The History Curriculum of Greek Supplementary Schools in England: Origins, Pedagogic Practices and Trajectories

Voskou, Angeliki
University of Birmingham
Email: angela.voskou.84@hotmail.com

Abstract
This study was conducted within a period of continuous socio-political changes, one of which was the recent migration waves from Greece and Cyprus to the UK. This paper aims to examine whether the curriculum - and particularly the history curriculum - of Greek Supplementary Schools in the UK corresponds with the wider social changes. This is undertaken with a review of the current curriculum of Greek supplementary education, and an examination of how primordial notions of culture and ethnicity influence curricula development. The examination of the origins of the curriculum allows in turn the discussion of the enactment of curriculum practices and how these influence students’ motivation and identity development. This research was conducted through case studies of four Greek Supplementary Schools in England, employing a mixed methods methodology. The findings of this research revealed that the curriculum of Greek Supplementary Schools is fuelled by ideologies around Greek nation building and ethnicity, which in turn affect history pedagogy and students' identity construction. The findings call for a revisiting of curricula and policies in Greek Supplementary Education in order to reflect the current fluid and constantly changing context.

Keywords: Greek Supplementary Education; History Curriculum; Students’ Motivation; Identity Development; Social Change

Introduction
Today’s world is characterised by continuous transformation in all aspects of social life. In particular, Greece and Cyprus, have undergone significant socio-political and economic changes during the last twenty years. One of these social changes was the financial crisis in Greece and Cyprus, which resulted in unprecedented large migration waves of Greeks and Greek-Cypriots in the UK during the last few years (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis, 2016). Within this context of migration characterised by Lucassen and Lucassen (2017) as a cross-cultural movement, immigrants’ identities are constantly re-developed through their social interactions (Vertovec, 2001). However, strong and deterministic notions of ethnicity and culture have often imposed a nationalistic view of ethnic identities, based on common ethnic and cultural characteristics, which are claimed to be in need of protection (DuBois, 1897; Smith, 1991).

These ideas on ethnicity prevail in the context of diaspora. Generally, in Europe, there is a general desire amongst migrant communities to maintain identities, culture and memories (Martinello, 2005; Berthomiere, 2005; Ma Mung, 2005). This was also the case for Greek and Greek-Cypriot migration, which was
dominated by immigrants’ wish to preserve their ethnic and cultural characteristics and transmit them to the following generations. One of the means through which their desire for the preservation of ethnic identities was fulfilled, was the Greek supplementary schools. Greek supplementary schools have been claimed to be important sites of identity construction (Catsiyannis, 1993; Constantinides, 1977, p. 284). History and heritage teaching provided in these schools, is considered as a powerful means of nation building and identity development (Leerssen, 2008; Davison, 2008; Cannadine et al, 2011). The attachment to these fixed notions of ethnicity and their preservation through these institutions, influences curricula development and renders history teaching and the construction of identities problematic in the today’s context of instability and continuous transformation.

This contemporary world of migration, and particularly the increase of migration waves from Greece and Cyprus to the UK, signifies the necessity of the examination of pedagogy and identity construction in Greek supplementary schools, in order to inform and revisit educational policies, curricula and practices in these institutions. This article is part of a doctoral study at the University of Birmingham, which examined the history pedagogy in Greek Supplementary Schools in England within a period of social changes. It aims to examine how primordial notions of culture and ethnicity in Greece, influence history curriculum development and how this in turn influences students’ ethnic identity development, motivation and pedagogic practices in Greek supplementary schools in England.

These aims will be addressed with the aid of critical realism, the overarching philosophy of this research (Sayer, 1992). Critical realism facilitated the examination of how the structure - the macro-level, which in this research was the ideology around Greek nation building, the social and historical context, educational policies and the history curriculum, affects the agency - the micro-level, the pedagogic practices, students’ motivation and identity development. The paper begins by providing background information on the ideology around Greek nation building, the Greek migration in the UK and the establishment of the Greek Supplementary Schools, which will set the macro level, the framework of explaining the origins of history curriculum. An analysis of the findings of this study regarding the curriculum content and the enactment of curricular practices, will shed light on the micro level of this study, initialising a discussion on curriculum trajectories.

The Curriculum Origins

Within this labile context of open societies, continuous change, pluralism and migration, the process of identity development is even more intensive and entails a process of continuous reflection, a process which the sociologist Margaret Archer (2000, p. 228) calls morphogenesis. In contrast to postmodern theories around identity, post-structural work on race and anti-racism theories on identity, support that in a pluralistic society, identities should be preserved and protected against the ‘threats’ of assimilation and exclusion (Carter, 2000, p. 47). This is where history, despite its dynamic notion, can strengthen communities' identities and render a sense of dignity amongst its members (Myers, 2006). Stepping back in the period after the 1960s political and intellectual change in the
UK (Chalmers, 2013), identities, instead of static and ahistorical essences, were presented as dynamic and changeable constructions (Leerssen, 2008). It was within this period that immigrants and community members were engaged in historical research, which was a means for providing them a sense of identity, historical consciousness and dignity (Myers and Grosvenor, 2011).

Within this changing social context, education, as a social and historical product, could not remain unaffected. More particularly, after the 1980s, there was a need for a shift from assimilation policies to embracing diversity and pluralism in the UK, which was reflected in various educational and cultural policies. This is where history had played an important role, in embodying the past with a new, dynamic meaning in the present (Myers, 2015). However, despite this transformative educational context, immigrant students were still faced as a problem within the educational system and not as a means to explore their needs and other deeper causes of inequalities (Green and Grosvenor, 1997).

This transformative educational context has inevitably initialised debates around history teaching and curricula development. More particularly, curricula debates on a knowledge versus competence-based curriculum during the last decades (Nodine, 2016), denoted the need for progressing from a traditional, teacher-centred pedagogy to a student-centred pedagogy, where students are active learners. History, due to its contestation as a teaching subject, caused recent debates on several diachronic issues around curricula and teaching practices, such as the world wars commemorations, the British values and international interactions (Davies, 2017). Apart from this, the pluralistic, transformable context of contemporary societies, urged the need for a reconsideration of history curricula in order to embrace diversity and become more inclusive (UNESCO-IBE, 2013).

Nonetheless, if the purposes and practices of history were a matter of significant educational debates in many parts of the world, there were no similar debates in Greece or Cyprus. There, history teaching continued to impart a dominant national narrative stemming from the Greek historiography of the 18th and 19th centuries, which asserted the continuity of the Greek nation since antiquity. In Greek historiography, being Greek was directly associated with ethnicity and not with citizenship. ‘Greekness’ was connected with having a common language, origin and religion (Zambeta, 2000, p. 148), while the ‘other’, was characterised as barbarian and uncivilised (Millas, 2008). These primordial notions of ethnicity appear to influence curricula development and pedagogy in mainland Greece. Relevant research revealed that the Greek National Curriculum is characterised by ethnocentrism. In particular, history pedagogy and curricula in Greece and Cyprus promote nation building based on a glorious heritage and past and a single narrative (Perikleous, 2010; Perikleous, 2014), following a ‘monolithic dimension’ which does not embrace cultural diversity (Georgiadis and Zisimos, 2008). It was only in 2010, that there was a reform of the history curriculum in Cyprus, which followed a more disciplinary approach towards history teaching and has set the basis for change in history curriculum (Perikleous, 2015).

Similar and even more intense struggles for preservation and empowerment of ethnic identities was prevalent in the context of Greek diaspora
in the UK. The Greek and Greek-Cypriot migrations in the UK during the 19th and 20th centuries were marked by social and political unrest in Greece and Cyprus and an effort to resist assimilation processes and xenophobic attitudes during their settlement (Catsiyannis, 1992; Holmes, 1993). Driven by an idealised view of Greekness, as presented in the Greek historiography, and the claim that Greek immigrants are considered to be representatives of Greece abroad, immigrants struggled to preserve and transmit the characteristics of ethnic identities to the following generations of immigrants (Tamvakis, 2008). For this reason, Greek immigrants were engaged in establishing communities and schools, performing the Greek national and religious customs and celebrations, aiming at preserving the Greek language and culture (Philippaki – Warburton, 2009).

This section has set out the macro level of this research - the deep notions of identity and ethnicity resulting from Greek historiography, exclusion experiences during migration, monocultural curricula and pedagogical practices in Greece and Cyprus. This will help explaining both the content and tone of the curriculum for Greek supplementary schools, discussed in the following sections.

The Greek supplementary schools in the UK

The establishment of Greek supplementary schools since the 19th century in the UK can be interpreted as a way of fulfilling immigrants’ wish for forging ethnic identities and transferring the Greek heritage to the following generations (Ekonomou and Halliday, 1988; Papathanasiou, 1990). These schools provide Greek language and social subjects teaching, from Nursery up to GCE A Level for third and fourth generation students, as well as first generation students, the students who migrated from Greece and Cyprus recently. Approximately 70 Greek supplementary schools were functioning in the year that the fieldwork of this project took place, in 2014-2016 (CEM, 2019). The Cyprus Educational Mission (CEM), founded in 1969, is the central body through which the Cyprus Ministry of Education enhances the efforts of the Cypriot communities in UK, for preservation and cultivation of the religious, ethnic and cultural identities of the students and community members (MOEC, 2015, p. 21). These schools operate in the afternoons, after the school closes or on Saturday mornings until the afternoon. The time of operation of these schools, raises issues regarding students’ motivation and urges considerations of how curricula and teaching practices should embody this.

The purpose of the Greek supplementary schools, according to the Greek Government Law on Intercultural Education 2413/1996, is the teaching of the Greek language, the transmission of Greek cultural identity and the transfer of Greek language, Greek and orthodox tradition and the Greek culture to other countries (Law 2413, 1996, Article 1, paragraph 1). These anthropologically driven claims and the deep notions of culture are reflected in the philosophy and the history curriculum of the Greek supplementary schools.

The Curriculum of Greek Supplementary Education

The wish for preservation and transmission of ethnicity is mirrored in the curriculum of the Greek supplementary schools which was first issued in 1997 by the Cyprus Ministry of Education (Cyprus Ministry of Education, 1997 – reference
found from Anagnostou et al, 2005). After almost thirty years it was reviewed for the first time in 2015 and re-published in 2018 by the CEM in collaboration with the Cyprus Ministry of Education. The time of the review of the curriculum is particularly important, as it coincides with the migration and registration of the first generation immigrant students in Greek supplementary schools. Even though this change in the structure and the teaching practices of Greek supplementary schools should be reflected in the current re-published curricula, the philosophy of the Greek supplementary education regarding the preservation of ethnic identities and the transmission of the Greek culture, remained the same from the time of the first publication of the curriculum in 1997, until the most recent one. This significant historical and social change is not mentioned in the curriculum, apart from one brief reference in the ‘methodological approaches’ section. There, the first-generation migrants are not considered as a means for reconsidering pedagogical practices, but according to the curriculum “the Greek supplementary school aims at the preservation and empowerment of these students’ mother tongue and cultural identity” (CEM, 2018).

The Social Subjects Curriculum

This ideology around the preservation and empowerment of ethnic identities is exemplified in the social subjects’ curriculum. This includes the teaching of history, geography, Orthodox Christian religion, traditional dance and music. These, according to the curriculum, are constitutive elements of the Greek identity and are claimed to be important for the construction of students’ ethnic identities and their national consciousness (CEM, 2018: Social Subjects).

According to the curriculum’s own phrasing, the ethnic minority students when they are taught about social subjects, they learn to appreciate and respect their cultural heritage, develop values which would help them to preserve their ethnic identity in a pluralistic society and be proud of their origin, while, at the same time they should respect ‘the different’ (CEM, 2018: Social subjects). As can be observed in the above claims, there are contradictory statements, as on the one hand, the curriculum emphasises the need for identity preservation and for developing a national consciousness, while acknowledging, on the other hand, the pluralistic context that the students live in.

Starting from the first level, according to the curriculum, the students should know about the meaning of homeland and their origin. The emphasis in this level, is on students’ identity formation from a young age and the development of students’ national consciousness as members of the Greek diaspora. The second level of teaching (years two, three and four) is focused on teaching about selected, powerful figures of the Greek mythology, and more specifically, the Olympus Gods, the Hercules Deeds, Theseus and the Minotaur and Odysseus adventures. Students also learn about the Cypriot and Greek antiquities through a visit at the British museum. However, the commemorations are those which cover the majority of the history curriculum from year 2 until year 6, subjects which are repetitive throughout each year (CEM, 2018). The content of the history curriculum of the Greek Supplementary education, including the commemorations, is outlined in the Table no. 1 below:
Table 1. The History Curriculum of Greek Supplementary Education, CEM (2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Level: Year 1</th>
<th>Second Level: Years 2,3,4</th>
<th>Third Level: Years 5,6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Meaning of Homeland – Origin</td>
<td>Greek Mythology:</td>
<td>Byzantium Foundation by Great Constantine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cypriot and Greek Antiquities – visit at the British Museum</td>
<td>Commemorations:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fights of Greeks for freedom - Connection with national commemorations:</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The Greek Revolution of 1821: The Foundation of the Greek nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1st October – Independence Day</td>
<td>28th October – Commemoration of ‘No’ and the flag</td>
<td>• The fight for freedom of 1955-1959: The Foundation of Cypriot Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 25th March (1821) – Greek Independence</td>
<td>1st April (1955) – EOKA commemoration</td>
<td>• Τhe coup d’ état</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Our occupied land</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The Turkish invasion and its consequences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Particular emphasis in the curriculum is also placed on learning about the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974, as this is a prerequisite of the curriculum from year 2 until year 6. More particularly, it is claimed that students should preserve their memories ‘alive’ and cultivate the faith for claiming the occupied land and for reunification. It is specifically stressed that the students should know about their occupied land, realise the disastrous consequences of wars and appreciate the ideals of freedom, democracy, respect people’s rights and recognise the value of attaching to ethical and human values (CEM, 2018: Social Subjects).

Upon examining the history curriculum, it can be observed that it is focused on the teaching of glorious and victorious moments of Greece and Cyprus, and more particularly the commemorations of wars and independence days. These commemorations refer to glorious moments of the Greek nation, and take the form of celebrations for the victory of the Greek nation over the conquerors. This emphasis of the curriculum on commemorations and preservation of memories, clearly denotes a general tendency towards the inscription of memories as a means of preservation of diaspora collective identities (Burrell and Panayi, 2006). The prevalence of celebrating national commemorations in Greek supplementary schools is an example of stressing the glorious moments of the Greek nation, while silencing darker sides of memory and history. This results in students’ developing a falsified or singled-sided form of the past, and by doing this, inculcating students’ pride for Greekness. A recent study on the formation of ethnic identity as part of national celebrations in a Greek supplementary school in the UK, revealed that national celebrations were part of a common-shared historical continuum, which is the foundation for the establishment of immigrants’ collective historical memory and ‘a collective ethnic identity’ (Simpsi, 2014).

The above sections examined how policies and curricula of Greek supplementary education, despite social and historical changes, appear to still reflect the ideology of Greek historiography on Greek ethnicity. The influence of the enactment of this history curriculum content on students’ ethnic identities and motivation, will be discussed in the subsequent sections.
Research Design and Methodology

The research was conducted through case studies of four Greek supplementary schools following a mixed-method methodology. Teachers, students above 13 years old and former students of Greek supplementary schools, accepted to participate in this research. The total number of participants whose data were included in the doctoral research were 58 (23 teachers and 35 students). For this article, students’ from 13-18 years old and former students’ questionnaire data were used, as well as three teachers’ interviews, one student interview and two lesson observations.

The quantitative phase of the research, employed questionnaires as a research tool. It explored teachers’ and students’ attitudes on history and heritage pedagogy in Greek supplementary schools, and contributed in obtaining data regarding the social stratification and background of the participants. The qualitative phase, using interview and ethnographic observations as research methods, shed light on participants’ perceptions around history curriculum and content and its practice through history teaching.

The research complied with the ethical and access processes. All participants were informed about the research in the Participant Information Leaflet and required to complete a consent form for their participation in both phases of the research. Parental consent was sought for students’ participation under 18 years old. Pseudonyms were used for all the participants (e.g. Teacher-a, Student-a) to secure participants’ confidentiality.

Schools’ and participants’ background information

In all the four case study schools (named as Greek School A, B, C and D), the wish of part of the Greek and Greek-Cypriot communities for preservation and continuation of the Greek ethnic elements was prevalent (Greek Schools’ websites). The schools were established between 1950s-1980s, a period of large influx of Greek-Cypriot migration in the UK, due to historical factors and structural changes in the island. As was the case with the establishment of Greek schools and communities during that period, the establishment of these immigrants in the UK, inculcated the wish and the desire for the establishment of a place to worship and of Greek supplementary schools, possibly due to fears of assimilation (Constantinides, 1977).

The results of the participants’ background information from the questionnaires indicate that the schools and the community itself, are in a process of structural change. What was revealed from teachers’ background information was that most teachers are from Greece, and most probably they migrated to the UK due to the recent economic instability in Greece. The data also suggest that even though the majority of the students were born in the UK with UK-Cypriot, Greek or Cypriot parents, there are a number of first generation students who have recently migrated from Greece (Tables 2 and 3 below). This may have consequences to classroom dynamics and suggests that policies and curricula need to be re-considered to adjust to this new situation and the needs of these students.
Table no. 2: Characteristics of teachers participating in the interviews and observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Teacher-a</th>
<th>Teacher-b</th>
<th>Teacher-c</th>
<th>Teacher-e</th>
<th>Head teacher-b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>UK - raised in Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of teaching</td>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>Pre-primary, 2nd and 3rd year</td>
<td>Teacher of reception in 2014-2015, teacher of 2nd year in 2015-2016</td>
<td>pre-GCE A level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of teaching in Greek school</td>
<td>6 years and above</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Students' aged 13-18 years old - Duration in UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Since birth</th>
<th>Last 10 years</th>
<th>Last 5-9 years</th>
<th>Last 2-4 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek School A</td>
<td>1 student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 student</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek School B</td>
<td>9 students</td>
<td>1 student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek school C</td>
<td>3 students</td>
<td>2 students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek school D</td>
<td>4 students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings and discussion

The next sections draw on data from the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research, in order to examine the enactment of curricular practices in Greek supplementary schools in a period of a structural change of the Greek community and the schools, as well as wider socio-political changes.

"The language given to me was Greek […] My only care, [is] my language on Homer’s shores…” O. Elytis, 1959

Elytis verse from his poem *Axion Esti*, echoes the reason for both current and former students’ attendance at Greek supplementary schools (Students’ questionnaire results, 2014-2015, 2015-2016). As Greek language learning is regarded as a form of ethnic identification (Deligianni and Louka, 2004), students’ attendance and socialisation in these institutions can act as a medium of reaffirming their ethnic identities. This is associated with one of the main findings of this research, the domination of Greek language teaching in the Greek supplementary curriculum and education.

Students’ and teachers’ interview responses revealed that the teaching of Greek language dominates over the other subjects taught in Greek
supplementary schools, occupying the majority of the teaching time. This was identified by the teachers, as one of the major problems in teaching history and heritage effectively (Voskou, 2018). An experienced teacher in a Greek supplementary school, when she was asked about the difficulties she faced when teaching history, she said that the emphasis of policies and curricula is on Greek language learning, subordinating history and culture teaching. As she confessed:

“The whole mechanism, the importance, is given in learning the language and this (the teaching of culture) comes second. These could have been taught together” (Teachers’ Interview 2).

However, interviewing former students who attended Greek supplementary schools 20-30 years before, revealed that the dominance of language teaching is not only a contemporary issue, but a longstanding problem with its roots in past education curricula, policies and practices (Voskou, 2018). This denotes that despite the time past and the wider social changes, curricula and teaching practices have not changed significantly throughout time. This is problematic, as according to the findings of this research, the domination of Greek language leads to students’ demotivation and disengagement. According to teachers, students prefer history and heritage learning rather than Greek language learning, which is more academically oriented, with emphasis on grammar learning (Table no. 4 below).

Table 4. Teachers’ attitudes on whether students are more enthusiastic on learning history and heritage than language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching history in a cross-curricular approach

The emphasis on Greek language teaching is also indicated in the curriculum itself. As it is indicated in the curriculum, this emphasis is due to the limited teaching time in Greek supplementary schools. Thus, the teaching of the social subjects should be conducted in a cross-curricular manner, through language teaching or in units based on commemorations (CEM, 2018). I had the opportunity to observe a history lesson conducted in a cross-curricular approach. This was devoted on the commemoration of the 28th October, 1940, regarding Greece participation in the Second World War and the victory of Greece over Italy and Germany. This class encompassed two levels, reception and year 2 (Observation no. 1).

As one of the aims of the lesson was for the students to understand the reason for commemorating the 28th October, 1940, the teacher at the beginning of the lesson, pointed out the main facts of this historic period. This part of the lesson involved a comparison between the past and the present, asking students to compare how students of that period experienced the war compared with the current situation. The students were also asked to imagine how peace looks like. These two activities developed students’ imagination, critical thinking and reflection. However, the teacher appeared to be restricted by the requirements of the curriculum and the teaching of grammar rules. The rest of the lesson was
dominated by grammar teaching and generally the development of students’ language skills. These grammar facts were a basic requirement in the year 2 curriculum. Part of the grammar exercises involved completing the blanks, copying sentences and circling the correct word based on the corresponding grammar rule (Observation no. 1).

The first cultural part of the lesson, provided the opportunity for students to develop their critical thinking and their understanding regarding abstract cultural concepts, such as peace. However, compared to the first part of the lesson in which students were engaged and participated in the discussion with the teacher, the students during the second part of the lesson were not so engaged during completing their grammar exercises and required assistance and support from their teacher (Observation no. 1).

This lesson observation is an example of how the emphasis of the curriculum on language teaching can lead to students’ disengagement. Even though the teaching of history in a cross-curricular manner, is a suggested teaching approach in the curriculum, this should be implemented in a way that will enable students to be engaged during the lesson and encourage their active participation.

“They like learning about ancient things …”

Apart from Greek language learning, both teachers and students participating in this research were asked about the content of the history subjects taught. According to the results, ancient history and ancient monuments were not considered as famous teaching subjects. The questionnaires’ data revealed that a significant amount of teachers teach Greek mythology, while only some students responded that they learn Greek mythology (Tables no. 5 and 6). However, based on the questionnaire results, the majority of the students responded that they are enthusiastic in learning about Greek heroes, Greek mythology, as well as fights with conquerors (Students’ Questionnaires’ Results 2014-2015, 2015-2016).

Table 5. Teachers’ responses on the history content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching subject</th>
<th>Recent History</th>
<th>Greek mythology</th>
<th>Themed work on islands in Greece</th>
<th>Habits</th>
<th>Ancient history</th>
<th>Ancient monuments</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Students’ aged 13-18 years old responses on history content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching subject</th>
<th>Greek mythology</th>
<th>Ancient History</th>
<th>Ancient monuments</th>
<th>Recent History</th>
<th>Habits</th>
<th>Celebrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above data were confirmed through an observation I conducted of a lesson devoted to museum education in Greek School D, which included elements of Greek mythology in its content. This was a preparatory lesson devoted to museum education, before students’ actual visit at the British Museum (Observation no. 2). Learning about the Cypriot and Greek antiquities and visiting the British Museum, is part of the revised curriculum for history teaching (CEM, 2018). This lesson aimed at providing details and information about the statues and decoration of Parthenon. Students during this lesson, were not so motivated and engaged when learning about ancient Greek artefacts and monuments. However, some students appeared to be more motivated, interested and engaged when the teacher referred and provided information about Greek mythology. Interestingly, only a few students participated in the discussion and particularly students who moved to UK from Greece recently (Observation no. 2). These lesson observations suggested that learning about ancient history and artefacts can be demotivating for students, while mythology seems to be a subject which is of more interest to students.

Students’ motivation and enthusiasm in learning about heroes and Greek mythology was also remarked in teachers’ and students’ interviews. Two teachers remarked that students are more motivated and engaged when they learn about Greek mythology and Greek heroes from Greek mythology and Greek antiquity (Interviews 2 and 3). One of the teachers, argued that students are more attracted to heroes from Greek mythology and antiquity, because they relate these heroes with heroes from their everyday experiences using their imagination. They also find common virtues in these heroes, which students admire.

As she responded:

“They like learning about ancient things, whatever has to do with mythology, great heroes, great heroes that they know from cartoons, for example about Hercules, Jason, children get really excited when they learn about these. They are heroes, and they connect them with other heroes, someone can connect them with Spiderman, they have huge imagination ... [...] “They find common elements (between the heroes) in heroism, in virtue” (Interview 2).

The above interview extract is another signifier of how students can be more motivated and enthusiastic when they are taught about recent history and mythology, rather than ancient artefacts and monuments. This students’ ‘admiration’ and interest in learning about heroes of Greek heroes and heroes of the Greek mythology, is driven and influenced by a nostalgia for a mythologized and glorious past. This can also be influenced by normative views regarding the superiority of the Greek nation, prevalent in Greek historiography (Millas, 2008), as well as the virtues and power resulting from the heroes of the Greek mythology. The admiration of students for heroes can also be a gendered issue. Male students, as a Former student of Greek School B (Interview 4), are more in favour of male semi-gods who exist in mythology, as they can be related with them or with other contemporary superheroes.

**Struggling for memories through commemorations teaching**

Despite the provision and teaching of other cultural themes, teaching recent history of Greece and Cyprus appeared to be the most popular teaching subject,
based on both teachers’ and students’ responses, with a big difference compared to ancient history, the second most popular teaching lesson (Tables no. 5 and 6). Teaching modern history was also the most popular teaching subject not only for contemporary students but also for former students, as the majority of them responded that they were taught about Greek/Cypriot modern history (Former students’ questionnaire results, 2014-2015). Teaching modern history, can be related to teaching national commemorations which are related to recent history of Greece and Cyprus from the 19th century onwards.

A student who attended Greek School B during the years during 2000s and graduated recently, observed that history was only taught through the prism of national commemorations. He did not recall encountering history in formal history lessons. Only when he started doing his GCSE did he begin to start learning history in more detail and develop a critical eye to questions of evidence and interpretation:

“That was mainly our focus we’ve learned our history through celebrations [...] that was the way we learned not through sitting down and saying and learning properly [...] when I was a teenager, when I was doing my GCSE we have recapped on it more because [name of the teacher] went into more detail in history through texts, and that’s when I did learn something (it) was on that point” (Interview 4).

The prevalence of teaching national commemorations though, as with Greek language domination, can also have adverse results on students’ motivation. This is supported by one of the head teachers, who expressed students’ demotivation and frustration for the commemorations - and in this case for the commemoration of the 28th October 1940 - because these are repetitive. This is because, according to the curriculum, these commemorations should be taught every year (Table no. 1). As the head teacher commented:

“children who have done a celebration about the 28th October when they were 6,7,8,9,10 years old they said ‘Enough! We don’t want (to celebrate) the 28th of October anymore’, not that we don’t want to learn, but we don’t want to do the same thing again, that is, it was very repetitive, while the Christmas celebration has provided the opportunity, the flexibility to do something different each year” (Interview 1).

The above sections revealed that the policies and the curriculum of Greek supplementary education in the UK enforce the dominance of the Greek language teaching and national commemorations and celebrations. This history curriculum content can be understood as a powerful means of forging students' ethnic identities, aiming at perpetuating cultural and ethnic values and ideas. These findings call for a revisiting of curricula of Greek supplementary schools in order to consider pluralism and social change as an opportunity for the students to reflect on and negotiate their identities.

**Curriculum’s trajectories**

The participants of this study realised that there is a need for a reconsideration of curricula and policies in Greek supplementary schools. They expressed their suggestions and provided solutions for improving issues, which were raised as problematic in history teaching curriculum and content.

One of the issues raised by both teachers and students was the dominance of teaching the Greek language and commemorations. A former student at Greek
School B, remembered being taught about historical facts only when a celebration or commemoration was approaching. He expressed the wish to learn about more cultural and historical subjects and not only those related to celebrations or commemorations, mentioning an example of learning about the development of Olympic Games (Interview 4).

The head teacher of Greek School C suggested that Greek language should not be the main teaching subject or the main reason for students to attend Greek supplementary schools. She also highlighted that the Greek history and commemorations teaching should not be the only pathway for developing students’ consciousness and identity. As the head teacher highlighted:

“[...] definitely it’s important (the teaching of history) for developing the conscience of the children but I believe that there are many other ways to do that”.

The head teacher’s comment contradicts the curriculum’s and other teachers’ views, supporting that to be aware of your national consciousness, you need to situate yourself in a nation (CEM, 2018; Voskou, 2018). However, the head teacher’s comment rather supports that students should develop a historical consciousness, which will encourage students to position themselves in a continuously changing context, reflecting on the past with a critical look in the future (Seixas, 2012: 865). This is supported by the head teacher’s last argument which opens up alternative ways of thinking about curricula development and classroom practices that can develop students’ historical consciousness and increase their motivation in the context of Greek supplementary schooling.

**Conclusion**

This paper discussed how policies and curricula of Greek supplementary education in the UK, despite social and historical changes, appear to still reflect the ideology of Greek historiography and archegonous notions of culture and ethnicity. These in turn, influence history teaching practices, the construction of students’ ethnic identities and motivation in these institutions.

A significant finding of this research was that the curriculum of Greek supplementary schools emphasises Greek language teaching, as this was considered as a means of identity construction and preservation (Prokopiou and Cline, 2010). The findings reveal that the history curriculum merely concentrates on the teaching of the glorious moments of the Greek nation, related to commemorations and celebrations, while silencing other important moments of history. As students learn about the history of Greece and Cyprus predominantly through its glorious and victorious moments, this inculcates a sense of pride regarding the superiority of the Greek nation which distinguishes it from other nations. The content of this didactic curriculum renders students demotivated and disengaged, as this is repetitive and does not correspond with their experiences as members of a pluralistic society. Such a curriculum, aiming at socialising students into an ethicised Greek identity, does not provide the opportunity to students to negotiate their identities within this changing, fluid context and to take a leading role in their learning.

However, participants’ suggestions at the end of the research, the dynamic changes in the structure of the Greek community and Greek supplementary schools, the continuous migration waves, as well as the recent international
debates on national curricula, reflect the need for change and a reconsideration of curricula, policies and practices in Greek supplementary schools. Curricula developers, should consider students as active and reflexive learners, able to develop their own sense of identities, and the teachers as the co-constructors of the curricula and policies, based on their own reflective experiences in a continuously changing context.

Summaries of interviews and observations:

Interview 1
Name: Head teacher-a, head teacher and teacher of Greek School C
Date of interview: 18/07/2015
Duration: 1 hour and 15 minutes
She explained in detail that she teaches recent history in her class which is GCE A level. The students like learning about Cyprus and the war which took place in 1974, as they cannot remain indifferent in matters such as wars, especially if they have experiences and background knowledge. Her students also liked recent history and they were asking questions about these issues.

Interview 2
Name: Teacher-a, Greek School D
Date of interview: 25/06/2015
Duration: 1 hour and 10 minutes
The teacher was teaching traditions, celebrations, customs related to Orthodox religion, because she supported that there is a close association of the Greek nation with Orthodox religion, which connects people in diaspora irrespective of their faith. She explained that the teaching in Greek schools is more academic, as it is focused in grammar teaching, irrespective of students' interests. Students are more enthusiastic when learning about ancient history, mythology and Greek heroes, as they find common characteristics in heroism with current cartoon heroes.

Interview 3
Name: Teacher-b, Greek School C
Date of interview: 16/07/2015
Duration: 52 minutes
She taught history and heritage celebrations and commemorations when these are approaching. She explained that even though these events are common sense to the children in Greece, it is difficult to conceptualise these for the students in diaspora. She supported that themes on tradition are more pleasant and familiar to them and students have more knowledge on these issues if they visit Greece or if they have a Greek family. Students are enthusiastic when learning about Odyssey, Iliad and mythology.

Interview 4
Former student-a: male, 18-20 years old, graduated from Greek School B recently, born in the UK, third generation student
Date: 21/07/2015
Duration: 40 minutes

He remembered that the teaching in his Greek school was more didactic and focused on commemorations and celebrations teaching when he was young and he does not remember doing creative activities. He used to love Greek mythology as a child, as he was brought up with this. His love for Greek mythology continues up to now. He also enjoyed attending dance lessons. He suggested teaching about the history of the Olympic Games, how they were founded and developed, using more videos.

Observation No. 1

Date and time: 17/10/2015, 13:00 – 13:30 pm
Teacher: Teacher-c, teacher in Greek School A
Subject: The commemoration of 28th October, 1940
Resources: videos, pictures, Class work in a handout provided to students: reading texts, exercises based on the texts, completing the blanks, drawing, grammar exercises

This lesson involved discussion and activities regarding social aspects of the period of the involvement of Greece in the Second World War, followed by grammar activities aiming at developing students’ language skills.

Observation No. 2

Date and time: 13/06/2015, 1:00 – 2:30pm
Teacher: Teacher-d in Greek School D
No. of students: twenty to thirty students
Aim of the lesson: To examine where these statues were placed originally before transferred to the British museum

This lesson involved a discussion around Parthenon and the artefacts related to it, encompassing reference to mythological elements and activities at the end of the lesson, which required students’ active participation.

Notes
1. Acknowledgements: I would like to thank all the participants for their valuable contribution in this research, as well as my supervisors, Dr. Kevin Myers and Prof. Ian Grosvenor, for their guidance and support throughout this study.
2. The participants’ characteristics are the same as the time of completing the questionnaires.
3. When referring to results of students, these are the students aged 13-18 years old, excluding adults and former students, unless otherwise stated.

References
Comparative European Research in Migration, Diversity and Identities. Bilbao: University of Deusto.


Perikleous, L. (2014). Deanna Troi and The TARDIS: Does Historical Empathy Have a Place in Education?. International Journal Humanities and Social Science, 2(18), 55-64.


**Research References:**
Headteacher-a, head teacher, Interview date 18/07/2015
Observation 1, date 17/10/2015
Observation 2, date 13/06/2015
Observation 3, date 13/06/2015
Teacher-a, teacher, Interview date 25/06/2015
Teacher-b, teacher, Interview date 16/07/2015
Former Student-a, Former Student Interview, date 21/07/2015
Teachers’ Questionnaire Responses (2014-2015, 2015-2016)
Students’ Questionnaire Responses (2014-2015)
Greek School A website (2016)
Greek School B website (2016; 2017)
Greek School C website (2016)
Greek School D website (2016)

Received: 29 July 2019
Accepted: 21 September 2019