



**5th International Academic Conference
on Teaching, Learning and Education**

Territoriality in Education Policy the Greek Cypriots and the Discursive Construction of National Identity

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of territoriality by Greek Cypriot education policy actors and argues its power in the construction of national identity in the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) - a post-colonial state with its northern part occupied by Turkey since 1974. RoC is constituted of two main communities, the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots. Only three years after independence, in 1963, the official recognised government is controlled exclusively by the Greek Cypriot community, as the Turkish community has withdrawn from all state institutions. Using a double-pronged approach - Constructivist Grounded Theory and Discourse-Historical Approach - this research in education analyses the ministerial commemorative messages sent to all state educational institutions, primarily related to the commemorative and national days, from 2008 to 2018. Concerning Greek Cypriots, education policy has always emphasised the Greek character of the RoC and belonging to the wider Greek nation, a discourse supported mainly by right-wing political circles. Left-wing political circles, on the other hand, advocate that Cyprus belongs to its people - both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots - and define identity on the basis of a common territory and citizenship. The aim of this paper is not to define territory and national territorial belonging in terms of a single meaning, but rather to discuss how it has been understood and discursively employed by Greek Cypriot right and left political circles in education policy as a macro-strategy in the discursive construction of the contested national identity of Greek Cypriots.

Keywords: Discourse-Historical Approach, kinship metaphors, left wing and right-wing education policy, nationalism, school curriculum