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What kind of history teaching may promote intercultural competence in culturally-diverse societies? Teachers' reflections from a case of conflict

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Introduction: In our globalised world, the goal of cultivating a rigid national identity through school history should be replaced by the goals of developing global citizenship and safeguarding democracy. School history should thus balance the feeling of belonging to the state with the feeling of being a global citizen by building students' intercultural competence through historical thought, conscience, and empathy. To this end, the main purpose of this research is to examine teachers' perceptions of the best teaching strategies and practices to cultivate students' intercultural competence through history education.

Methods: The study is implemented in Cyprus, as it provides for a context of conflict, in which history education is called to play a catalytic role in building reconciliation. Interviews were carried out with 18 high-school history teachers.

Results: Based on teachers' perspectives, three thematic categories emerged from the data analysis; namely: (a) history teaching through an interdisciplinary approach, (b) history teaching through historical sources, and (c) history teaching through collaborative learning.

Discussion: The study bears wider implications for history curricula, teaching methodologies, and teachers' training.

KEYWORDS

history education, intercultural competence, intercultural historical learning, teacher perceptions, Cyprus

Introduction

This research aims at examining teachers' perceptions of the most appropriate teaching strategies and practices to cultivate students' intercultural competence. To meet this goal, we chose Cyprus as a prominent case to carry out our research. Cyprus is a young democracy that became an independent republic in 1960. The social landscape has been radically transformed in the past six decades, making the Cyprus context an interesting site to examine the intersection between history education and intercultural competence. The "partition" of the island in 1974 caused the physical division of the two constitutionally-recognised communities of the island: Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots. Armenians, Maronites, and Latins constitutionally belong to the Greek-Cypriot community, while the Turkish-speaking Roma were affiliated to the Turkish-Cypriot community. As the Greek-Cypriot government is

recognised as the *de jure* government of the island, this study focuses only on the Greek-Cypriot context.

What past research has shown is that after 1974, history education in Cyprus had been merely oriented towards the nation-building project aiming at the construction of a political definition of the national “self” as superior to the “others” (e.g., Hajisoteriou, 2011; Klerides, 2016; Zembylas and Karahasan, 2017). School celebrations of national events and the promotion of national heroes as role models further contributed to this endeavour. History teaching was based on the “I do not forget” (our lost lands) curriculum, pointing to a narration of events supporting the dominant narrative by the teacher and their memorisation by the students, which fostered the one-sided victimisation of Greek-Cypriots, while silencing the traumatic experiences of the others (Zembylas and Karahasan, 2017). However, in a case of conflict, where school curricula and teaching serve a notion of citizenship that is coterminous with a homogenous culture and nation, history teaching might produce xenophobia, not only towards the Turkish-Cypriot community, but also towards non-dominant groups, such as minorities, immigrants, and refugees (Hajisoteriou, 2011). It is in divided societies where history teaching should be the vehicle for the promotion of peace, reconciliation, and mutual respect and understanding, not only between the two major communities, but also with other social groups such as minorities, immigrants, and refugees (Klerides, 2016; Klerides and Zembylas, 2017). To this end, past research highlights the importance of school history in building intercultural-competent citizens (Leontsinis, 2007; Harris, 2013; Nordgren and Johansson, 2015; Nordgren, 2017; Solomou et al., 2019), as concept that we further discuss below.

In this context, the focus of this study is to examine teachers’ views regarding the best ways in which history teaching may cultivate intercultural competence in students. To this end, our research questions are the following:

- How do history teachers conceptualise the goals of history teaching in culturally-diverse classrooms?
- What do history teachers perceive as the most appropriate teaching strategies and practices for history education in culturally-diverse classrooms?

History education for intercultural competence

History education in culturally-diverse settings has been connected to the goal of cultivating attitudes against oppression, racism, and social discrimination (Mutluer, 2013; Johansson, 2021). However, Nordgren (2017) explains that this should not happen by idealising peaceful and harmonious co-existence nor by concealing the tensions throughout history between cultural groups, natives and foreigners, or tradition and change. On the other hand, this goal should be promoted through intercultural history learning that fosters students’ intercultural competence (Solomou et al., 2019; Johansson, 2021). Intercultural historical learning has been defined as the educational process through which students gain intercultural competence pointing to the necessary knowledge, abilities, and outlook to engage effectively in a diverse society (Nordgren and Johansson, 2015). Intercultural competence requires cultural knowledge about the ways cultural identities are

formatted, social groups function, and intercultural interactions occur. It also presupposes values such as autonomy, criticality, care, equality, and respect (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2016), and interpersonal skills for building effective relationships and collaboration in culturally-diverse environments.

In the same spirit Pöllmann (2021) argues that school history education should be subject to intercultural transformation that requires step-by-step progress “from the mental state of ‘ethnocentrism’—followed by the intermediate stages of ‘denial,’ ‘defense,’ ‘minimization,’ ‘acceptance,’ ‘adaptation,’ and ‘integration’—to eventually reach the mental state of ‘ethnorelativism’” (p. 1). To this end, Girard and Harris (2018) assert that global education and the study of big history pose a challenge to the traditionally nation-centric approach to history.

Studying history through the lens of global education allows for envisioning innovative economic, political, and social systems and institutions, while pointing to the proactive political roles that citizen should undertake to reshape social reality (Isaacs, 2018). This includes altering negative perspectives, instigating positive local transformations, influencing national political landscapes, and leaving an impact on global structures and systems (Isaacs, 2018). Pillay and Karsgaard (2023) based on UNESCO’s global citizenship framework, argue that global education should encompass four fundamental dimensions, each interwoven with the others, addressing: local, national, and global systems and structures; substantive assumptions and power dynamics; diversity and the importance of respect across various dimensions such as gender, socio-economic status, religion, culture, ideology, geography, and more; and, ethically responsible and conscientious engagement.

What we argue in this article is that history education is essential for developing global intercultural-competent citizens, as it may be used as an argument, example, and symbol of change (Solomou et al., 2019). Santisteban et al. (2018) explain that history education has the potential to build citizens who possess the capacity to analyse their reality through a historical lens, taking into account their historical context. Such citizens are able to explore connections across different eras and regions, cultivating a critical consciousness of historical narratives. Furthermore, history education may empower students as citizens who actively offer solutions to societal challenges while recognising the broader global and local contexts, extending their engagement beyond national boundaries (Johansson, 2021). This necessitates moving beyond conventional stereotypes within national histories and crafting a comprehensive perspective of global history. Lastly, for Santisteban et al. (2018), history education allows citizens to foster a historical understanding of their own identity and the perspectives of others while advocating for the principles of social justice.

Nonetheless, past research aiming at drawing connections between history teaching and intercultural competence as a vehicle for global citizenship has mostly focused on school curricula and textbooks (i.e., Andersson, 2010; Harris, 2013; Demosthenous, 2018), rather than on teachers as the “vehicle” of change. Through our research, we aim to contribute to bridging this gap by shedding light on teachers’ views regarding the most appropriate teaching strategies to promote intercultural competence through history education. To this end, we have chosen Cyprus as the context to carry out our research, as it provides for a case of conflict, in which history education is called to play a catalytic role in building reconciliation through intercultural competence.

History education in the contemporary Cyprus context

In the last two decades, new developments have altered the socio-political landscape of Cyprus, putting pressure for changes in education policies, in general, and history education curricula, in particular. Such developments include *inter alia* the partial opening of the borders in 2003 and the subsequent inter-communal meetings between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities; the Annan Plan, which was a proposal by the United Nations to resolve the Cyprus dispute that led to an unsuccessful national referendum in 2004; and Cyprus' accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004. It should be noted that the *acquis communautaire* is suspended in the North. These developments have also introduced changes in the cultural composition of the population. After its accession to the EU, Cyprus has gradually been transformed from a net source of emigration to a recipient of immigration (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2016).

All these new developments brought up questions about the relevance of the "I do not forget" curriculum, leading to the introduction of the so-called "New National Curricula" in 2010, which have a rather different philosophical orientation. In more detail, the 2010 national curricula highlight the need for the creation of "a democratic and humane school" (MoESY, 2010), underpinned by a "spirit" of diversity and multiperspectivity. However, this new orientation has not fully transcended to history education; neither in terms of curricula and textbooks, nor in terms of teaching (Perikleous, 2010; Makriyianni et al., 2011; Psaltis et al., 2011; Zembylas and Kambani, 2012). Despite suggestions for the introduction of multiperspectivity and critical thinking in history education; the ethnocentric teaching of history as heritage still permeated narratives developed in school classrooms (Zembylas and Karahasan, 2017). Cypriot scholars highlighted the imperative need to "transform" history education in order to promote students' historical consciousness and "the development of critical thinking and evaluation of historical sources" (Zembylas and Karahasan, 2017, p. 327).

Notably, the current curriculum, which has been in force since 2010, identifies as learning outcomes the "adequate knowledge of the main phases of the history of Cyprus," "the historical changes that have occurred and are taking place," and "the assessment of the contribution to world culture" (MoESY, 2010). The syllabus, and thus the historical narrative covers a wide range of topics from Greek antiquity (with references to the peoples of the Middle East and how they influenced the formation of ancient Greek culture) to modern times. Regarding Cypriot history, references are made to the Stone and Bronze Ages, the world of the Homeric epics, the new kingdoms in Cyprus, the Byzantine years, the Venetian period, the Ottoman rule and the popular uprisings, the Greek Revolution in Cyprus, the British rule, the vision for Union with Greece and the Cyprus issue.

It is also noteworthy that despite the rich and in-depth debates on the ways history education may cultivate peace and serve the reunification of the island, hardly any debates focused on the ways history education and teaching should also respond to the super-diversity resulting from the increased waves of immigrants and refugees to Cyprus (Solomou et al., 2019). Arguable, immigration and refugee waves have created an environment of cultural diversity that is qualitatively different from the diversity resulting from

historically-based communities and minorities (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2016). Our research aims to fill in this gap in the existing literature by examining what history teaching strategies and practices may cultivate students' intercultural competence in conflict societies, which are nonetheless also culturally-diverse.

In more practical terms, the teaching of history in Cyprus begins at the age of about 8 (third grade of primary school) and continues until graduation from secondary education. In primary school, history is taught by the class teacher, who does not necessarily have specialisation in the subject, while in secondary education it is taught by philologists, some of whom may have received some specialised training. Due to the Greek-language requirement for teachers, almost all history teachers in Cyprus are Greek-Cypriot. Some Greek teachers also teach history. This is also related to the fact that teaching of history in state schools focuses on Greek history and is linked to the preservation of national identity in the Greek-Cypriot community, while Cypriot history is viewed as local history in the wider context of Hellenism (Hajisoteriou, 2011). The centralised system, which is extended to the curricula, the syllabus and the textbooks, hardly gives the possibility of choice and creativity to the teacher, since all the above are determined centrally by the Ministry of Education (Solomou, 2017). Therefore, the didactic methodology is teacher-centered and is based on a simple factual narrative with a chronological sequence (Solomou et al., 2019).

Materials and methods

To meet our research goals and to respond to our research questions as stated in the introduction of this article, we carried out an interview study with 18 high-school teachers from various districts in Cyprus. The use of semi-structured interviews helped us to collect in-depth information in order to shed light on different dimensions of the research questions according to the participant teachers' meanings, perceptions, and experiences rather than predefined, structured questions (Robson and McCartan, 2016). All teachers were purposively selected to meet the following criteria: (a) teach history in secondary schools; (b) have more than 5 years of teaching experience; and (c) work in schools that enrol a considerable number of students coming from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. After our invitations for participation through personal contacts and teachers' social-media platforms, 23 teachers expressed their interest to participate. However, in our final sample, we included only 18 of those teachers, as only those met our selection criteria. In terms of demographic characteristics our sample included 11 female and 7 male teachers out of whom: 7 teachers (3 females and 4 males) had 5–10 years of teaching experience, 6 (4 females and 2 males) had 11–15 years, and 2 (1 female and 1 male) had 16–20. All teachers were Greek-Cypriots, as this is the case for almost all history teachers in Cyprus. In terms of education background, six from the participant teachers had Master's degrees in the fields of Special Education (3 females and 1 male), and Educational Leadership (1 female and 1 male). All teachers that participated in our research worked in schools that provided for highly culturally-diverse student populations. Although proportionally most teachers in Cyprus are female, our intention was to include both female and male teachers in our sample.

The thematic priorities of the interview schedule referred to issues such as the goals history education should have in

culturally-diverse classrooms; issues of diversity in history education curricula, textbooks, and syllabus; their understandings of intercultural education; and their proposed practices to enhance history teaching in culturally-diverse classrooms. All teachers were interviewed only once and for approximately 40 min. The interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed so that no verbal information would be lost. To maintain credibility, we adopted a member check measure. Thus, the interviewees were asked to review and revisit the interview transcripts and the themes that emerged from their interview accounts.

In the event, a total of 18 interviews were carried out, which were inserted in a thematic analysis cycle. In order to examine the multiple positions and viewpoints addressed by the interviewees, we carried out an inductive analysis of the data in order to identify the thematic priorities of each interview according to our previously stated research questions. These priorities were compared and contrasted across the different interviews so that common themes could emerge. The three researchers independently carried out their analyses. In the end, we examined agreement between the three analyses. We ensured inter-rater reliability in our qualitative thematic analysis, meaning that the three researchers have agreed upon the emerging themes to a great extent.

Then, we read our data closely and we also kept notes about our thought processes. After that, we began examining our data for themes addressing our research questions, which are mentioned above, and we tried to locate how these were connected within a theoretical model (Robson and McCartan, 2016). We continued the process of analysis and we divided the data into two thematic categories with pertinent subthemes. As our themes emerged directly from the analysed data, we discuss the emerging themes in the results section below. Finally, we began looking at our data in order to substantiate the emerging thematic categories with raw data.

Results

Drawing upon the previously described data collection and analysis, we identified the inputs for the development of teaching strategies and practices aiming at cultivating students' intercultural competence through history education as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In the following sections we present the themes that emerged from our analysis in response to our research focus and questions and our theoretical framework and substantiate these approaches with raw data. The emerging themes are: (1) *Intercultural goals in history education*: (1a) the additive approach; (1b) the multiperspectivity approach; and (1c) the transformative approach. (2) *Teaching methodologies for intercultural history education*: (2a) Using historical sources; (2b) adopting an interdisciplinary approach; and (2c) Fostering collaborative learning.

Intercultural goals in history teaching

In response to our first research question about "How do history teachers conceptualise the goals of history teaching in culturally-diverse classrooms?" three themes emerged. These themes are the following: (a) the approach of additions to history education curriculum, (b) the approach of multiperspectivity in history teaching,

and (c) the approach of transformation of history education curricula and teaching.

The additive approach

In discussing about the intercultural orientation that history education should have, it is astonishing that all participants, regardless of their demographic characteristics, agreed that in our contemporary, globalised world, teaching history in an intercultural way is an imperative need. As seen in the example below, all participants, despite of gender, years of experience, or other characteristics, claimed that history education to be intercultural should aim towards humanistic education:

My opinion, the lesson of History must be taught through an intercultural approach nowadays. Humanistic education and essential education are more relevant than ever before. Young people must be open to knowledge and other cultures, be able to communicate, coexist and cooperate in the shared effort for building Europe and, by extent, our planet. (Male teacher, Nicosia)

In explaining the meaning of humanistic intercultural history teaching, most participant teachers pointed out that intercultural history education should aim towards teaching and learning about facts and personalities that relate to issues such as racism and human-rights violations. This might be the case as all these participants were coming from highly diverse schools. These teachers asserted that for history education to have an intercultural dimension, content, concepts and themes should be added to the history education curriculum. Nonetheless, these teachers did not refer to any changes in the structure of the curriculum or the ways history is currently taught in Cypriot schools. In Banks and McGee Bank's (2009) terms, these teachers relied upon additive and contributory approaches to intercultural education. These approaches are the lowest levels of intercultural curriculum and indicate the addition of topics concerning national celebrations and heroes or intercultural concepts and themes to the curriculum without changing its structure.

The multiperspectivity approach

On the other hand, a few of the younger teachers (all of them under the age of 40), despite of gender, asserted that for history education to become intercultural, teaching should substantially change format and methodology to accommodate perspectives that are less politically-desired or more questionable. For them, intercultural history teaching it is not about adding historical facts or personalities related to racism or social injustice, but it is about allowing for multiple perspectives to be heard in the class. To this end, they explained that intercultural history education should aim towards participatory and dialogic teaching, allowing for students' multiple, and often contradictory, interpretations of historical events and situations to emerge:

Through collaboration, students understand the complexity of a problem and the importance of working with others to find a solution. For example, we may select a social issue related to our lesson. Then each group exchanges views and attempts to find a consensual solution. Through this, their critical thinking develops as well as their empathy, since they hear opposite views to their own,

and put themselves in someone else's shoes. (Female teacher, Famagusta)

Notably, these few younger teachers cautioned that the aim of the intercultural teaching of history is to allow for contradictions in students' interpretations to emerge. For them, students were often expressing master narratives of their white supremacy, colour-blindness, and meritocracy. Thus, history teaching should seek for master interpretations and understandings to be counteracted by counter narratives, meanings and understandings. Multiperspectivity in history teaching entails a way of examining historical events from different perspectives. However, as Wansink et al. (2018, p. 495) caution, teachers often engage in "normative balancing," in the sense that not all perspectives are "perceived as equally valid or politically desirable, showing where multiperspectivity ends." Through this process, students may develop their historical empathy - that is a prerequisite of intercultural competence - as they witnessed the "ways that privilege and oppression are enacted," and reflected on and challenges the "unquestioned dominant ideologies" (Edwards, 2014, p. 9).

The transformative approach

Drawing upon the multiperspectivity approach, but also moving beyond that, one female and one male teacher argued that intercultural history education should follow a transformative approach across all levels, including the curricula, textbooks, and teaching. For them, history education should refrain from the teaching of historical events and personalities following the time sequence. Instead, they believe the analysis of the historic past should be connected to the present through the analysis of intercultural and social-justice topics:

Cultivating historical learning with an intercultural perspective is something that as a teacher I have to include in all of my lessons. [...] I usually try to cover contemporary issues, such migrant children or even racist incidents such as George Floyd's savage beating to death, through an interdisciplinary approach. To eliminate hostile representations and promote learning to coexist in today's world of people coming from culturally-diverse communities. (Female teacher, Larnaca)

For these two teachers, issues and topics including poverty, the socio-historical evolution of women's roles in society, the violations of human rights, and racism, should become the "umbrella" concepts for an intercultural examination of history that surpasses specific time eras or strict geographical borders. For them, for history to have an intercultural character, history curricula and teaching should be better organised around enduring questions and not factual events; they should thus focus on specific issues that all people face, which nonetheless are dealt in different ways from time to time and from place to place. It is noteworthy that these two teachers were the only two participants, who received higher education beyond Greece and Cyprus. Similar to these two teachers' suggestions, Hunt (2000, p. 39) explains that history teaching should focus on "ageless, social, moral, and cultural issues," which according to Van Straaten et al. (2016) include concepts such as peace, environment, social inequality, and interpersonal relationships. Klerides and Zembylas (2017) also point towards this direction of history education, arguing that teaching history "from top down" does not allow the opposite or conflicting

views to be heard. Instead, teaching "from bottom up," giving emphasis to narrations that focus on people and topics, and not on the political (or military) facts and events, may allow for building intercultural acceptance and mutual respect (Van Straaten et al., 2016).

Teaching methodologies for intercultural history teaching

In response to our second research question "What do history teachers perceive as the most appropriate teaching strategies and practices for history education in culturally-diverse classrooms?," three interrelated themes emerged. These themes are the following: (a) Using historical sources; (b) Adopting an interdisciplinary approach; and (c) Fostering collaborative learning.

Using historical sources

It is astonishing that all the participant teachers in our research, despite of demographic characteristics, highlighted that in order to promote students' intercultural competence, the need to teach history through historical sources is imperative. They claimed that the examination of historical sources cultivates, in students, skills such as historical conscience, historical empathy, and respect to cultural diversity, which according to them are the cornerstones of intercultural competence:

I try to promote intercultural competence in my classroom by cultivating historical thought and consciousness in my students through the study of historical findings such as sources, images of vessels, tombs, and other. Regarding written sources, I ask students to draw a critique of the source in front of them based on the national origin of the person who wrote it, and what this person seeks to achieve with the source, what is silenced and what conclusions are drawn. (Female teacher, Famagusta)

According to the participant teachers the use of historical sources helps students to develop historical thought, conscience, and empathy that may eventually lead to an intercultural understanding of history. Through the use of sources, students may better understand that there is not only one and uncontested historical narrative, but different historical narratives often exist to serve contradictory national political and socio-cultural interests. In explaining the participants' references to historical sources, one may refer to the changes in the national history education curriculum, which ask from teachers to incorporate historical sources in their teaching. It is also notable, that the last history education textbooks include examples of historical sources to be used in teaching. Nonetheless, what stems from our analysis is that the few participant teachers who talked about multiperspectivity in history teaching, they also asserted students should examine the past through contrasting historical sources. In this way, as they claimed, students may develop their own interpretations and narrations of historical events by constructing arguments through the use of sources.

It should be noted that as in our research, also past research concludes that written testimonies, object images, evidence and primary sources should be used for the development of historical thinking and conscience (Nordgren, 2016). To this end, the use of sources in history teaching should be promoted so as to bridge the

gap between school history and sources (Leontsinis, 2007). The use of historical sources opens up the way to historical knowledge and understanding through the critical approach of history that goes beyond the dominant narrative (Van Hover et al., 2016). Through the use of sources, students become aware of both continuity and change through time, the ways that the past differs from the present, but also the ways the present is rooted in the past; they recognise causes and results, and arrive at explanations as to their importance (Van Hover et al., 2016).

Moving a step forward, following their remarks for cultivating historical thinking and conscience through the use of sources, 2 female and 2 male teachers, who were of younger age in relation to the other participants, indicated that the analysis of sources should follow the approach of multiperspectivity to serve its intercultural purpose:

We examine historical facts, and the basic elements related to them, in combination with past or parallel historical realities of other cultures that have directly or indirectly influenced these events. Through the critical study of sources, such as texts, announcements, agreements, publications, maps, audio documents, videos, coming from various cultures, we examine these events from different angles to draw different interpretations and conclusions [...] through empathy activities. (Male teacher, Nicosia)

What these teachers suggested is that the use of sources in history teaching should address multiperspectivity, which indeed characterises our contemporary, globalised and super-diverse societies. Moreover, they went on to explain that as the use of historical sources is at the stage of being established in Cyprus education, it requires flexibility and critical thinking:

Historical sources provide food for thought and discussion in order to understand the way each people acts based on their own cultures, ways of thinking and habits. In my opinion, we should not view the sources as a gospel and follow them faithfully without doubting and judging them, because in this way we will learn to accept what they tell us without using and developing our critical thinking. Therefore, we should study and critically analyse each source and use data from it to understand how and why someone acts in a certain way, especially when we have to get in the position of a historical figure and justify his/her view. (Male teacher, Limassol)

According to these four teachers, analysing sources through the prism of multiperspectivity requires critical thinking and reflection. As Smyrneos (2013) had noted, it is not history that helps the development of a critical mind, but the critical mind that empowers historical knowledge and conscience. For Van Hover et al. (2016), the application of critical thinking requires that students adopt the methodology and practices used by professional historians to analyse historical sources. Notably, former research has shown that the use of sources through a multiperspectivity approach contributes to the democratisation of history teaching (i.e., Leontsinis, 2007; Monte-Sano, 2011). Multiperspectivity in the analysis of conflicting sources from various angles allows freedom of thought, while avoiding a monolithic approach, doctrinism and the abuse of history so as to serve the purposes of a national narrative (Zembylas and Karahasan, 2017).

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach

Almost half of the participant teachers who argued for an additive approach to intercultural history education, but regardless of other demographic characteristics, highlighted the importance of teaching history through an interdisciplinary approach in order to promote intercultural learning and cultivate students' intercultural competence:

We may use Art lessons to draw a historical map in alternative ways, according to the aspirations of different cultures. Additionally, we may use Music lessons to study the songs of different cultures about the same historical events. In Greek lessons, we may critically examine the structural and multimodal elements of poems, texts, publications about these historical events. In mathematics we can also teach well-known algorithms of other cultures, as for example multiplication of ancient Egyptians, Arabs, Indian way, and other. (Male teacher, Nicosia)

Most teachers provided examples of how different fields may be used in the study of historical events. They explained that such events should be examined through the lenses of various curriculum subjects including History, Literature, Geography, Civics Education, and Arts. However, as in the quote above, it is notable that most of the teachers mainly pointed out the use of these interdisciplinary approaches for the examination of chronologically ordered factual descriptions of historical events. This mostly stems out of teachers' perceptions regarding additive approaches to intercultural history education, that point to the addition of historical facts and personalities to history education syllabus and textbooks.

On the other hand, teachers, who endorse the approach of multiperspectivity, argued that by examining historical issues, facts or topics in an interdisciplinary way, students may more critically question all historical narratives as they become familiar with perspectives coming from different fields. What should be noted here, is that the two teachers who argued for a transformative intercultural history education, exemplified an interdisciplinary methodology that follows a "bottom-up" approach to history teaching. For them, contemporary and current issues and topics should be combined with the examination of the historical evolution of these issues through an interdisciplinary approach. Their suggestions are in line with the conclusions of part research and literature claiming that for the narration of history to be achieved from "bottom up" it would be useful if it were presented through an interdisciplinary approach (De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2017; Solomou, 2017).

Fostering collaborative learning

In discussing the teaching strategies used in their history lessons to cultivate their students' intercultural competence, all the participant teachers, despite their demographic characteristics, referred to the value of collaborative learning in formal and informal environments. However, the teachers who adhered to additive approaches to intercultural history education, appeared to exclusively focus on the benefits of the increased cross-cultural interaction in terms of getting to know each other:

This could be achieved by allowing children from different cultural backgrounds in group work to present of elements of their cultures – customs, traditions, songs, poems, eating habits, historical events, etc. (Male teacher, Nicosia)

These teachers mostly focused on the act of collaboration, instead of the content and format the collaboration should have in history teaching. What they argued is that collaborating with the perceived “other,” cultivates one’s knowledge about the other, which in turn contributes to the cultivation of a culture of respect and understanding. For them, collaboration is rather a key component of socialisation among majority and minority or migrant students in their classroom.

On the other hand, teachers who argued for a multiperspectivity or transformative approaches to intercultural history education, claimed that collaborative learning in history teaching empowers students to become active participants in the learning process by constructing their own meanings and understandings:

Collaborative learning may substantially contribute to the intercultural teaching of History. Collaborative learning develops skills and often facilitates informal and formal learning. Collaborative learning is monitored and structured by the teacher to achieve the group’s goals. The different views of the people who make up the group, the discussions, the disagreements, and the exchange of views help to improve and contribute to each other’s knowledge on a topic, through frequent substantive discussions, encouraging each other and supporting each other. (Female teacher, Nicosia)

For these teachers, collaborative learning allows students to be confronted with counter-narratives expressed by their peers. Master narratives inhibit critical inquiry when not treated effectively, especially when focusing on issues such as racism, sexism and other forms of inequality (Edwards, 2014). Thus, during their collaboration, students have the opportunity to critically reflect on the ways master narratives predetermine what we “see,” but also what we choose not to “see,” and to further reflect, both critically and emotionally, on historical issues through the counter-narratives that emerge during their collaboration (Musingafi and Rugonye, 2014). Collaborative learning should thus take the form of critical and collective “witnessing,” allowing students to understand the moral ambiguity in social justice issues that relate to history.

When asked about the ways counter interpretations may come to the surface during history teaching, the participant teachers referred to role-playing and debates. They argued that role-playing and debates help students develop empathy, which is an essential component of intercultural competence:

During group role-playing, each child may draw upon his/her cultural background to project his/her own interpretation of different historical events from a different angle. For developing empathy, we may also assign different roles to students in a group debate, during which students have to present diverse views based on different cultures. (Female teacher, Larnaca)

Teachers explained that role-playing and debates allow for different worldviews and cultural stances to be expressed. They added that during these activities students should develop arguments by drawing upon the examination of historical sources and other materials. Monte-Sano (2016) indicates that

argumentation includes claims, conflicting views, and evidence. More solid historical arguments show higher levels of historical thinking in terms of structure, selection, construction, and explanation of evidence (Clark and Nye, 2017).

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to examine history teachers’ perceptions of reorienting history education to the goal of promoting global citizenship by cultivating students’ intercultural competence. We thus studied teachers’ perceptions of the goals that intercultural history teaching should have, and the pertinent teaching methodologies to cultivate such goals. We carried out our research, in Cyprus, which represents a region of conflict (Klerides, 2016; Klerides and Zembylas, 2017), where history teachers are called upon by scholars and various societal groups to support peace-building and reconciliation, while cultivating respect to diversity. However, Cyprus has traditionally narrowly focused its education system on the cultivation of a “strict,” “nationalistic,” and “purified” national narrative that makes the development of intercultural competence a daunting task for teachers (McCully, 2012).

In this context, the corporate findings of this research indicate that all participants agreed that history education can and should play an essential role towards cultivating ideals including social solidarity, democracy, and respect to human rights and diversity. To this end, they argued that history education should support the development of critically-thinking global citizens that are characterised by historical thinking, conscience, and empathy, along with social-justice values. Nonetheless, our findings also illustrate that the participant teachers conceptualised diversity in history education, and thus intercultural history teaching goals, in very different ways, which in turn, influenced their perceptions of the most appropriate methodologies for intercultural history teaching.

To begin with, a group of participants seemed to adopt additive approaches that argued for the celebration of diversity in history education by adding historical facts, personalities, artefacts, and historical sources from culturally-diverse groups in history curricula, syllabus and textbooks. They also supported that the use of collaborative learning during history classes could bring culturally-diverse students together, whilst interdisciplinary teaching may increase their cultural knowledge of each other (e.g., about customs and traditions). Arguably, these teachers favoured cultural-celebration views on intercultural history teaching stemming out of a rather folkloristic form of culturally-relevant history teaching. Moving a step forward, a second group of teachers, argued for the multiperspectivity approach that allows for students’ critical and reflective thinking, on “tough topics” that even today teachers may “fear” to address (Kokkinos and Gatsotis, 2010; Angelakos, 2012). These teachers explained that through multiperspectivity they may cultivate students’ historical knowledge, conscience, and empathy that go beyond the dominant (and often nationalistic) narrative. These participants were of younger age in comparison to the other participants, and thus, they have possibly been exposed to education and training that adheres to multiperspectivity in history education. What was highlighted by the them is that conflicting and provoking historical sources, interdisciplinary

teaching, and collaborative learning in formal and informal learning environments (including role-playing and debates), should be used as teaching methodologies to provide the opportunity to students to critically reflect on the interactions between people within the historical narrative taught at school, and thus contribute to students' intercultural openness.

Lastly, a third group of teachers, drew upon multiperspectivity to argue for a transformative approach, reaching the highest level of intercultural history teaching. This was the smallest group of teachers, and were teachers who received education abroad that could possibly have influence their perspectives on history teaching. For them, the implementation of all the aforementioned teaching strategies and practices should move away from the chronologically-sequential teaching of history, which research shows that is not engaging for students or seems irrelevant to them and their contemporary lives (Solomou et al., 2019). They asserted the necessity for the interdisciplinary and collaborative examination of issues related to interculturalism and social justice, and the use of historical sources to foster a critical inquiry of master narratives, especially when focusing on issues such as racism, sexism, and other forms of inequality (Winans, 2010). These teachers caution that it is not about what strategies and practices are used in history teaching, but how these strategies and practices are implemented.

From our data, we may argue that intercultural history teaching should provide the incentives to students to engage in critical reflection and "collective witnessing" by facing counter narratives and stories, which according to Winans (2010) may help students understand moral ambiguity on historical issues. To this end, the strategies and practices suggested by the participant teachers in our research, may only gain momentum if they are used to help students to self-interrogate "moral" and "attitudinal" differences in an informed manner. Thus, teachers are called to overcome the superficial character of additive approaches in order to build on multiperspectivity, and eventually reach out to transformative approaches. For this change to happen, there is an imperative need for conceptual clarity and theoretical agreement in the official history education curricula, syllabus, and textbooks. Currently, the ideological ambiguity characterising the centralised "prescribed" history education curricula in Cyprus inhibits the development of teachers' clear understandings of what intercultural history education is, and how it should be implemented in practice. Undeniably, further training and professional development courses should be carried out to help teachers develop pedagogical skills and strategies to better promote intercultural history teaching.

Although our research has been focused on the Cyprus context as a situation of conflict in a shared society, it still bears implications for further research beyond Cyprus. In the light of the importance of interculturalism in today's super-diverse societies, further research is necessary in order to re-examine and re-formulate the curricula of history education in many countries including Cyprus. The intercultural re-development of history education curricula requires further research regarding the development of more appropriate school textbooks that are distant from "essentialist reductionism in the analysis of cultures" (Pöllmann, 2021, p. 1). Arguably, it becomes more difficult for

teachers to put across their ideas when the textbooks available align to ideals counteracting interculturalism and global citizenship. In addition, more research should be carried out about the best teaching strategies and practices for intercultural transformation to take place, which will engage not only teachers, but also other stakeholders, and especially students themselves. In conclusion, the implementation of such strategies and practices highlight the need for history teachers' intercultural training, and thus the development of corresponding training programmes.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because due to the extremely small number of history teachers in the whole Cyprus, no dataset can be provided for reasons of anonymity. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to CH, hadjisoteriou.c@unic.ac.cy.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by University of Nicosia Ethics Committee. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

CH, ES, and MA contributed to the conception and design of the study, contributed to the data collection and data analysis, and wrote sections of the manuscript. CH finalised the article. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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