiovisual language which, as will be explained further down, is only one aspect of the media (education). Even more strikingly, media use as educational aid (an otherwise legitimate way of using media for teaching purposes) is confused with the media as a subject in its own right.

It needs to be noted here that the need for technological literacy is welcome but largely instrumental whereas media literacy (the product of media education) involves critical thinking and reflection/questioning of how media operate, how they make meaning, how they affect people and how audience is positioned and responds in relation to that. Finally, making explicit one’s choices and attitudes vis a vis the media.

As I noted above, throughout the document there is a dominance of the ‘language’ as the main product of media and subsequently the domain that should be studied. Other areas of concern and study are absent from the document. In reality, media - and their study - have other aspects too such as how representations are being made and circulated, stereotypes, audience responses and reception, media as business and the ideological aspects of the media. Indeed, models of taxonomies for media education that have been produced, such as BFI’s (Bazalgette 1989), outline succinctly the areas of study for media education in the form of ‘key concepts’.

But even so, it is not entirely clear what ‘the use of audiovisual language’ means: is it technological competence for a better ‘use’ of devices for operational ends, like knowing how to use your remote controller or knowing how to fill a form online - what D. Buckingham calls instrumental use of technology (Buckingham 2003). Or does it also imply creative use on behalf of the students?

5. In terms of what media are being addressed, throughout the document there is an insistence on film. To be sure, the proposals may well have been termed ‘film

education' instead of 'audio-visual education' Does this imply a perceived supremacy of the medium? There is very little mention of other media. It is as if social media, tablets and mobile phones do not exist, and there is not a single word about the internet or the digital technologies. Film education is a legitimate part of media education but not the only diet children are exposed or should be exposed to. In fact, other media occupy much more of their time and attention making film almost marginal. A possible explanation for this is the fact that the five authors of the proposals are film directors or film critiques and only one seems to also have a teaching background. But I believe that there is also another implicit discourse on the insistence on film. It is a matter of cultural taste. This has to do with the view that cinema carries a higher cultural value and is therefore the medium children should be exposed to rather than products of popular (implied, lower) culture.

6. Related to the last point above, there is the issue of what stance is taken on children's media experience: is it celebrated, dismissed, looked at its entirety or only aspects of it? Most current programmes of media education start from the premise of bringing children's media experiences and cultures in the classroom. In this document, there is no much mentioning of this issue. There is also little acknowledgment of the agentive role of children and their ability to discern, mock, re-appropriate, parody, pastiche existing media material for their own purposes. Instead, there is a rather passive image and ability of them

## **Specific Issues**

### *A. Aims*

The aim of teaching media (or, rather, film) at school, according to this document, seems to be the appreciation of the works of art. This approach rests on the belief that - the mostly European - cinema carries a cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and disseminated to children.

### *B. Curriculum*

This area deals primarily with the content of the subject and the appropriate curriculum spaces. The only reference the proposals are making in relation to curricular issues relate to the location within which the subject could be fostered. It advocates flexible zone (which seems to have been abolished as part of the recent changes in the school timetable), all-day school and after-school clubs which had been hailed as purveyors of innovative practice and hubs for new approaches (they are in a state of decline too) as ideal curriculum opportunities for media education.

A positive element is the fact that media education is seen as an aspect of almost every lesson and not as a separate, specialized subject. This is in line with the international practice on the subject, as confirmed by K. Domaille (2001) and Emerson (1993), which sees it as a dimension of all subjects that permeate the curriculum. On this matter, the seminal work of BFI needs to be pointed out again, that has been applied internationally and puts forward a conceptual framework for exploring all aspects of media.

Nevertheless, the suggestions for how the curriculum could be implemented and the

practical suggestions that need to be taken remain vague. At certain points, the authors evoke the assistance of external agents. They seem to have in mind more the establishment of a network of collaborators, like it would have happened with a film appreciation network, rather than an educational initiative.

### *C. Pedagogy*

International literature favours a combination of theory and practice, of critique and production, for the effective teaching and learning of media. A crucial distinction needs to be drawn here though. Critique involves investigating, not criticizing! Critical investigation means looking at the power structures that are embedded in media, not contempt or judgment for students' media choices. Above all, it does not mean rejection of the pleasures derived from media use and consumption but rather revealing the workings and the motives behind each construction of texts.

Other principles in media pedagogy - which is fundamentally constructivist - include constant reflection and an inquiry-based model that encourages people to ask questions about what they watch, hear, and read

Above all is practice - creating and producing one's own media messages. On this, production should emanate from student's own interests and priorities as to what it is they wish to communicate. In doing so, it is inevitable - if not desirable - that they will encounter and draw inspiration from popular cultural forms. This is something that the document in consideration does not address. Neither the vast media knowledge and experience the students bring to school seem to be acknowledged and tap upon. But no effective media teaching can begin without bringing students' experience in the classroom.

On the matter of pedagogy, the White Paper offers some teaching suggestions that potentially could be proved useful and which include playfulness (particularly for younger children), group work and project-based work as opposed to exams.

### **Conclusions**

From the analysis undertaken we can observe that there are certain positive points in this proposal and it certainly marks a departure in the attitude and tone it adopts from earlier proposals. But there is still a lot of unsatisfactory elements and the paper falls short of being a comprehensive, researched and complete proposition. White Papers typically offer a clearer idea of where they are coming from and what they attempt to achieve. Instead, here there is a lot of wishful thinking and use of catch-phrases (technology, production, criticality), out of context and scope, with little explanation of what they actually mean and real consideration of how they can be applied in practice.

'The art of film' the proposals talk about, ignores the fact that a vast amount of children's time is not devoted to watching cinema anymore but rather to internet, mobile phones and videogames. This prevalence implies also a hierarchy of cultural taste to which children ought to comply: film is high-art, videogames is low-art. None denies the importance of introducing children to the 'best that humans have made'.

But isolating them from their everyday experience and not valuing their cultural capital is counter-productive.

I have pointed to similar shortcomings that are not addressing satisfactorily a number of pertaining issues and made relevant suggestions based on the international literature on the subject. In any case, prior to any implementation, research is needed in order to inform both policy as well as practice of the subject in Greece.

Possible ways forward for the implementation of media education in the Greek school system can happen through applying and adapting models from existing theory and practice whilst taking into account the national priorities. A variety of scholars have proposed concrete theoretical frameworks for media literacy. Notable examples include:

1. Renee Hobbs (2006) identifies three frames for introducing media literacy to learners: authors and audiences (AA), messages and meanings (MM), and representation and reality (RR).
2. David Buckingham (2003), adapting the BFI Key Concepts, has developed four key concepts that "provide a theoretical framework which can be applied to the whole range of contemporary media and to 'older' media as well: Production, Language, Representation, and Audience."
3. Canada's Ontario Ministry of Education's Eight Key Concepts, British Film Institute's Signpost Questions, The Center for Media Literacy Five Core Concepts, L. Masterman's model, etc.

Media Education should also be relevant to the country's specificities and social priorities. What these priorities are for Greece?

To some extent phenomena and issues pertinent to the rest of the world are no exceptions to Greece: bias, stereotyping, post-truth, hate-speech, fake news, post-fact. Current themes that have significant relevance in Greek public life include the rise of fascist and racist tendencies and xenophobia and how these are addressed in the media; how the citizens are represented in the international media (lazy Greeks) and how the whole country is represented in the media (not so long ago we had PIIGS) - and why. But in the current state of crisis, distinguishing fact from fiction, standing up for the truth, reflecting on the causes of the situation, can all be productively facilitated through the means that media education provides – not as a doctrine but as tools that will enable the citizens of the complex and complicated 21<sup>st</sup> century to navigate intelligently and safely through often contradictory messages put across by the media.

In any case, the principles of critical media literacy can act as guides in this endeavor: 'Critical media literacy examines ideologies that govern social institutions, government, and lived lives' (Hall 1995). 'The benefit of a critical media literacy approach is that audiences engage with and analyze dominant readings and codes within media and contribute to a better understanding of the world's "social realities" (Kellner 2007).

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**Title: Meta-Memory: An empirical exploration of a new conceptual schema for understanding ethnic conflict in Cyprus**

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**Abstract:**

The events of 1974 in Cyprus resulted in the geographical division and the political and institutional separation of the two communities. This study aims to evaluate the extent to which the hegemonic transmission of information, through official education, affects the narrative of generations that have not experienced the events of 1974. Using critical discourse analysis, this paper examines how these narratives influence the ways in which national identity is conceived, and what happens when counter narratives to the ‘official history’ are produced.

A new term, “meta-memory”, is proposed to describe the case of young Cypriots who have not experienced the events, arguing that the ‘Cyprus problem’ consists of an open-ended process that carries elements of the past as “memories” while at the same time being enriched by current problematic elements that are also subsequently converted into memories<sup>1</sup>.

**Keywords:** collective memory, meta-memory, Cyprus conflict, postmemory, Cypriot youth.

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<sup>1</sup> “Memories” refer to transmitted experiences from those who have witnessed the events.

## **Introduction, Research Framework and Methodology**

The research that has been carried out so far focuses on the role of memory of a specific event (or events if both sides are taken into consideration). In this research field, when remembrance is evaluated by scholars, the hegemonic reasoning/rhetoric at the levels of the state and the “grand narratives” are taken into consideration, since both concern the preservation of collective memory. The literature has largely failed to take into consideration the processes by which memory accumulates and evolves from the moment of the event onwards through subsequent generations. The role of these later generations lies not only in retelling the narrative of collective memory; rather they have experienced and continue to experience the consequences of the 1974 war in a multitude of different ways. This finding is of great importance since it signals a research gap that requires rigorous theoretical and empirical investigation.

This study explores the process by which the transmission of historic information influences the formation of cultural and national memory and the establishment of national identity. Using a qualitative framework, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual Greek and Turkish Cypriots as the basis for an empirical exploration of their relationship with the traumatic events that took place in Cyprus in 1974. The focus on the connection that the research participants make with experiences that took place more than a decade before their birth forms this paper’s contribution to current research.

A total of 40 interviews (n=40) were conducted with an equal number of Greek and Turkish Cypriots between the ages of 18 and 28. The respondents were selected through “snowball sampling” using the initial sample as the central core of extension. The only criterion that was considered for selecting an interviewee the educational level of interviewees to be either an undergraduate university student or graduate.

Using critical discourse analysis, the research examines how these narratives influence the ways in which national identity is conceived, and what happens when counter narratives to the ‘official history’ are produced. Furthermore, it explores the ways in which the state (in both communities) attempts, through the official history curriculum, to influence young Cypriots’ conceptual framing of their imaginary other.

### **A proposal for an alternative definition: Meta-Memory**

The point of memory production – the Turkish military intervention – has two different readings for the two communities. Considered a liberating event worthy of celebration by Turkish Cypriots, who refer to it officially as a ‘peace operation’, and a problematic, dramatic invasion and occupation of 1/3 of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus by Greek Cypriots, both communities reproduce and perpetuate the divergent readings of these events. For more than four decades, the conflict has remained at a diplomatic level, with some sporadic sparks of increased tension and fear of military escalation. Technically, the island remains in a state of war, subject to a continuing ceasefire. Institutionally, socially and politically, the current situation represents a case of unfinished business, which remains on the agenda of all news and social media in Cyprus, on an everyday basis, infiltrating all aspects of life – not least in the matter of economic development, with both communities facing a difficult economic situation and precarious employment (Aygin, 2016; Guardian, 2015).

The memory of the past is instrumentalized as a means of cohesion among the members of the two communities. The selective remembering of the past is used in an aggressive way. An example is the self-proclaimed ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ (TRNC) illuminated flag laid over Pentadaktylos hillside, visible from any point in Nicosia, the divided capital of Cyprus. Wodak and Richardson (2009: 231) refer to *lieux de memoir* as the staging of commemoration of events that celebrate the end of wars and victories. Normally, these events function as a mark for the end of collective traumatic experience and indicate that the group (we) has moved on. Therefore, the live event (of an illuminated flag) is promoted in the public sphere to unify citizens “*and create hegemonic narratives of national identity which find their way into the media, schoolbooks and so forth*”. On the other side of the dividing line, the Greek Cypriot community clearly demonstrate an apostrophe to the flag that is commonly described by the media as “*the flag of shame*” (Καλλινίκου, 2015).

Having in mind the above rationale and the particularities of the prolonged Cyprus conflict, a new term is proposed, “Meta-memory”, to conceptualize and describe the explanatory/supplementary memory to the existing memory. ‘Meta’ derives from the Greek word *μετά* that refers to a chronological sequence in which one event leads to another that takes place at a subsequent time in the future. Thus, the word “aftermath” is effective in conveying the meaning of *meta*. Reversing Hoffman’s position (2004), the members of the age group under consideration in this paper have witnessed or have “memories” of defining common events, not a single event (as in the case of the Holocaust post generation that Hoffman addresses). Hence, there is not a single defining event of the past, that constitutes “*the prehistory*” of the post war generation, but a linear succession of events, developments and milestones.

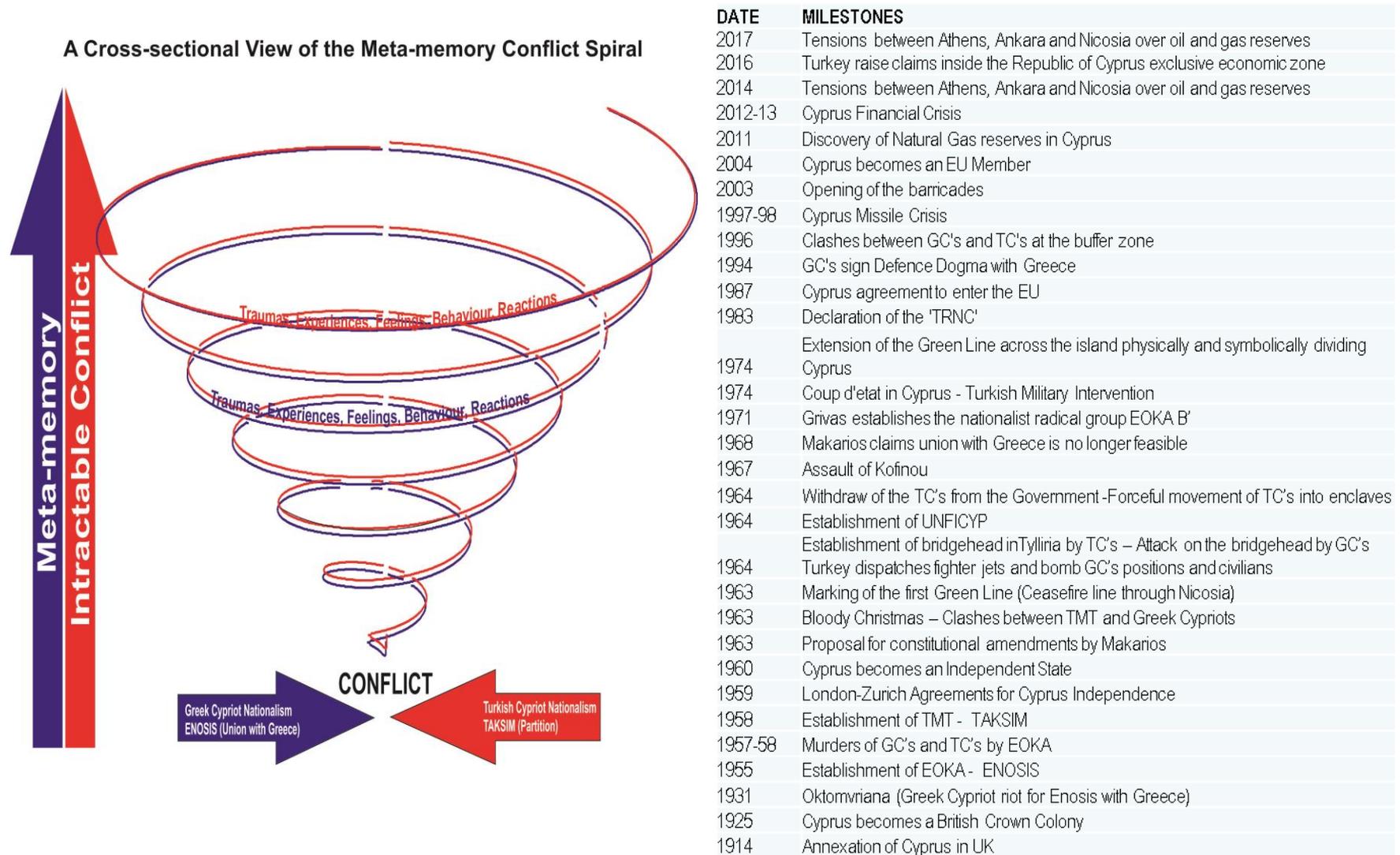
The memories of the pre-1974 generation constitute a symbolic reference point (Hoffman, 2004). The meta-memories of young generations are fuelled by the intractable open-ended conflict still present on the island. The presence of 30.000-40.000 Turkish troops in the TRNC is a constant reminder of the division along with the ‘green line’ that manifests the territorial partition of the island (Beesley, 2016; Georges, 2015; Kambas & Miles, 2017; Maurice, 2017; The Economist, 2014; Yezdani, 2012).

What holds for the case of Cyprus is a meta-memory open-ended process, which encompasses problematic elements (meta-info) that are still current. Those who had personal experiences co-exist and are in contact with those to whom the traumatic events have been imparted through narratives and who currently experience the consequences in their everyday environment (in the form of barricades, occupation forces, UN’s peacekeeping force, ceasefire line, outbreaks of ethnic violence). The past and present are converted into a single ontology that is enriched through the interaction of the pre-1974 and post-1974 generations on both sides of the dividing line.

In Cyprus, the conflict between the two communities has dominated the public agenda for more than a century. There are two alternative public spheres challenging for domination that have the same starting point (National Identity) but are in direct antagonism and competition. Thus, conflict in Cyprus follows a spiral pattern of a diachronic nature which is maintained by successive waves of traumas, experiences, feelings, behaviour and reactions. The memory of the conflict is fixed for each generation; however, the intractable conflict converts cumulative memory to meta-memory.

Figure 1 presents diagrammatically the cross-sectional meta-memory conflict spiral.

**Figure 1**  
**Cross-sectional meta-memory conflict spiral**



## Discussion

Ongoing reminders of the events of 1974 and their aftermath, apart from preventing the members of the two communities from dealing with the past and embracing the future, act as an obstacle to mutual acknowledgment of the sufferings from both sides, and prevent the building of trust, dialogue, reconciliation and understanding that will facilitate and guarantee a lasting peace.

Meta-memory is a form of memory that has a visible and ongoing connection to its source. There is no break in the lifeline but a series of events in Cyprus. 1974 is a seminal event both for Greek and Turkish Cypriots but with different official narratives that impose their interpretation, justifying the 'We', while demonizing the 'Other'. The past haunts the present and becomes a weapon in the political struggle between the two communities, used to justify their causes. The sense of instability and impending collision in relations between the two communities remains. Past and post generations share a common core of experiences as well as eye witness testimonies that manifest the position of each side.

Since 1974, the map of Cyprus with the division line has been a symbolic focus for both sides, denoting different meanings and different claims for sovereignty. For the Greek Cypriot side, the *de facto* division of the island represents an illegal and immoral act and, hence, it demonstrates the need for a collective effort to restore the "anomaly" and injustice. For the Turkish Cypriot side on the other hand, the division is viewed as the *de facto* legitimisation of its territorial and political sovereignty.

The nationalism that developed in Cyprus, due to the attachment to the homelands, resulted in the deepening of the rift between the two communities, leading to the conflict of 1974 and its after-effects. Although the Greek-Cypriot side managed to recover relatively soon after 1974, the Turkish-Cypriot side remained isolated in the international stage and dependent on Turkey for its survival. Ever since 1975, efforts have been made from both sides to find a viable and functional solution to the Cyprus issue. 2004 was a milestone for these efforts, due to the referendum that took place for the solution of the Cyprus issue; Thirteen years after this failed referendum, the hopes are raised because of the efforts made by the leaders of the two communities to find a solution.

Aleida Assmann stresses the importance of education in the building of nation-state especially the role of history and history textbooks as "*vehicles of national memory*". History becomes a means of cohesion of heterogeneous members of a population into a collective "*distinct and homogeneous collective*" (2008: 64).

In the case of Cyprus, the axiom of Assmann is confirmed: history becomes the backbone for the nation-state, supporting its values by constructing heroic and mobilizing patriotic narratives. In Cyprus, education, media and political elites foster the conflict through the divisive dialectic which seeks to fulfil the aims of both sides. The educational curricula have not been developed with the aim of building peace. On the contrary, they have contributed –in a rather instrumental way- towards the preservation of bigotry, prejudice, fear and stereotypes between the two sides. Education has the power to either mitigate or exacerbate a conflict. In the case of Cyprus, education aids the conflict through the divisive dialectic it uses, whose main purpose is to achieve the diverging goals of the two sides. The divisive methods adopted by the official narrative aim (a) to construct the "other" on the basis of the "other's" actions, something that highlights the importance of collective memory for present and future actions, (b) construct history by invoking emotions and, (c) construct the "other" as an "other" that is to be

blamed for the current situation. Establishing an official history that will reveal the wrongdoings and acknowledge the sufferings of both communities is a *sine qua non* for achieving reconciliation.

Before the opening of the barricades in 2003, the leadership of each community used images of the traumatic events of the past, which are still used, in an obsessive repetition. The opening of the barricades sparked a dialogue between the members of the two communities, without the limitations caused by the isolation imposed on them for 29 years that fuelled radicalization of their collective memories. Even in the cases of antagonistic narratives, the members of the two communities are involved in a dialogue that reveals truths that have been concealed by the existing monolithic hegemonic discourse, therefore filling the vacuum in their historical knowledge and shedding light on their misinterpretations of historic facts.

Analysis of the interviews revealed an intense questioning, contestation and suspicion towards the official narrative, while it also demonstrated the request to understand the narrative of the other side. This can be interpreted as an effort of understanding the “other’s” way of thinking. As indicated by the analysis, the official historical narrative offers vague hints of the conflict, starting from the lower tiers of education. The youth of both communities are faced from a very young age with an unclear and confusing narration that they, however, seem to realize, contest and question. It is particularly interesting how, in the case of the Greek-Cypriot side, the official narrative avoids positioning itself regarding the events, thus transferring this responsibility to the family. This is the result of internal disputes between political parties, regarding the uptake of the events and its failure in finding a common denominator for the creation of a collective historical narration. TRNC relies fully on Turkey for economic, political and military support. As far as the economy is concerned, Turkey provides its support through aid protocols, thus resulting in an almost total integration of the TRNC economy in the economy of Turkey (TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016; Günçavdi and Küçükç 2009; Hatay 2008; Çarkoğlu and Sözen 2004). The outcome of the 2015 presidential election reflects a scepticism by the majority of the Turkish Cypriots regarding the control that Turkey imposes and its effort to maintain political, economic and security dependence (Akyol, 2016; Hurriyet Daily News, 2016; Kyris, 2016; Public Information Office. Ministry of Foreign Affairs TRNC, 2016; Taştekin, 2015).

The analysis suggests that a change has occurred in the dominant narrative, in such a way as to mitigate the differences and unite the people, so as to achieve the above-mentioned common objective. However, certain preconditions are needed for any new narrative that promotes peace to take root. In Cyprus, there has never been a systematic and formal process to address the fears, past traumas, distrust and hostility between the two communities at a mass level. Until the members of the two communities move to the phase of dialogue and reconciliation, settling the antagonism and putting an end to the blaming of the Other, the attribution of negative qualities to it and the polarization of one side against the other (Fisher, 2001), the vicious cycle of the Cyprus conflict will remain.

## **Conclusions**

As long as the negotiation process for reconciliation is based on national identities/origin it is impossible for the two communities to reach a common ground. And, inevitably, the dialectic for reconciliation will fuel nationalism on both sides. Especially at times of strife or threat the dialectic of national survival (*ethniki epiviosi*) will be implemented to “*preserve cohesion and unified identity-driven positions*” (Tint, 2010: 242). The two communities in Cyprus failed to construct a common identity.

Past is fuelling the conflict by addressing those historical sources of the conflict without acknowledging the pain of the other. The conflict becomes a part of the reality of the members of both communities and results in the accumulation of mistrust, animosity and hostility (Bar-Tal, 2007). These experiences consist of layers of memory that are constantly added on the existing memory, resulting to what was defined as meta-memory.

The proposition of the term “meta-memory” is not only of conceptual significance but also has practical implications. The understanding that memories of the pre-1974 generation are inherited by the post 1974 generation in successive cycles, imposes the compelling need to introduce programmes, educational initiatives and peace building efforts that will stop fuelling meta-memories and rather spread the seeds for peace on the island. Pragmatically though, this task is challenging from the moment that hotbeds of tension still exist on the island.

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