MULTICULTURALISM
IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CYPRUS

The Educational Reform:
Between the Previous and the Present Curriculum

Maria KRASIA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Kingston University London

February 2019

ABSTRACT

In spite of the recent reform of the curriculum, Religious Education (RE) in Cyprus remains confessional and it is dominated by the Greek Orthodox Church, reflecting the island's history of occupation, colonization and partition and the need to promote national unity amongst a presumed-to-be homogeneous population, with imperatives for nation-building superseding concerns with the island's historic cultural diversity. However, a series of changes, broadly since Cyprus' independence in 1960 but especially since 2000, present challenges to this confessional RE. Therefore, the aim of this PhD thesis is to assess the implications of changes in Greek-Cypriot society for the provision of RE in Greek-Cypriot primary schools, and to identify ways of addressing the challenges posed by these changes; and especially to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of Cyprus. At the same time, it aims to provide some suggestions as to how RE can be reformed along the lines of multiculturalism in order to promote the reconciliation of the island and to encourage students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This thesis primarily considers the way RE is taught in Cyprus, but at the same time it examines the RE curricula frameworks of other European countries, since Cyprus is a part of the European Union and thus, shares similar visions and challenges with them. For the conduction of this PhD thesis, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. However, the main research tool was a RE booklet which was developed by the researcher and it was used as an additional teaching material which aimed to reform students' knowledge, views and attitudes about a variety of topics.

This PhD research has revealed that some of students' knowledge, views and attitudes regarding different spiritual, moral, social, and cultural issues have been enriched and changed, in some way, after being taught from the RE Booklet. Most of their original misconceptions and false knowledge have also been successfully redressed. However, their views and attitudes towards the minority community of Cyprus, Turkish-Cypriots, have not been changed, and this reveals that a systematic effort needs to be made in order to change well-embedded confessional views. Another finding was that the majority of Greek-Cypriot students, teachers and educators prefer a more multicultural RE rather than a confessional one, but there are some reservations which need to be addressed before putting this into practice. These include: the Church of Cyprus' preference for a confessional RE, its influence on the educational system, the confessional teaching material, the inadequate guidance and support offered to teachers by the Ministry of Education and individual prejudices towards people of different cultural and religious origins. This research has also revealed that the three representatives from the religious minorities of Cyprus (Maronite/Armenian/Turkish-Cypriot) believe that the majority of Greek-Cypriot teachers have very negative attitudes towards religious and cultural diversity, and so they are unwilling to promote multicultural education within their classrooms. They also perceive the Greek-Cypriot community as being more nationalistic and religiously fundamentalist than their own communities. Finally, this PhD thesis has reached the conclusion that the integration of citizenship and religious education can promote intercultural dialogue which will help individuals to coexist, cooperate, understand and respect each other. However, the Cypriot society is not prepared yet for a radical change in the way RE is taught. Therefore, it is a better option initially to combine confessional and multicultural RE; to orient RE to multiculturalism, and not to change radically the way that RE is taught, because that would provoke adverse reaction. At the same time, the Ministry of Education has an instrumental role to play in improving RE; it needs to seriously take into consideration the presence of non-Orthodox children attending schools, to correct students' misconceptions and combat their social and religious prejudices, to encourage assessment for learning and to ensure that education is free of political interests and Church influences.

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ACRONYMS

ECHR   European Court of Human Rights

EFTRE   European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education

EMU   Education for Mutual Understanding

EU   European Union

MEC   Ministry of Education and Culture

OFSTED   The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

RE   Religious Education

SMSC   Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural

UNESCO   United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Mutual appreciation and respect in a multicultural world

Mutual appreciation and respect are significant as a basis for peaceful co-existence in a globalized world, thus educational institutions, schools, colleges and universities need to promote cultural awareness among their students and to help them build up a positive attitude towards multiculturalism by providing them with knowledge about the histories, cultures and religions of diverse groups. They should prepare all students to work actively towards equality and democracy within organizations and institutions by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills. Therefore, school curriculums should include interdisciplinary aims and various topics about the different cultures and religious traditions and worldviews; about religious intolerance, racism and xenophobia, sexism; about peace and war, poverty and wealth, universal human values; and about health, moral, cultural, social, environmental and spiritual issues.

Mutual appreciation and respect are significant in a globalized world for several reasons. Firstly, they enrich civilizations and the communities because they create a rich and diverse world by allowing a variety of communities, nations, cultures, languages, traditions, ethics and arts to coexist (UNESCO, 2005b, par.4). Secondly, they promote social cohesion because all individuals mutually appreciate and respect each other, and thus live peacefully together (UNESCO, 2005b, par.11). Thirdly, they help individuals to cooperate effectively and increase their productivity within an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding and simultaneously encourage economic development because they allow people to work together peacefully, despite their diverse cultural backgrounds, and to increase their productivity to the maximum. They help communities, people and nations to develop because they promote peace and security at a local, national and international level. Fifthly, mutual appreciation and respect nurture human capacities and values, such as democracy, tolerance, social justice and dialogue, between people and cultures (UNESCO, 2005b, par.5) and they allow free flow of different ideas, by constant exchange and interaction between cultures (UNESCO, 2005b, par.12). They encourage individuals to express and to share with others their ideas and values and they built bridges between people by encouraging dialogue among individuals, cultures and nations (UNESCO, 2005b, par.24). Mutual appreciation and respect inspire dialogue within and between cultures which consequently leads to increased tolerance, understanding and empathy and promotes international friendship, cooperation and goodwill. At the same time, human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression,

information and communication, are protected (UNESCO, 2005b, par.25). Clearly, mutual appreciation and respect are significant values to be encouraged between students because they are the next generation and as citizens of the future they will contribute to societies' development.

Religious Education in promoting mutual appreciation and respect

Religious Education (RE) is one of the school disciplines that can contribute to the development of mutual appreciation, respect and understanding among young students. It can contribute to the promotion of intercultural education and social cohesion (Jackson, 2004, p.3) and it should help individuals to develop an understanding of cultures outside of their own. Positive relationships depend on mutual respect - respect between each other for their ideas, skills, experiences and resources - and RE can develop mutual respect not only between cultures but also within families, schools, working environments and in everyday relationships. Teachers and students need to work together, and this cannot happen without mutual respect. Students have thoughts and ideas of their own, and teachers need to respect that because learning cannot be achieved in an environment without mutual respect.

It has become more and more important to promote mutual understanding of such social premises as language, customs and cultural traditions. Especially nowadays, in the post 9/11 period, the promotion of mutual understanding is crucially important. Several authors, such as Grimmitt, Pring, Jackson, Wright, Arweck and others, have engaged with the study of RE in publicly funded schools.

For Grimmitt, in the post 9/11 period it is necessary to seek dialogical approaches to RE, to explore the different controversial issues in RE and to promote mutual respect and cooperation among all people, whatever their worldview, and whether they are religious or non-religious (Jackson, 2012, p.102).

The role of education in achieving a cohesive community has also been examined by Richard Pring (Jackson, 2012, p.102). Pring posited that nurturing shared beliefs and values can connect many smaller communities with different beliefs, values and traditions (Jackson, 2012, p.102). He argued that schools should aim to avoid homogenizing individuals; instead they should appreciate and understand the different cultures of young people, bring together all their cultural differences and connect them with the "more universal cultural traditions", for instance Arts, Sciences and Humanities (Jackson, 2012, p.102).

Andrew Wright suggested that public education should enable students "to engage intelligently and critically with truth questions" rather than prescribe biased answers (Jackson, 2012, p.102). Wright also distinguished between political and comprehensive liberalism regarding the teaching of RE, where the former aims to mediate between conflicting worldviews whereas the latter, "advocates an all embracing liberal worldview, with freedom, tolerance and reason" (Jackson, 2012, p.102).

Elisabeth Arweck and Robert Jackson in their article "Religion in education: findings from the Religion and Society Programme" (2012, p.254), pointed out why religion(s) should be studied in publicly funded schools. They argue that there are both 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' reasons for studying religions; 'intrinsic' reasons because liberal education should "cover all distinctive areas of human experience" and 'instrumental' reasons because some understanding of religions is required in order to achieve social cohesion and to promote young people's personal development (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.254). Arweck and Jackson (2012, p.254), go on to argue that young people's social development can be promoted through the knowledge and understanding of cultures and through practices that encourage the respect and tolerance of religious diversity. The respect of religious diversity encourages young people to clarify their own ideas and values and contributes to their moral and spiritual development (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.254).

However, the teaching and understanding of the histories, cultures and religions of diverse groups may not always develop mutual appreciation and respect among individuals. It is possible that pupils have increased knowledge of one culture, but at the same time, do not respect or appreciate it at all. The cultural awareness or understanding of different cultures is an important component of citizenship education in culturally diverse societies, but this is only one element. It needs to be part of a wider approach which recognizes the influence of other factors in society, including historical aspects, contemporary issues to do with the economy, politics and immigration. It is clear that, there are many elements needed to promote mutual respect and a common citizenship framework and to develop a livable multiculturalism.

To accomplish the above goals, the teaching of RE requires practitioners who are culturally skilled and who need to be racially, culturally and religiously objective. Teachers must be multiculturally skilled and capable of including and supporting families and social groups in order to create an environment that is beneficial for children (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2013, par.5). Multicultural education is an interdisciplinary pedagogy that contributes to the preparation of individuals to live

and work together peacefully and in a diverse society. At the same time, it offers all students an equitable educational opportunity and it encourages them to be critical towards society (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2013, par.6).

The relation between religion and politics

At the same time, religion should not only be examined sociologically but should also be examined in relation to its specific political context and not separately from it:

> "In most philosophical-educational literature, religion is viewed either as a hindrance to multicultural education or as a potential ancillary force, but rarely it is examined in its stricter relation to specific political contexts".
> (Papastephanou, 2005, p.139)

As Norris' and Inglehart's (2010, p.2) note, during the recent decades, religion has become increasingly prominent all over the world and it remains a significant force in contemporary politics. Whereas the contemporary western world views religion and politics as two separate categories, in many other countries, religion seems to play a crucial role in political life (Black, 2010, p.116). Particularly in Islamic countries, Muslim thinkers consider religion and politics as being necessarily intertwined, since any attempt to separate them have so far failed (Black, 2010, p.117). However, religion and politics are two analytically different categories, although in many instances they interact with, and sometimes affect, each other.

March (2007) in his paper "Islamic Foundations for a Social Contract in non-Muslim Liberal Democracies" examines the Muslim attitudes and views in non-Muslim states. March (2007, p.250) concludes that two different groups of Muslim scholars emerge regarding the integration of Muslims in non-Muslim societies. The first group includes those Muslim scholars, such as Qutb (2001) and Topoljak (1997), who consider the obedience to non-Muslim laws or authorities as unacceptable and antithetical to Islamic aims. Thus, they believe that for Muslims to live in non-Muslim regimes is "an unfortunate and hopefully temporary necessity" (March, 2007, p.250). The second group comprises Muslim scholars, such as Rashid Rida, who believe that what is forbidden is anything that harms Muslim people or damages their interests (March, 2007, p.250). Thus, any secular activities, such as trade or any other social interactions are not forbidden because they do not oppose to God and His Apostle (Rida, 1973, p.288).

Another Muslim scholar, Faysal Mawlawi (1999, pp.210-219), discusses solidarity and civic friendship. He supports the idea that there are two kinds of solidarities. One kind of solidarity is based on secular values, common interests and geographical

proximity (Mawlawi, 1999, pp.210-219). Mawlawi (1999, pp.210-219), believes that secular solidarity can be developed among people anywhere, universally, regardless of their cultural, racial or ethnic differences. He goes on to argue that Muslims can feel a form of "innate love" towards non-Muslims and this love is based on shared humanity and interests (Mawlawi, 1999, pp.210-219). On the other hand, the other kind of solidarity is based on metaphysical beliefs, where Muslims feel the "creedal love". This kind of solidarity and love is only shared among Muslims (Mawlawi, 1999, pp.210-219). More specifically, Mawlawi argues that:

> "Islam would prefer to be expressed through a community where politics and metaphysics are fused. But given the reality of sharing political space with non-Muslims, it is preferable to limit solidarity and political power to that which all humans have in common".

<div align="right">(Mawlawi, 1999, pp.210-219)</div>

But is it only in Islamic regimes that religion and politics are concurrent? Many social science research (Converse, 1964; Greeley and Hout, 2006; Knoke, 1974; Manza and Brooks, 1997; Regenerus, Sikkink, and Smith, 1999; Sherkat and Ellison, 1999 in Hirschl et al, 2012) conducted in the United States, indicate that religious identity is a driver of political behavior. So while it is widely held that religion is strongly related to politics in Muslim world, it retains political significance in the West too, as the above research in the US show. Therefore, religion should always been examined in its relation to the specific political context.

At this point, another question could be raised: How can Cyprus' religious minorities (Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) and other immigrants, integrate successfully in Cyprus? The answer to these question is not a straightforward. However, the consideration Mawlawi's above statement about the two kinds of solidarity and love (Mawlawi, 1999, pp.210-219), could offer an answer. The religious minorities in Cyprus and immigrants can integrate successfully in the Cypriot community if they develop a secular solidarity and "innate love", based on secular values, common interests and shared humanity. In other words, individuals need to separate their religious and secular spheres. On the one hand, in their secular sphere, all individuals can live and work together regardless of their cultural, racial or ethnic differences. That is the "innate love", according to Mawlawi (1999, pp.210-219), which can be developed among all people anywhere and universally. On the other hand, in their religious sphere, they can interact only with people sharing the same religious values and beliefs which would show the "creedal love" (Mawlawi, 1999, pp.210-219).

Apparently, religion and politics are somehow concurrent because both of them seem to be mutually influential. However, sometimes this interaction between religion and politics is not always clear, and thus many conflicts between countries are often misconceived as religious and ethnic conflicts rather than political or economic conflicts. It seems that religion is often blamed as a scapegoat, whereas in fact politics and economics are the real reasons. One typical example of a conflict that was misconceived as being religious and ethnic rather than as a political conflict is the Cyprus problem:

> "The Cyprus problem has been misconceived by many people as a kind of religious and ethnic conflict, thus raising various kinds of false dilemmas and expectations in relation to the local religions (Christian Orthodoxy and Islam) and their future cultivation in the schools of the two communities [...] The Cyprus issue is not reducible to the religious difference of the peoples involved,..."
>
> (Papastephanou, 2005, p.139)

The relation between religion and economics

The influence of religious identity on politics (i.e. presidential voting) is becoming ever stronger, mainly during a period of rising economic inequality (Hirschl et al, 2012, p.107). It would seem that during a period of economic crisis and social inequality, when people feel desperate, restless, depressed and hopeless, they turn more to religion, looking for support and compassion. As Tomas Rees (2010, par.1) notes in his article "Will the financial crisis turn people to religion?", "religion is a source of solace for a lot of people during financial crises". Rees (2010) refers to a US study by Bradshaw and Ellison (2010) who looked at the data from the US General Social Survey regarding the connection between psychological distress (because of poverty) and religion. The results from the survey found that, "in general, people who went to church more often were less stressed" (Bradshaw and Ellison, 2010 in Rees, 2010, par.5). "Going to church makes rich and poor less stressed, but the effect is particularly strong among the poor" (Bradshaw and Ellison, 2010 in Rees, 2010, par.11). Also, another finding from the survey was that "belief in the afterlife proved to be the biggest factor in helping the religious poor to deal with stress of their situation" (Bradshaw and Ellison, 2010 in Rees, 2010, par.8). Lastly, "although meditation didn't reduce stress on average, it did seem to reduce the stress caused by financial hardship" (Bradshaw and Ellison, 2010 in Rees, 2010, par.12). Rees (2010, par.12) suggests that "perhaps this just shows that people who meditate do not see wealth as a measure of their personal success or social status, and so are unfazed if they happen to be poor".

In Cyprus today, where there are so many financial and unemployment problems, due to the serious economic crisis, some people seem to turn to different religious "agents" to seek help and support. These "agents" are mostly the church, priests, bishops, the Archbishop of Cyprus and different religious institutions, who provide people with food, clothes and economical support.

> "In Nicosia it is the church which has taken the responsibility for spearheading a system for providing food packages to families in need. The church, under the direct initiative of Archbishop Chrysostomos II, opened a food market [...] where families that are in immediate need can receive food".
>
> (Theodorides, 25 November 2012, Cyprus Mail)

Taking into consideration the above, it seems that people turn to religion for different reasons. For instance, the US study, as was mentioned above, revealed that some people turned to religion for psychological reasons because it helps them to cope with their psychological distress (due to poverty) (Bradshaw and Ellison, 2010). On the other hand, in Cyprus, a number of people seem to turn to religion not for psychological reasons, but for practical reasons because religion - Greek Orthodox Church - supports them economically by providing them with goods.

All the above are also confirmed by Norris' and Inglehart's (2010, p.3) study, focusing on the 'theory of existential security'. According to Norris and Inglehart (2004 in Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.3), people's turn to religion varies systematically according to the levels of their social and personal vulnerabilities, risks and threats. The turn to religion reduces when the individuals feel existential security; when 'the feeling that survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted' (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.3). That means, when people feel secure without risks and threats, then, they turn less to religion. On the contrary, when they feel vulnerable to 'physical, societal and personal risks', they turn more to religion (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.4). For instance, people who live in poor countries, often live a vulnerable and unpredictable way of life, always facing sudden nature disasters, such as diseases, landslides, weather issues, drought or flood (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.4). In addition, poor nations have poor access to basic conditions of human survival, for example, uncontaminated water, adequate food, basic healthcare, literacy, schooling and adequate income (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.4). As a result of these, people feel insecure and stressed and that is why they seek reassurance to religion. Individuals on their own, they cannot understand or predict what lies ahead but a higher power will ensure them that things will work out (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.4). Apparently, this belief reduces

people's stress and anxiety and enables them to cope with their immediate problems (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.4). Other sociologists and economists have also reported similar findings regarding the relationship between religion and economy. Ruiter and Tubergen (2009) have examined the factors contributing to religious attendance and their study concluded that personal, financial and social insecurities are associated with greater religious attendance (Ruiter and Tubergen, 2009 in Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.6).

However, Norris and Inglehart (2010, p.4) note that the process of secularization contributes to the systematic erosion of religious practices and values. The word 'values indicates the importance of religiosity in individuals' everyday lives, whereas the word 'practices' means 'the common rituals which express religious values in different faiths, such as prayer and attendance at churches, synagogues, mosques and temples (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.4). People living in secure, advanced, industrial and secularized societies often 'become less willing to engage in conventional religious practices' (Norris and Inglehart, 2010, p.4).

A rationale for Religious Education

Teaching RE is a very delicate matter. Over the years there have been many arguments around the teaching of RE as to which model of RE should be followed. Should RE be confessional and follow a faith-based approach which seeks to promote a specific faith (Cooling, 1994, p.153)? Or should RE be phenomenological and mainly descriptive and not give special prominence to any religion (Hulmes, 1979, p.46)? Or is it better for RE to be spiritual and focus on the "inner dimensions of personal experience and awareness" (Bigger, 2003, p.13)? Or should it follow a post-modern model for RE which rejects any metaphysical philosophy and the idea that there are "universal and eternal truths and values" (Gutek, 2004, p.123)? Or could it perhaps follow implicit RE which focuses on "believing without belonging" (Bangor University, 2008)? Or could it be that critical religious education is better because it is aiming to develop pupils' ability to "discuss, debate and question" (Brandom, 2000, p.102)? The teaching of RE in Cyprus is a controversial issue regarding which teaching model should be followed. Should it be mostly confessional and focus mainly on Orthodox Christianity? Or perhaps is it better to combine and follow different teaching RE models, taking into consideration Cypriot society, culture and mentality? These questions are not easy ones, but an attempt will be made to answer them throughout this thesis.

Multicultural Education

> "Multicultural education […] has become important because populations are becoming increasingly mobile and diverse. Formal school education for all is a modern aspiration, connected with democracy, industrialization, and the construction of nation-states. […] Not surprisingly, then, education has often been seen as an instrument for propagating a supposedly unitary national culture. That has always been problematic, because virtually no nation-state has ever actually been completely homogeneous and mono-cultural".
>
> (Castles, 2009, p.49)

The aim of this thesis is to provide some suggestions and guidelines for the teaching of RE in order to contribute to the development of mutual respect and understanding between the primary education pupils in Cyprus. Primary education in the Cypriot educational system has been subjected to three major curricular reforms since the 1980s. The latest one began in 2009 and was concluded in 2016. The previous RE syllabus in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128) and even the new one (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012, pp.213ff), seem to impose the main culture and religion of the island, ignoring, in this way, the diversity and the minority cultures of the island. Mainly, it aims to teach about Christian Orthodox Education and marginalizes the minority religions of the island. As mentioned above by Castles (2009, p.49), multicultural education is important and necessary because of populations' movements all over the world but also because no nation has ever been completely culturally and religiously homogeneous. This fact applies to Cyprus as well; Cyprus has never been completely culturally and religiously homogeneous, because so many minorities have lived on the island for hundreds of years. With the Greek population comprising the majority of citizens, the Turkish representing the biggest minority and the Maronites, Armenians and Latins being smaller minorities, Cyprus can be surely considered as a non-homogeneous country.

The origin of multicultural education goes back to the 1960s and 1970s when ethnic revitalization movements began, when Western societies were experiencing a rapid and a 'tremendous ethnic, cultural, racial, religious and linguistic diversity' (Banks, 2009, p.9). However, Cypriot society only started to experience this diversity after that, around the 1990s.

Multicultural education is a pedagogical approach that aims to promote educational equality, democracy and justice for all pupils from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds (Banks, 2009, p.13). The major purpose of multicultural education is to reform schools, colleges and universities so that pupils from

diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, social and linguistic groups will be offered equal opportunities in education (Banks, 2009, p.13).

When in a society there is racial, ethnic, cultural, social or any other kind of inequality among individuals, this inequality is also reflected in the school syllabus, in the teaching textbooks, in teachers' attitudes and behavior towards pupils and in the school culture (Banks, 2009, p.13). Bank's statement about inequality seems to apply to the RE syllabus of Cyprus because it is mainly focused on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity and marginalizes any other religion.

The complications of Multiculturalism

However, multiculturalism is not always considered by everyone as beneficial to a society, and thus social and political issues related to it should be considered. Many doubts about, and criticism of, the development of multiculturalism have been raised in many countries over the last few years. For instance, in Britain, throughout the 1980s, there was a significant public debate about multicultural frameworks and issues (Verma, 1989; Halstead, 1988; Lewis, 2002). Also, in the Netherlands, during the1990s, there were political attacks against some policies that were aiming to help ethnic minorities (Prins and Saharso, 2010). In Canada, as well, during the 1990s, some of the ethnic minorities themselves criticized multiculturalism, "emphasizing concerns of marginalization and reproduction of cultural differences" (Ley, 2010). In Vertovec's and Wessendorf's edited book, "The Multiculturalism Backlash" (2010), the authors analyze not only the social and political questions surrounding multiculturalism but also doubts about it (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010). In this book, the authors' and columnists' views about the problematic role of multiculturalism are presented. Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010, p.1) start the introduction of their book with a headline from 'Britain's Daily Mail': 'Multiculturalism is dead', which was the headline of the "Daily Mail"' on 7 July 2006, one year after the London terrorist bombings. This headline was followed by public criticism, suggesting that the liberal ideology of multiculturalism "had failed miserably" (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.1).

Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010, pp.6-12) in their book outline the core critiques against multiculturalism. Firstly, multiculturalism was criticized as a single 'doctrine' (or ideology or dogma) (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.6) which contends that the different communities should not be forced to integrate within the community they live in (Slack, 2006, par.8). On the contrary, the ideology of multiculturalism encourages all

the communities to preserve their own cultures and identities and not to integrate (Slack, 2006, par.9).

But is this really a disadvantage for multiculturalism? The fact that the ideology of multiculturalism encourages individuals to maintain their own cultures, identities and religions, is more of an advantage than a disadvantage, because it does not oppress the minorities, so they feel freer in the community they live in. As to the criticism that it does not force them to integrate within the community they live in, it is inevitable that minorities will be integrated sooner or later within the community. Immigrants attend schools and universities; they are employed, they socialize, they interact with the community they live in. Because of this constant interaction, sooner or later they will adjust and they will become integrated within the community. Clearly, the maintenance of their own cultures and identities can generate some social problems initially, but this will be overcome as they gradually integrate within the society in which they are living. Eventually, they will start to follow not only their own customs but will also adopt the customs and lifestyle of the community, and finally they will be able to adjust successfully to the community in which they live. During the last few years, the 'integration' of immigrants and ethnic minorities has become one of the prominent themes throughout European countries (Carrera, 2005, Sussmuth and Weidenfeld, 2005). In many European countries, such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, United Kingdom and the Netherlands, governments have established integration policies (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.17). These integration policies usually include citizenship courses, tests for immigrants examining their knowledge of national civics, dominant cultural values and official language requirements (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p .17). In this way, immigrants and ethnic minorities are encouraged to adopt the 'host' country's values and cultural practices and to prove their desire to 'belong' in this 'host' country (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.18).

The second critique against the ideology of multiculturalism, which is outlined in Vertovec's and Wessendorf's book, is that multiculturalism stifles any kind of debate about multiculturalism itself (2010, p.7). The ideology of multiculturalism has created an atmosphere in which thought, speech, discussion or debate about race and immigration is controlled, so no one can talk about these issues (2010, p.7). For instance, David Cameron has attacked multiculturalism and its concomitant "fear of causing offence or being branded as a racist" (Daily Mail, 26 February 2008, par.1).

But is it possible in a democratic country for thought, speech and debate to be controlled in any way? Even though there is an atmosphere supporting multiculturalism,

this does not mean that politicians or media do not have the right to express themselves freely or debate a specific issue. The freedom of speech is always crucially important, thus all individuals have the right to express, in a respectful way, their thoughts freely without any fear that they might be accused as racists. Even in the case of multiculturalism, where the majority of people consider it to be an advantage for society, people still have the right to doubt it and to express their worries and views accordingly. Additionally, the contention that multiculturalism has fostered separateness is the third critique against multiculturalism (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.7). Multiculturalism is accused of promoting ethnic separatism, rejecting common national values and preventing social integration (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.7). Even the authorities seemed to have encouraged minorities to maintain their own cultures and identities (O'Sullivan, 2007, par.19), "rather than promoting common values of nationhood" (Davis, 2005, par.3).

As was mentioned before, in regard to the first critique, it might be possible that initially immigrants follow only their own customs, so they do not have common values or the sense of nationhood. But subsequently, once they have been living in the community for a while, they will gradually begin to develop common values with the rest of the people within the community, as well a sense of nationhood. Because in reality, individuals live permanently in a country which they call their own country too, and where they plan to spend the rest of their lives, raise their families and build careers; and then they will concern themselves about the future of this country; they will develop nationhood and common values; and they will ultimately develop in addition a common national vision for the improvement of their country. In this way, they will be socially and nationally integrated within the society. This view is supported by Deborah Phillips (2006, pp.36f) who has studied minority ethnic communities, mainly British Muslims, in the city of Bradford. Phillips (2006, pp.36f) 'found that it is a myth' that the minorities live or wish to live separate lives from the wider British society. Evidence from British Muslims' residential patterns, as well their diversity of lived experiences and their views about social mixing, show that they neither live nor wish to live separately from the wider British community (Phillips, 2006, pp.36f). In addition, from reviewing a number of other studies across Europe, it would appear that the critique of ethnic self-segregation is a myth. Schonwalder (2007, p.6) observes that in the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden "the levels of residential segregation are moderate and the trends seem to be towards decreasing concentration of residential environments rather than towards consolidating ethnic enclaves". Also, Schonwalder and Sohn (2007) observed that in Germany there are

no "large-scale concentrations of particularly ethnic groups" and all areas always "comprise a mixture of ethnic groups".

A similar critique to the previous one is that multiculturalism negates the common values and is "not interested in any form of commonality" (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.8). As it was noted in Daily Mail by the academic Munira Mirza (Daily Mail, 29 January 2007, par.10), the multicultural policies since the 1980s have been emphasizing the different identities at the expense of a shared national British identity and that they have resulted in the division of people according to their ethnic, religious and cultural background. Thus, multiculturalism was accused of preventing the development of a common national identity or shared values and vision. On the contrary, it has been encouraging the development of ethnic, religious and cultural identities of each minority. But, again, is this really a disadvantage for multiculturalism? The development of the ethnic, religious and cultural identities of each minority is advantageous and it does not mean that a common national identity and shared values cannot be developed as well. The development of their own identities does not exclude the development of a sense of national identity as well. Ethnic minorities living in a community can maintain and develop their own identities, but at the same time, they can also develop a national identity. The development of the national identity and common values and vision is primarily the role of the different educational institutions but not exclusively; governments too have an important role to play in the development of a national identity. In its 'Improving Opportunities, Strengthening Society', the British Government listed among its goals that:

> "As youth services and school partnerships are developed, we will improve opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to learn and socialize together and to develop an inclusive sense of British identity alongside their other cultural identities…"
>
> (Home Office, 2005, p.11)

> "We also expect museums, galleries and community cultural programs to play an increased role in promoting an understanding of, and celebrating, the diverse elements of our local and national society…"
>
> (Home Office, 2005, p.12)

> "Today, Britishness encompasses the collective contribution diverse communities make to the country. People should not need to choose between their British identity and other cultural identities. They can be proud of both".
>
> (Home Office, 2005, p.20)

The fifth critique against the ideology of multiculturalism, which is outlined in Vertovec's and Wessendorf's book (2010, p.9), is that multiculturalism denies the

existence of any problems. The ideology of multiculturalism has controlled people's ability to see the problems clearly, to see what is really happening. They refuse to acknowledge serious social problems related to immigrants and minorities (Vertovec's and Wessendorf's, 2010, p.9).

But how can this be true? Is it possible that multiculturalism prevents individuals from seeing the serious social problems around them? This critique implies that multiculturalism brainwashes people, so they become 'blind' to seeing reality and the problems related to immigrants and minorities. But if there really are so many serious problems caused by multiculturalism, certainly people will identify them. The most common social problems relating to minorities and immigrants are that these groups are often blighted by poor quality housing conditions, low educational attainment and high unemployment. But there is no evidence that these problems exist because of the bad multicultural policies. They might just exist because of failed education, housing and employment policies in general (Vertovec's and Wessendorf's, 2010, p.16). It seems that minorities' economic marginalization is largely down to other factors, such as discrimination, the job market and educational policies etc. (Vertovec's and Wessendorf's, 2010, p.16).

The sixth critique is that multiculturalism encourages reprehensible practices because it is related to cultural relativism, which contends that all "all-aspects-of-all-cultures" are intrinsically good and positive (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.9). But is that true? Are all 'all-aspects-of-all-cultures' really good? Or maybe some cultural or religious practices are in fact reprehensible? For instance, some cultural practices, such as "unequal treatment to women, forced marriages, honor killings and female genital mutilation" (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.9) are genuinely reprehensible. Therefore, not "all-aspects-of-all-cultures" are good because they include evil and reprehensible practices. Such views have been presented in the British media especially after the London terrorist bombings of 7 July 2005 (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.9). For instance, the Daily Mail columnist Melanie Phillips (2006a), wrote:

> "At the heart of multiculturalism lies a radical egalitarianism by which everyone's culture and lifestyle has equal validity and moral stature. The consequence is that people are increasingly unable to make moral distinctions based on behavior".
> (Phillips, 2006a in Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.12)

But when multiculturalism refers to equal validity and moral stature for all cultures, it excludes anything violent or abusive towards human beings. The Economist columnist Bagehot (2007, par.6) argues that critics of multiculturalism tend to focus on easy targets

such as forced marriages or honour killings. This surely rejects the unequal treatment to women, forced marriages, honour killings or female genital mutilation. These kinds of customs are not acceptable in any civilized and democratic community. Multiculturalism supports equal validity for all cultural practices except for those which offend the human existence and respect. Monaghan and Just (2000) in their book 'Social and Cultural Anthropology: a very short introduction', discuss cultural relativism. According to them, our beliefs, morals, behaviours and perceptions of the world are products of the culture and community in which we are nurtured (Monaghan and Just, 2000, p.49). Therefore, no culture can be considered as superior to another, but they (cultures) can only be judged relative to one another (Monaghan and Just, 2000, p.49). That means that any belief or moral or behaviour must first be understood relative to its own cultural context (Monaghan and Just, 2000, p.49). Monaghan and Just (2000, p.50) go on to argue that a behaviour or practice that in one specific society might be considered as nonsensical, illegal or immoral, in another society might be rational, moral and socially acceptable. In this case, "the only reasonable thing to do, it would seem, is to suspend any judgment of the practices of another society". But this is not easy to take on board. It is not easy to relate to another culture which is morally, socially, legally different from our own (Monaghan and Just, 2000, p.50). Cultural relativism suggests not judging any cultural practice and that any cultural practice or behaviour should be understood only within its own context and by not comparing it to other cultural contexts. But then again, what if a particular cultural practice is violating human rights and legal standards? Here the role of multiculturalism comes into its own by trying to balance universal standards (legal, rational, moral and social standards) and cultural practices. Multiculturalism promotes equality towards all cultures, but this does not mean that it encourages reprehensible practices or any other illegal, irrational or immoral practice.

The final critique against multiculturalism is that it provides a haven for terrorists (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.11). Again, Phillips (2006b in Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.11) argues that the ideology of multiculturalism holds that all minority groups must enjoy equal privileges with the majority, thus, any effort to enforce, in any way, the culture of the majority over that of a minority, is considered to be racist. This idea, however, encourages the development of terrorism, because as Phillips (2006b in Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.11) notes, it "has helped to create a cultural vacuum into which has roared militant Islamism – the interpretation of Islam that preached holy war". Phillips (2006b in Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.11) goes on to argue that

multiculturalism not only nurtures terrorism and fascism, but also renders people unable to defend themselves against them.

In effect this criticism against multiculturalism is not strong enough because the enjoyment of equal privileges does not encourage terrorist behaviour. On the contrary, equal privileges for all citizens promotes more likely appreciation. Conversely, if immigrants were treated unequally, then most probably they would have more reason to develop aggressive and terroristic behaviour. Multiculturalism does not encourage terrorism, not even after serious terrorist attacks; most European citizens continue to believe that cultural diversity enriches societies. For instance, in Britain, even just after the London bombings in 2005, a BBC/MORI (BBC, 2005a) poll found that 62 per cent of the Britons thought that "Multiculturalism makes Britain a better place" (ibid.,par.10); only 32 per cent thought that "Multiculturalism threatens the British way of life" (par.1), and just 21 per cent thought that "the policy of Multiculturalism in Britain has been a mistake and should be abandoned" (BBC, 2005b, p.2.). Two years later, in 2007, the Euro barometer found that almost 75 percent of EU citizens believe that "people with different ethnic, religious or national background enrich the cultural life of their country" (The Gallup Organization, 2007, p.4).

All things considered, multiculturalism can be beneficial to a society because minority communities have the right to maintain their own ethnic, religious and cultural identities, and so do not feel any kind of oppression. At the same time however, 'multiculturalism seems to include' some unpleasant aspects as well (as discussed above). For this reason, any frameworks, initiatives, issues or debates surrounding multiculturalism, should be assessed and considered within existing national, social, political and historical contexts (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.22). Undoubtedly, all ideologies or philosophical approaches or views have both advantages and disadvantages. In the same way, the 'ideology' of multiculturalism, as it is called by some thinkers, has both advantages and disadvantages. The crux of the matter is not to over-emphasize its disadvantages because then it could be rejected as a problematic issue. Thus, I contend, it would be better to identify both advantages and disadvantages and strike a balance between them. If the effects of multiculturalism are seriously problematic then certainly it should be rejected. But if the benefits outweigh the negative aspects, then it would surely be better to focus on the problems and try to find solutions to them instead of rejecting the multicultural approach as a whole. Multicultural policies have not failed; but their critics have failed to find any evidence of negative impacts. Multiculturalism seems to attract public support, regardless of the various criticisms that have been outlined

above. The attack on multiculturalism has not apparently created a climate of negativity towards it (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.15). On the contrary, further multicultural policies have been adopted and developed, even if they are no longer labelled as 'multicultural' but 'diversity' (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.18). In this way, the word 'diversity', which has replaced the word 'multicultural', embraces a broader range of different issues, such as sexuality, gender, culture, religion etc. (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, pp.18-21). Diversity now includes measures to reduce discrimination, to promote equal opportunities, equal participation in society, equal access to public services, acceptance of ethnic pluralism and to promote cultural understanding across all ethnic groups (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.19). In many European countries, developing diversity includes the goal of "respecting differences in the attitudes, values, cultural frameworks, lifestyles, skills and experiences of each member of a group" (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.19).

Religious and Citizenship Education

This thesis also considers the relationship between Religious Education and Citizenship Education, and how the combination of these two teaching disciplines can contribute to the promotion of multicultural-intercultural education and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relating citizenship education and RE can be very effective in order to promote intercultural education. This is especially evident when, subsequent to various terrorist attacks, the Council of Europe is encouraging the development of intercultural education and religious dialogue (Jackson and Steele, 2004, par.1). One basic aspect of teaching citizenship and religious education is dialogue, and especially "intercultural dialogue". The term "intercultural dialogue" refers to the fact that within a society the various cultural groups have to coexist, cooperate, respect and understand each other mutually. Dialogue and discussion play a vital role in the development of pupils' thinking, understanding, tolerance and respect (Russell, 2002 in Deakin Crick et al, 2004, p.26).

The aim and the need for the research

The aim of this PhD thesis is to assess the implications of changes in Greek-Cypriot society (since 1960, and especially since 2000) for the provision of RE in Greek-Cypriot primary schools, and to identify ways of addressing the challenges posed by these changes, and especially to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of the island. At the same time, it aims to provide some suggestions as to how RE can be

reformed along the lines of multiculturalism in order to promote the reconciliation of Cyprus, which it is been divided since 1974[1].

This project will focus on how the RE curriculum in Cyprus could effectively respond to the changing demography of Cyprus. Cypriot society has become multicultural; many people professing different beliefs and cultures now live in Cyprus as immigrants, and many of them permanently.

The problematic area

In spite of recent changes to the curriculum, RE in Cyprus remains dominated by the confessional approach advocated by the Greek Orthodox Church, which reflects the island's history of occupation, colonization and partition as well as the need to promote national unity amongst a presumed homogeneous population, where the imperatives of nation-building supersede concerns with the island's historic cultural diversity. However, a series of changes, broadly since independence in 1960 but especially since 2000, present challenges to this model.

Firstly, during the past decade, a growing number of immigrants are arriving in Cyprus from different countries, and therefore a growing number of pupils, originating mainly from Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldavia, Greece and Syria, have been enrolled in the Cypriot primary education system (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013, par.1f).

> "The collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the escalating globalization of the neo-liberal model, Cyprus's accession to the EU and domestic economic progress in certain sectors (e.g., tourism and construction) led Cyprus to reconsider its restrictive approach to immigration".
>
> (Vrasidas et al, 2012, par.1)

All these immigrants live across all areas of Cyprus. The number of immigrants in Cyprus is increasing exponentially every year (Gregoriou et al, 2010, p.66), causing social and economic problems on the island because of the small size of the island and a populace and infrastructure which cannot cope effectively. As noted by Vrasidas et al (2012, par.1), Cyprus has historically been characterized by diversity and multiculturalism. However, during the late 1990s, Cyprus rapidly and suddenly became an immigrant recipient country (Vrasidas et al, 2012, par.1) and this sudden shift to an immigrant host country found not only the Government of Cyprus, but also the Cypriot society as a whole,

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[1] The reconciliation of Cyprus, it is the vision of Cypriots after the 1974 war and the division of Cyprus into two parts, North (Turkish) and South (Greek) and the conflicts between the Greek and Turkish communities.

unprepared for the socioeconomic challenges and problems that immigrants brought to the island (Mainwaring, 2008, p.20). "In relation to education, migration leads to an increase in diversity in schools and this transformation has created new challenges for the education system in Cyprus" (Vrasidas et al, 2012, par.3).

Over the last few years, and especially during the current economic recession on the island, there have been numerous debates and arguments regarding the policies that aim to help immigrants economically (mainly Bulgarians, Romanians, Syrians, but also other minority groups such as Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins). As a result, this situation (the promotion of policies that aim to help immigrants economically) has encouraged the increase of racism towards immigrants and, at the same time, the growth of far-right ideology. This tendency was particularly evident in Greece, during the last Parliamentary elections (June 2012), where the far-right political party, known as "Golden Dawn", managed to win 6,9% of the vote and claimed around 20 seats in the new parliament (Zenakos, 2012, par.14). The rise of the far-right party in Greece is surely related to the serious economic recession of the country. As noted in The Economist newspaper (11 August 2012, par.3), "the party has gained some credibility thanks to its food handouts and other social efforts,..". But it would seem that the far-right has not only risen in Greece but in many other European countries as well. Laura Smith-Spark (May 2012, par.7) noted:

> "Across Europe, anger at a perceived mismanagement of the economic crisis, and accompanying high unemployment, low growth and painful cuts […] feeds far-right's rise in Europe".
>
> (Smith-Spark, L., 9 May 2012, CNN, par.7)

Secondly, since the 1st of May 2004, Cyprus has become a member of the European Union. As a result of this, other European citizens, especially from countries with higher unemployment, such as Bulgaria, Romania, Moldavia and Greece have arrived in Cyprus in order to find employment (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013, par.1-3). These immigrants manifest different cultures to Cypriots.

Thirdly, despite the small population of Cyprus, people with different cultures and religions coexist and have historically co-existed in Cypriot society for many centuries. Specifically, 80,7% of Cypriots are Greek-Cypriots (including Armenians, Maronites and Latins), while 11% are Turkish-Cypriots and the remaining 8,3% are foreigners residing in Cyprus (The Republic of Cyprus, 2004). The Greek-Cypriot community adheres to the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus and the Turkish-Cypriot community adheres to Islam. The religious groups of Armenians, Maronites and Latins, in accordance with the 1960 constitution, opted to belong to the Greek-Cypriot community (The

Republic of Cyprus, 2004). Therefore, the majority of the Cypriots are Christian Greek-Orthodox.

Fourthly, the 1974 war led to the division of the island into two parts: Greek and Turkish. The Cyprus dispute is an ongoing conflict between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey, which goes back many years. Before 1960 Cyprus was a British colony but on the 16th of August 1960 Cyprus was proclaimed an independent state. Thus, since 1960, Cyprus has had its own Constitution which divided the Cypriot people into two communities: Greek-Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot. The President had to be a Greek Cypriot elected by the Greek Cypriots, and the Vice-President a Turkish Cypriot elected by the Turkish Cypriots. Simultaneously, this involved three "guarantee powers": Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom, along with the United States, the United Nations and the European Union. After independence, all inhabitants of Cyprus (Greek, Turkish, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) were living together peacefully.

> "…80% Greek, 18% Turkish and 2% Armenian, Maronite and other. Before the turmoil, [...] all the inhabitants were literally living together, [...] in mixed villages throughout the island. Everyday life was characterized by peaceful coexistence [...]. We would see that we were alike except for our names and religions, which did not matter essentially. On the contrary, intermingling enriched our social life".
> (Ozgur, 2001, p.23 in Papastephanou 2005, p.143)

However, fourteen years after Cypriot Independence and the new Constitution, in 1974, a military coup took place in Cyprus, guided by Greek high ranking military officers (Zaphiris, 2012, par.16). It was then when Turkey, on 20 July 1974, using as a pretext the Greek-backed coup of 15 July 1974, invaded Cyprus in an attempt to guarantee the island's independence and in order to protect the Turkish population of the island. As a result of the Turkish invasion, approximately 40% of the total territory of the Republic of Cyprus came under Turkish military occupation and about 40% (200.000) of the total Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot population was displaced, forced to leave their homes and effectively turned into refugees (Zaphiris, 2012, par.16). Moreover, thousands of people, including civilians, were killed or ill-treated and many more disappeared and are still missing. Turkey occupied the northern part of Cyprus and a buffer zone was created by the United Nations in order to avoid any further inter-communal tensions and hostilities, and to separate the Greek Cypriot-controlled south from the Turkish Cypriot-controlled north. Since spring 1975, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot governments have been trying, with political conversations, to solve the 'Cyprus problem', but unfortunately no progress has yet been made on this issue (Hatjidemetriou, 1985, p.327).

All of the above four factors (immigrants, Cyprus' entrance in the EU, the different ethnic and religious groups of Cyprus and the 1974 war) combine to challenge the current provision of RE in Cyprus. RE needs to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of the island, especially because of the great number of immigrants arriving in the country. Immigrants from EU countries and other countries practice different religions and cultures, to those of the Cypriots. Thus, the development of a more multicultural and multi-religious RE that will promote the smooth integration of these people within the Cypriot society is imperative. At the same time, the existence of different religious and ethnic groups in Cyprus (Greeks, Turkish, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) requires pupils to acquire a knowledge of all these groups, so that they will be able to coexist peacefully. Finally, the 1974 war which resulted the division of the island into two parts (Greek and Turkish), and the implications of this partition, need to be considered in the designing of the RE curriculum.

Therefore, many will benefit from a more multicultural and multi-religious RE curriculum. Firstly, a more multicultural and multi-religious RE content will contribute to Cyprus unification and reconciliation, because it will help all communities of Cyprus – Greek, Turkish, Maronites, Latins and Armenians - to meet, appreciate and respect each other. Secondly, immigrants and foreigners residing in Cyprus will benefit because Cypriots will become more understanding and less racist towards other cultures. In this way, they will face less racism. Thirdly, in the long-term, future generations will live in a more empathetic and understanding society and they will be able to coexist peacefully. Both individuals and society itself will benefit from more multicultural RE teaching.

Religious Education in Cyprus and within the European context

Therefore, due to all of the above reasons, it is necessary to develop and promote a more multicultural and critical religious education within Cypriot schools. Multicultural education in Cyprus is currently being practiced in the form of various support measures. For instance, there are "measures for language support, which refer to the learning of Greek as a second language and measures for the smooth integration of groups with different culture identities" (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013, par.4f). At the same time however, Religious Education in Cyprus chooses to stay confessional and focus on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity, Byzantine and Greek-Orthodox values. From 1996 to 2009 the main purpose of RE syllabus was that:

"Pupils have to realize that they are members of the Christian Orthodox Church, to learn the fundamental truths of Christianity and to experience a loving relationship with God".

(Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128)

The RE syllabus, at that time, demonstrated a variety of additional aims for 'Orthodox Education' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128):

Pupils should be enabled to understand the presence of God throughout the history and the apocalypse of God as an answer to the fundamental questions of human existence. Children must also experience the figure, the teachings and the work of Jesus Christ, as the highest contribution of God for the multilateral fulfillment of man. Children need to experience the Christian way of love towards all people, regardless color, religion and race. They should be introduced to the basic aspects of other religions and develop a critical attitude towards them. In this way, they will become able to understand and respect the religious beliefs of other people. "Orthodox Education" provides pupils with the skills to appreciate the meaning of the Christian Orthodox ethics, traditions, prayer and to make them part of their everyday life. Pupils should also appreciate the beneficial influence of the Orthodox Church to the development and progress of civilization. "Orthodox Education" also develops children's understanding of the collective worships of the Church and encourages them to participate in these worships. Children have to respect the value and importance of the various ecclesiastical monuments. Finally, "Orthodox Education", needs to promote children's responsibility for the continuation of the Orthodox faith and way of life (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128).

Thirteen years later, during the Educational Reform of Cyprus, a new RE syllabus was developed. The departments of Primary and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus have been developing, since 2009, the new Educational Curricula of Cyprus. In spring 2009 "working groups-committees" were developed in order to reform the Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education Curricula (Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, 2010, par.4). Those groups were constituted of practitioners from different areas of the system: primary and secondary teachers, school inspectors and university professors from Cyprus and Greece (Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, 2010, par.2,3,6). The members of these groups were chosen according to their educational qualifications within each school discipline. For instance, the RE "working group-committee" constituted of primary and secondary school teachers and inspectors who are specialized (possibly possessing a postgraduate degree relevant to RE) in RE. Also, those groups were constituted of university professors, mainly theologians. The reforming of

the Curricula also included other groups, such as parents' committees, educational committees, politicians, social and religious organizations (Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, 2010, par.16). The "working groups-committees" worked from 2009 until 2016 on the educational reforms, and they initially worked towards reforming the teaching aims for each school discipline (Linguistics, Mathematics, Science, History, Religious Education etc.) and then subsequently to produce new teaching materials for every single discipline (Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, 2010, par.15). At this point, it should be mentioned that I myself, as a primary school teacher and as an employee of the Ministry of Education, was also part of a "working group-committee" for reforming the RE syllabus. Therefore, I can state that the purpose of the new RE curricula in Cyprus is to ensure that:

> "The pupils to be taught about the Orthodox Church, the main world religions and the religious phenomenon".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012, pp.213ff)

So the main purposes of RE in Cyprus are threefold: specifically and firstly, pupils are required to be taught about 'The Orthodox Church' and about God, humans and world, through the Christian faith, tradition, symbols, Holy Scriptures and monuments, as well as the history of the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church throughout culture and civilization (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012, pp.213f). Secondly, pupils are to be taught about 'The different religious traditions' and their relationship to God, humans, faith, tradition, symbols, Holy Scriptures and monuments, as well as the history of the different religious traditions and their relationship to culture and civilization (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012, pp.214f). Thirdly, pupils should be taught about 'The religious phenomenon' and humans' effort to solve their ontological problem and to be connected to the supernatural (God) (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012, p.215).

It appears that even the new RE syllabus is focused on the teaching of the Christian Orthodox doctrine. It remains mostly confessional rather than multicultural. But how can a confessional RE curriculum serve a multicultural society? How can a confessional RE syllabus serve the visionary aim of the reconciliation and reunification of the island of Cyprus and the peaceful coexistence of Greek and Turkish Cypriots?

Alongside the above considerations, this thesis will study RE within the European context, because Cyprus has joined the European Union in 2004, so it is sharing common European vision and values. Teaching of RE in Europe varies enormously from country to country. In some European countries RE is a compulsory subject or an optional

one, with a confessional or a non-confessional approach. Some others focus on education into religion, or education about religion or learning from religion. More specifically, in Austria, Belgium and Northern Ireland, religious education is a compulsory and confessional subject. In Hungary and Spain it is optional and confessional. Compulsory and non-confessional religious education is taught in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Scotland. In Estonia, Germany, Sweden and Norway, religious education is optional and non-confessional. Two countries follow the French or American model of religious education: France and Slovenia. Some other countries focus on education into religion: Hungary, Estonia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Spain, Norway and Northern Ireland. Some others focus on education about religion: Denmark, Finland, Slovenia, Sweden, Norway and United Kingdom. Finally, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Northern Ireland and United Kingdom focus on learning from religion. However, some religious education theorists (i.e. Schreiner (2005) and Schweitzer (2002)) argue that it is very important to set some international standards and criteria for religious education. Some of these criteria and standards involve interdenominational and interreligious learning, social and religious pluralism, peace, tolerance and mutual understanding (Schweitzer, 2002).

The Research Questions

As has been previously mentioned, the overall aim of this thesis is to assess the implications of changes in Greek-Cypriot society (since 1960, and especially since 2000) on the provision of Religious Education in Greek-Cypriot primary schools, and to identify ways of addressing the challenges posed by these changes, and especially to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of the island. Therefore, Religious Education should be reformed along the lines of multiculturalism in order to promote the reconciliation of the island, which it is been divided since 1974.

The research questions are mainly focused on the challenges emerging for the current model of RE due to the increasing diversity within Cyprus. It examines how the effective teaching of RE in Cyprus can contribute to meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse society.

More specifically, this thesis aims to explore how the historical legacy and social change in Cyprus has influenced the way that RE has been taught through the years. It also considers the range of approaches (pedagogies and national systems) applied to RE development across Europe and aims to suggest improvements to RE curriculum development in Cyprus. Additionally, it analyzes the relationship between RE and

Citizenship Education, and considers the difficulties in assessing RE, specifically how assessment for learning can be achieved, and goes on to explore the obstacles facing the promotion of a more critical religious education. It will then seek to investigate the approach of different religious minorities (Turkish, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) in Cyprus towards Religious Education as a subject, and to study how RE teaching in Cyprus can be reformed along the lines of multiculturalism in order to promote the reconciliation of the island.

Cyprus: A historical background

The historical background and the current political situation in Cyprus appear to be critical factors influencing the planning and the development of every educational reform. Specifically, where this educational reform applies to "sensitive" or "controversial" teaching disciplines, such as Religious Education and History, then the arguments around this topic can become very challenging.

It is significant to present Cyprus' historical background, so that it will become clear why teaching RE in Greek-Cypriot schools can be challenging. The island of Cyprus has a long and complicated history over the centuries. Therefore, it is crucial to clearly define the historical significance of the topic of this thesis and to explain early on in the thesis why this topic justifies the readers' attention.

As was mentioned above, the island of Cyprus has a long and complicated history over the centuries. As Philippou (2009, p.204) notes, the Greek-Cypriot historical narratives describe Cyprus as a "victim" of many conquerors such as the Phoenicians, Persians, Egyptians, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, French, Venetians, Ottomans and British. Each of these conquerors has in some way influenced the way Cyprus is today in terms of their effect on culture, religion, tradition, language-dialect, economy, politics and so on. Cyprus' history can be divided into seventeen historical periods: Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze, Geometric, Archaic and Classical, Alexander the Great, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Richard the Lionheart and the Knights Templers, Frankish (Lusignan), Venetian, Ottoman, British and the Republic of Cyprus (Zaphiris, 2012).

Evidently, many conquerors have passed through Cyprus, but it seems that the Greeks have exerted the most influence on the Cypriot population, since the majority of them speak Greek and most follow the Greek Orthodox religion (80,7% of the Cypriots are Greek-Cypriots). Greek-Cypriots have always struggled to prove that they were Greek and Europeans and that they were not related to Middle East civilizations (like Arabs or Ottomans) in any way. Greek-Cypriots have always tried to prove historically that they

share a common language, history, religion and tradition with the Greek mainland. As noted by Philippou (2012, p.433), when analyzing the content of geography, civics and history textbooks it was found that Cyprus has always been presented as European because of 'a perceived cultural-historical Greekness' in the island. The following extract from a Geography textbook exemplifies this clearly:

> "Achaeans Greeks colonized the island right after the Trojan War and contemporary Cypriots are considered their descendants […] The Greek element, despite Ottoman occupation and rule for 300 years, comprises 80% of the population […] Cyprus, based on archaeological heritage, on the Christian and European tradition and culture, follows its European orientation and destiny. […] Nobody succeeded in changing its Greek and European character".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2002, pp.8f)

BC Ages (7000BC - 330 AD)

Firstly, it is important to present briefly the BC historical periods of Cyprus in order to reveal the historical relationship of Cyprus to Greek civilization and the first Greek signs on the island which must surely have influenced Cypriots' language, religion, customs and tradition. The oldest known civilization in Cyprus is estimated to have been around the Neolithic Age (7000-3900 BC) but one of the most important historical periods was the Chalcolithic Age (3900-2500 BC), when the copper[2] of the island began to be exploited and used by citizens, thus bringing them lots of wealth and prosperity (Zaphiris, 2012, par.1-2). During this era, the citizens of the island started developing religious practices; and the most famous one from that time was the worshipping of fertility goddesses and idols (Zaphiris, 2012, par.2). After 1400 BC, Mycenaean Greeks reached the island (Philippou, 2007, p.71) and specifically during the 11th and 12th centuries, several Achaean Greeks came to settle on the island bringing with them the Greek language, their religion (twelve Olympian Gods) and their customs and tradition (Zaphiris, 2012, par.3). The ensuing historical periods, the Geometric (1050-750 BC) and Archaic and Classical (750-325 BC), were periods of a great wealth and prosperity for the Cypriot citizens, despite the fact that during those years the island fell to several conquerors, such as the Assyrians, Egyptians and Persians (Zaphiris, 2012, par.4f). During the years (333-58 BC) Cyprus became part of the Alexander the Great's Empire

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[2] Cyprus during the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age was very famous for its copper resources. In fact, the name of the island "Cyprus" derived from the word cuprum which means copper. So Cyprus got its name from the large deposits of copper in the island.

and afterwards became part of the Hellenistic[3] state of the Ptolemies of Egypt (Zaphiris, 2012, par.7). Finally, the last, but very important historical period of the BC- era years was the Roman Period (58 BC - 330 AD) when Cyprus became part of the Roman Empire; and during the first AD years, it became the first country to be governed by a Christian Proconsul, Sergius Paulus, who converted to Christianity (Zaphiris, 2012, par.8).

AC Ages (330AD - 1974)

Byzantine Period (330-1191 AD)
After the Roman Empire was divided in two parts, Cyprus became part of the Eastern Roman Empire, known as Byzantium (Zaphiris, 2012, par.9). In 488 the Byzantium Emperor Zenon granted the Archbishop of Cyprus full autonomy and important privileges (Zaphiris, 2012, par.9). In 647, the Arabs invaded the island of Cyprus under Muawiya and in 688 the Byzantium Emperor Justinian II and the Arab Caliph al-Malik signed a treaty for neutralizing Cyprus, but violations of this treaty were reported (Zaphiris, 2012, par.9). At the same time, pirates were attacking the island and in 965 the Byzantium Emperor Nikiphoros Phocas expelled the Arabs from Cyprus (Zaphiris, 2012, par.9).

Richard the Lionheart and the Knights Templar (1191-1192 AD)
Isaac Comnenus, the Byzantium high officer, proclaimed himself as governor of Cyprus but Richard the Lionheart, King of England, on his way to the Third Crusade, defeated Isaac and took possession of Cyprus (Zaphiris, 2012, par.10). Richard then sold the island to the Knights Templar but they resold it afterwards to Guy de Lusignan, one of the Crusader Knights (Zaphiris, 2012, par.10).

Frankish (Lusignan) Period (1192-1489 AD)
During the Frankish Period, Cyprus was ruled under the feudal system and the Catholic Church officially replaced the Greek Orthodox Church, although that did not mean that the Greek Orthodox population converted to Catholicism (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1999, p.23, Zaphiris, 2012, par.11). The Lusignan denomination ended when the Queen Catherina Cornaro ceded Cyprus to Venice in 1489 (Zaphiris, 2012, par.11).

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[3] The word Hellenistic means Greek.

Venetian Period (1489-1571 AD)

The Venetian period in Cyprus began at 1489 (Zaphiris, 2012, par.12). Venetians considered Cyprus as a last bastion against the Ottomans in the eastern Mediterranean, and fortified the island by building defensive walls which were considered at the time as works of impressive military art (Zaphiris, 2012, par.12).

Ottoman Period (1571- 1878 AD)

In 1570 Ottoman troops attacked Cyprus and after a strong defense by the Venetian commander, finally managed to capture it (Zaphiris, 2012, par.13). During the Ottoman Period in Cyprus, the Greek Orthodox population restored their faith and the Archbishop of Cyprus, who was the leader of the Greek Orthodox, became their representative to the Ottoman administration in Constantinople (Istanbul) (Zaphiris, 2012, par.13).

British Period (1878-1960 AD)

In 1878 Britain assumed administration of the island but it remained formally part of the Ottoman Empire until 1914 when Britain assumed full possession of Cyprus, after the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of Germany (Zaphiris, 2012, par.14). In 1923, under the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey gave up any claim to Cyprus and consequently, in 1925 Cyprus was declared formally a British colony (Zaphiris, 2012, par.14). During this period, the Greek-Cypriot community gradually aspired to the unification of Cyprus with Greece (Philippou, 2007, p.71) and thus in 1940, during the Second World War, Cypriot volunteers served alongside the British Armed Forces, mainly because they were hoping that, in return, Britain would allow them self-determination or unification with Greece (Zaphiris, 2012, par.14). However, their hopes were shattered by the British who considered the island vitally strategic, and so refused to allow self-determination. A few years later, in 1955, an armed liberation struggle broke out against the British, which lasted until 1959 (Lambrou, 2004, p.37; Zaphiris, 2012, par.14).

Republic of Cyprus (1960) and the 1974 War

Cyprus became an independent republic on 16th August 1960, under the Zurich-London Treaty, which assigned Greece, Turkey and Britain as the three guarantee powers of the island (Philippou, 2007, p.71). The first President of the new Republic was a Greek-Cypriot, Archbishop Makarios III, and the Vice President was a Turkish Cypriot, Dr. Fazil Kucuk (Zaphiris, 2012, par.15). The new republic was based on the 1960

Constitution which defined Cypriots' citizenship according to their ethnic origin, language, culture and religion (Philippou, 2007, p.71). Firstly, the Constitution proclaimed that the Greek community included the citizens who were of Greek origin, whose mother tongue was Greek, and who both belonged to the Greek-Orthodox Church and followed the Greek cultural tradition (Republic of Cyprus Web-Site, 2001, Appendix D: Part 1 – General Provisions, Article 2). Secondly, the Turkish community was to include the citizens who were of Turkish origin, whose mother tongue was Turkish, and who were both Muslims and followed the Turkish cultural tradition. Thirdly, the citizens who did not belong to either the Greek or the Turkish community had to choose to belong, as individuals, either to the Greek or Turkish community. However, if they belonged to any religious group, they were required again to choose to belong, as a religious group, to one of the above two communities (Republic of Cyprus Web-Site, 2001, Appendix D: Part 1 – General Provisions, Article 2).

However, the 1960 Cyprus Constitution proved to be unworkable to balance the nationalisms of the Greek and Turkish communities and this made impossible its smooth implementation (Philippou, 2007, p.71; Zaphiris, 2012, par.15). As Danopoulos (2004, p.42) argues,

> "Democracy was threatened, since democracy lacks quality unless it is able to produce a constitution that provides for fundamental liberties, minority rights, and a set of institutions and checks and balances that limit state power and ensure accountability".
>
> (Danopoulos, 2004, p.42)

In 1963, the President Archbishop Makarios III, proposed some modifications to make possible the functioning of the new state, but the Turkish community reacted to this with rebellion: the Turkish ministers withdrew themselves from the Cabinet, the Turkish public servants ceased attending their offices and Turkey threatened to invade Cyprus (Lambrou, 2004, pp.107ff; Zaphiris, 2012, par.15). This period was characterized by "ethno-nationalism, inter- and intra-communal conflict, and eventually war" (Koyzis, 1997, p.31). In July 1974, a military coup took place in Cyprus, organized by the dictatorial government of Greece, in order to overthrow President Archbishop Makarios (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1999, pp.294f; Philippou, 007, p.71; Zaphiris, 2012, par.15). It was then when Turkey, on 20 July 1974, using as a pretext the coup of 15 July 1974, invaded Cyprus as a guarantor of the island's independence and in order to protect the Turkish population of the island (Philippou, 2009, p.204). 40.000 Turkish troops landed on the island assisted by Turkish air and naval forces, in violation of the United Nations (Zaphiris, 2012, par.15). On 14 August, Turkey launched a second invasion in

violation of the Security Council resolutions. As a result of the Turkish invasion, approximately 40% of the total territory of the Republic of Cyprus came under Turkish military occupation and about 40% (200.000) of the total Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot population was displaced, forced to leave their homes and were turned into refugees (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1999, p.299; Zaphiris, 2012, par.15). Moreover, thousands of people, from both communities, including civilians, were killed or ill-treated and many more disappeared and are still missing. Turkey occupied the northern part of Cyprus and declared there the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in November 1983, but the Republic of Northern Cyprus lacked international recognition (Philippou, 2009, p.204). After the two communities and the guarantor countries had committed themselves in finding a peaceful solution over the dispute, the United Nations created and maintained a buffer zone to avoid any further inter-communal tensions and hostilities. This zone separates the Greek Cypriot-controlled south from the Turkish Cypriot-controlled north. Thus, since 1974 the island of Cyprus has been divided into North and South, and Turkish and Greek respectively, although there is a small minority of Turks living in the South and a small minority of Greeks living in the North. Since the spring of 1975, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot governments have been trying, with political conversations, to solve the 'Cyprus problem', but unfortunately still no progress has been made on this issue (Hatjidemetriou, 1985, p.327). However, since April 2003 the Turkish-Cypriot authorities have eased the travel restrictions, so there has been mobility between the Turkish and the Greek communities (Philippou, 2007, p.71). Finally, in April 2004 the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, after a number of negotiation talks between the Greek and Turkish communities, proposed a plan, known as the 'Annan's Plan', for the solution of the Cyprus problem (Philippou, 2007, p.71). This plan was put to a referendum but was rejected by the 75% of the Greek-Cypriots (Philippou, 2007, p.71).

The role of religion within Cypriot society

Over the centuries religion, and more specifically, the Christian Orthodox Church of Cyprus, has been playing an instrumental role within Greek-Cypriot society. Throughout Cypriot history, the Christian Orthodox Church has been involved in the social, political, educational and economic issues of Cyprus. Specifically, during the long periods of foreign domination of the island, the Church always struggled to help the population of the island maintain their own Greek Orthodox identity, the Greek language, the Christian Orthodox religion, the Greek culture, ethics, civilization and its history.

> "During the Ottoman domination, the role of the Church was to maintain the religious faith and the national identity of the Greek population of Cyprus. The Church managed successfully to gather the people around it and to focus their interest on the religious and national values. During the 19th century the Church founded many schools and through those schools the Greek national ideology was promoted".
> (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1999, pp.145f)

As mentioned above, in the historical overview, Cyprus was dominated by many conquerors, so the Greek Orthodox civilization in Cyprus was at great risk of being assimilated. This is where the role of the Church has been so pivotal in helping to maintain it successfully despite so much foreign dominance, and as a result the Greek population still speaks Greek, follows the Christian Orthodox religion and adheres to most of the Greek ethics and customs. The Church helped achieve this outcome by enhancing educationally and economically the Greek population of the island. The Church played a vital role in political issues as well. For instance, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus usually acted as the intermediate power between the dominating state and the Greek population of the island.

> "The Archbishop, during the Ottoman period, had the right to address to the local authorities or to the Turkish government or even to the Sultan, in order to submit any request or express any complain when the Christian Orthodox religious rights were violated or if the Greek population was oppressed".
> (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1999, p.139)

Moreover, every time that any liberation struggle broke out against any of the conquerors, it needed first the approval and blessing of the Orthodox Church. Lambrou (2004, p.38) notes,

> "The Liberation Struggle of E.O.C.A.[4] was fully supported by Archbishop Makarios III and by the Church, which it was the most important financial sponsor, as well by the big majority of the Greek population of Cyprus".
> (Lambrou, 2004, p.38)

Greek Orthodox Church's involvement in state issues has its origins back in time, during the Ottoman Empire's denomination. The Christian and Jewish religious leaders, that were living in areas administrating by the Ottoman Empire, were given important privileges through the administrational system of 'millet' (Baraz, 2010, p.1). Christians and Jews were considered, by Ottomans, as "people of the Book" (called Ahl al-Kitab), which means the people who held monotheistic beliefs and accepted the prophets (Ma'oz,

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[4] E.O.C.A. was the name of the Liberation Struggle (1955-1959) of the Greek-Cypriots against the British domination. E.O.C.A. means National Organization of Cypriot Fighters.

1999, p.6). Because of this reason, for professing a monotheistic religion and for accepting same prophets as Ottoman Empire's Muslims, 'were given state protection (called 'Ahl al-Dhimma') (Baraz, 2010, p.1) and enjoyed autonomy in their religious affairs and education (Ma'oz, 1999, p.6). As Baraz (2010, p.1) notes, 'Jews and Christians enjoyed certain privileges under Ottoman Rule that was not granted to minorities in Europe, where Jews and Muslims were often persecuted or held back due to religious prejudice'. In the Ottoman millet system, one religious leader (i.e. rabbi or archbishop), called 'millet-bashi', was acting as an administrative officer and he was acting as a representative for his community to the state (Ottoman Empire) (Baraz, 2010, p.1). For instance, rather than collecting the taxes individually from Christians or Jews, they paid the state collectively, with the religious leader administrating (Baraz, 2010, p.1). 'The millet system allowed the respective communities to enjoy a certain level of administrative autonomy under their representative. The millet leader may have held certain powers to enforce and legislate laws and he also served to plead the causes of his community to the Ottoman government' (Ma'oz, 1999, p.81). Apparently, the extraordinary power given to the religious leaders, during the Ottoman denomination, has encouraged the strong and close relations between Church and State and this strong relation seems to be thriving up until nowadays. An evidence of this strong relation between Church and State, is the constant involvement of Archbishop of Cyprus in the different social, political, educational, economic and other state's issues.

However, one of the strongest evidence of political involvement of the Greek Orthodox Church, was in 1960, when Cyprus became independent and the Republic of Cyprus was declared, with the first president of the new Republic being the Orthodox Archbishop. The fact that a religious leader, Archbishop, was elected as a political leader, indicates once more the impact of the Ottoman millet system and the close relation between Church and State. As Lambrou writes, 'on the 13th of December 1959 the first presidential elections were conducted in Cyprus and Archbishop Makarios III was the winner with 66,85% of the total voting' (2004, p.76). Only a country which has strong religious beliefs and values would choose for a president a religious leader. Archbishop Makarios III was the president of Cyprus for seventeen years, from 1960 to 1977, until his death.

Even nowadays the Archbishop of Cyprus, Chrysostomos II, is still involved continually with the social, political, educational and economic issues of the island. Archbishop Chrysostomos II is always expressing his strong opinions on every issue. This is particularly evident nowadays, with the economic recession in Cyprus being so serious,

as the Orthodox Church supports so many people and children in need in various ways. The Archbishop has even offered an important part of the Church's property in order to help the country to recover from the recession. As Archbishop Chrysostomos said:

> "The Church is willing to help the people in order to come out from the economic recession. We want to assist the development of the country because without development we cannot be improved. The Church of Cyprus will help to achieve this development, to improve the market and in this way, all people will be able to smile again".
>
> (Archbishop Chrysostomos II, 2013, par.5)

Another example of Archbishop's involvement in the educational issues of Cyprus, is the following declaration of him about the Educational Syllabuses:

> "The Christian Orthodox Church of Cyprus must have an opinion on the important issues of Cyprus' and it must play an instrumental role in the development of the Educational Syllabuses, despite the fact that some individuals wish to change or even to abolish the Religious Education subject from the Cypriot schools".
>
> (Archbishop Chrysostomos II,
> Fileleftheros Newspaper, 16th October 2016)

An additional declaration of Archbishop, which indicates his involvement in the education system, is about the abolishment of some religious school holidays (Chrysostomou, 2018). More specifically, in August 2018, Archbishop Chrysostomos II has suggested to education Minister of Cyprus that five religious school holidays should be abolished (Chrysostomou, 2018). Archbishop has made this suggestion as a reaction to Teachers' Union ongoing protest about the teaching hours' reduction (Chrysostomou, 2018). In his (Archbishop's) letter to minister of education, he suggested:

> "We have noticed that few, if any, educators, take advantage of religious holidays for the purpose for which they have been established. Neither they nor their students use the time for religious worship on those days. These days are simply used as holidays" […] "better serve the purpose for which they were set up as public holidays, because if it was a working day, teachers could then take at least some children to church. It will also afford additional time for teaching".
>
> (Archbishop Chrysostomos II, Cyprus Mail, 7th, August 2018)

As it is indicated from the above newspapers' extracts, Archbishop of Cyprus is determined to involve and play a vital role in every aspect of Cyprus' public sphere.

The background of the researcher

I was an undergraduate in the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus, having graduated in 2003 with a Bachelor of Science in Primary Education. Even though my undergraduate degree was on Primary Education, Religious Education has always been my fascination, so during my studies I have chosen to study some optional

sociological courses about the role of religion in society. My particular areas of interest were "Christian Education", "Nationalism and Orthodoxy", "Islam in Contemporary Turkey", "The education of women in Islamic Regimes", "Religion and Magic according to the ideas of Malinowsky" and "Ideology and Education".

Therefore, I decided to continue my postgraduate studies in Religious Education, in order to have the opportunity to carry out research and gain in-depth knowledge of subjects related to my interest. For this reason, I undertook a Master's degree in Religious Studies at the Department of Education and Professional studies at King's College London, completing in 2005. At King's College London, my tutors' main areas of interest at that time were the critical religious education, diversity, plurality and multiculturalism. My exposure to their ideas has perhaps influenced, to some extent, my personal views regarding the teaching of RE.

I am currently employed by the Cypriot government, at the Ministry of Education and Culture, as a primary school teacher. For ten years I worked in Greek-Cypriot primary schools and for four years I was working as a teacher in Greek schools in North London, teaching Greek as a second language, employed still by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus. At the moment, I am working as a primary school teacher in Cyprus.

In reflecting upon my previous experience and background I am aware of the potential impact of this research project on the teaching of Religious Education in Cyprus. As was previously mentioned in this chapter, RE in Cyprus needs to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of the island, and therefore the development of a more multicultural and multi-religious RE is necessary in order to promote the smooth integration of the immigrants within Cypriot society and the peaceful coexistence of the different religious and ethnic groups of Cyprus (Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins).

The structure of the thesis

This thesis firstly looks at the importance of Religious and Multicultural Education within the primary school curricula of Cyprus and it considers the different approaches to RE. Next, it examines the RE subject within the school curricula of Cyprus and demonstrates how RE is taught in other European countries. The important relationship between RE and Citizenship education is also examined. In this PhD research it was also important to investigate pupils' attitudes and knowledge about different religious, spiritual, social, cultural, moral and health issues in order to discover if there were any prejudices and bias

towards any of these issues. For this reason, diagnostic questionnaires were given to primary school pupils and afterwards, a religious education booklet was developed as a supplementary material for teaching RE. This booklet aimed to achieve two purposes: to develop both the interreligious and the intercultural dialogue between pupils. Therefore, the teaching topics included in the booklet were intended to promote cultural awareness among pupils and to help them build up a positive attitude towards multiculturalism. More specifically, the teaching topics included in the booklet were: teaching about world religions and beliefs, meeting the religious minorities-communities of Cyprus, and teaching about religious spiritual, social, cultural, moral and health issues. The booklet was used as a teaching resource for two years for primary education pupils, and subsequently their attitudes and knowledge were assessed again with questionnaires to discover if any change had occurred after the teaching content of the booklet. The main purpose of the thesis is to provide some suggestions about how RE in Cyprus can develop interreligious and intercultural dialogue between pupils and how it can contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

More specifically, Chapter I, *Religious Education in Cyprus and within the European context*, primarily looks at Religious Education within the school curriculum of Cyprus. Firstly, it briefly outlines contemporary Cypriot society and afterwards, it considers the aims of humanity and religious education subjects as they are analyzed within the educational curricula of Cyprus. Additionally, it describes in detail the content of Religious Education textbooks and then offers a brief critique on the textbooks' teaching topics. In 2011 the existing curriculum framework was altered, not only for RE but for all subject areas. Prior to this change, students had been using the exact same textbooks for RE for the last fifteen years (1996-2011). During those fifteen years, pupils' views, attitudes and values related to RE were developed based on the previous syllabus' aims. These views, attitudes and values have influenced pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development despite the changing of the curriculum framework. The second part of this chapter is devoted to analyzing the approaches to RE in Europe and how it is taught in some European and post-socialist countries, such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. It was important, for this project, to take a look at the way RE is taught throughout Europe and the curricula frameworks of other European countries. This was necessary considering the fact that Cyprus is now part of the European Union and other countries within the E.U. share similar visions regarding the importance of RE as well as similar educational goals.

The second chapter, *Research Design and Methodology*, outlines the methodological approach and research design applied in this research work. The chapter explains in detail the overall research purpose, problem and questions of this thesis. It describes the qualitative and quantitative data of this research, as well as the research sample: pupils, teachers and religious educators. The chapter further explains the research questionnaires and protocols used for this research: introductory, diagnostic and final questionnaires and the pupils', teachers' and religious educators' interview protocols. The purposes of the interviews, the type of interviews used, the reasoning behind choosing interviews as a research method and the criteria for developing the research questions are also explained. The Religious Education booklet's philosophy, aims and teaching topics are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter III, *Relating Citizenship and Religious Education*, considers the relationship between citizenship and religious education. At first, it defines the terms 'education', 'religion', 'religious education' and 'theology'. Then, it examines the various philosophical approaches to religious education: confessional, phenomenological, critical, implicit, post-modern and spiritual religious education. An evaluation is offered as to how these approaches influence the development of educational curriculums and especially religious education curricula. The chapter further looks at the historical background of citizenship education and then moves on to define 'citizenship education' and the different approaches to it. Subsequently, it reveals the role and importance of citizenship education within the European context. The aims of citizenship education, as they are included in the national curriculum of Cyprus and the citizenship education textbooks, are also discussed. In addition, this chapter focuses on the difficulties in assessing citizenship education. Finally, it considers and suggests how citizenship and religious education can be integrated effectively into the teaching process.

The focus in chapter IV, *Findings and Analysis: Religious Education in the Greek-Cypriot schools*, is on the presentation of the primary school pupils', teachers' and religious educators' views and attitudes towards RE, as compiled from the introductory, diagnostic and final questionnaires and from the open-ended personal interviews. It looks into how pupils' answers are related to each other and how these answers have changed after the teaching input of the RE booklet. Pupils', teachers' and educators' views are then categorized in theme groups and analyzed in detail.

Finally, Chapter V, *Discussion and Conclusions: Promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*, summarizes the key findings of this PhD research, but also provides some suggestions about how RE in Cyprus can develop

interreligious and intercultural dialogue between the pupils and how it can contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These suggestions are focused on four aspects: on the emerging relationships between Religious and Citizenship Education, balancing between Confessional and Multicultural Education, Assessment for Learning and on the role of Ministry of Education of Cyprus.

CHAPTER I
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CYPRUS
AND WITHIN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter is divided in two parts; the first part looks at the RE as a subject within the school curriculum of Cyprus, and the second part presents the RE teaching within the European context. Firstly, part one presents the aims of humanities and RE subjects as they are analyzed within the educational curricula of Cyprus. Subsequently, it describes in detail the content of RE textbooks and goes on to present a brief critique on the textbooks' teaching topics. In 2011 the existing curriculum framework was reformed, not only for RE but for all subject areas. Prior to this change, students had been using the exact same textbooks for RE for the last fifteen years (1996-2011) and therefore pupils' views, attitudes and values related to RE were developed based on the previous syllabus' aims. Initially, even though the RE curriculum had changed, the new RE textbooks had not yet been completed, and therefore pupils were being taught both from the old textbooks and supplementary material from the new ones, which were partially completed. The aim of the Curriculum Authorities was to gradually develop the new RE teaching material. RE textbooks are written (2013), the new teaching material has been completed and so the new RE textbooks are now exclusively used by teachers.

Part two of this chapter is devoted to the analysis of different approaches to RE in Europe and specifically, how it is taught in European countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. It was critical that this thesis examined the way RE is taught throughout Europe, and the curricula frameworks of other European countries, because Cyprus is a part of the European Union, and thus shares with them similar visions regarding RE; and these countries also face similar challenges, such as high unemployment and immigration.

Part I: Religious Education within the school curriculum of Cyprus

RE and Cypriot society

As mentioned previously, in the introductory chapter, there is a growing number of immigrants arriving and residing in Cyprus and this influx has resulted in a growing number of foreign pupils - about 6672, which represents 13.4% of all primary school

pupils (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013, par.3) had enrolled in Greek-Cypriot schools (The Republic of Cyprus, 2004; Cyprus' Parliament, 2004). These pupils mainly originate from Greece, Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania and Syria (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013, par.2). All these immigrants live across Cyprus but particularly in areas where house rentals are very cheap; therefore, some schools have more immigrant children attending than others. During the school year 2012-2013, 84.18% Greek-Cypriots, 0.24% Turkish-Cypriots, 0.21% Maronites, 0.11% Armenians, 0.01 Latins and 15.26% 'other' foreigners attended primary schools in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013, par.1).

As a result of the growing number of foreign pupils enrolling in Greek-Cypriot schools, the Ministry of Education has introduced some multicultural education measures for supporting them. For instance, there are "measures for language support, which refer to the learning of Greek as a second language and measures for the smooth integration of groups with different culture identities" (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013, par.5).

RE in Cypriot schools is being taught to all registered pupils. It is a compulsory subject for pre-primary (ages 4-6), primary (ages 6-12) and secondary (ages 12-18) educational stages (Tapakis, 2003, p.13), and it is usually taught twice a week. In secondary education, it is taught by teachers who are subject specialists in RE and theology; and they are mainly specialists in the confessional teaching of Orthodox Christianity (Educational Service Commission, 2013, par.1). In pre-primary and primary education, RE is taught by class teachers, who are not subject specialists in theology or RE.

Despite the fact that Orthodox RE is a compulsory subject for all pupils, parents who profess a different religion have the legal right to remove their child from RE lessons, if they wish to do so (Penintaex, 2012, par.6). Also, parents whose religious and philosophical beliefs and values are opposed to the RE teaching aims also have the legal right to remove their children out from RE lessons (Penintaex, 2012, par.6). However, the majority of parents, even those who are not Orthodox Christians, choose not to withdraw their children from RE lessons. Their most usual request is for schools to excuse their children from participating in church visits for collective worship or from participating in daily prayers.

The aims of the humanities subjects in the national curriculum of Cyprus

In Cyprus' national curriculum, RE (alongside history, geography, environmental studies and citizenship education) is classed as a humanity subject (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.119). The national curriculum of Cyprus states that:

> "The aim of the humanities subjects is to study the life of human beings in society and in the natural and artificial environment. They (humanities subjects) also aim to explore the religious, historical, cultural, political, economic, environmental and social life of Cyprus and other countries".
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.119)

However, the most important aim of humanities subjects is the social development of the pupils and so the national curriculum of Cyprus demonstrates a variety of aims that will contribute to the promotion of this aim (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.119-120). To begin with, humanities subjects should promote pupils' love for their country and for the natural environment, and should encourage them to respect their national, cultural and religious identity (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.119f). In addition, humanities subjects should enhance pupils' spiritual and emotional strength in the "struggle" against Turkish troops, and aim for the reunification of Cyprus which was divided following the Turkish invasion (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.119f). Another purpose of humanities subjects is to bring about an understanding of the variety of religious and national traditions. In this way, pupils will be enabled to respect the different religions and nations, to be open to other viewpoints and thus able to live in a pluralistic society (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.119f). Basic democratic principles should also be promoted; the respect of human rights, the respect of all people regardless their social, religious or economic status and the development of a fruitful dialogue between people (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.119f). Humanities subjects must also promote citizenship and nurture interest in social and political problems. At the same time, it should encourage individuals to use effectively their knowledge and experience to deal with everyday problems and to develop their critical thinking (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.119f). A further aim is the development of moral and universal values and to help individuals become liberal, responsible and democratic citizens, not only in their own country, but within universal society as well (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.119f).

Finally, the syllabus includes some strategies for the effective teaching of humanities subjects (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.121f). Specifically, it indicates that teachers should use the natural, artificial and social

environment for the teaching of humanities subjects (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.121f). At the same time, pupils must be actively involved in the learning process in order to discover new and authentic knowledge (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, pp.121f).

The Religious Education Syllabuses: The 'old' and the 'new'

From the autumn of 2009, educational reform of all teaching disciplines was undertaken in Cyprus, which was eventually completed in 2016. This educational reform was intended to set new teaching aims for all disciplines, to introduce new teaching topics and to issue new textbooks and teaching material. The main rationale for this reform was to update, improve and modernize the Greek-Cypriot educational system and also to promote pupils' critical thinking and their multicultural education.

RE reform was an integral and essential part of this process. New aims and topics were set for the subject and supplementary teaching material was issued as well. Even the name of the subject changed, from 'Christian Orthodox Education' to 'Religious Education'. However, as the research for this PhD thesis was started in 2007, before the educational reform process began, it was important to consider both pre-reform and post-reform RE syllabuses. This also explains the title of the thesis: "Religious Education in Cyprus: The Educational Reform: Between the Previous and the Present Curriculum". The previous syllabus was active for about fifteen years, from 1996-2009, so it was important to look at its aims, ideology, principles and values.

The previous/ 'old' RE syllabus (1996-2009)

The aims of RE within the national curriculum of Cyprus

In the previous National Curriculum of Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128), the subject of RE was entitled 'Christian Orthodox Education' and its main purpose was stated as:

> "Pupils have to realize that they are members of the Christian Orthodox Church, to learn the fundamental truths of Christianity and to experience a loving relationship with God".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128)

In addition, the national curriculum of Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128), demonstrated a variety of aims for 'Christian Orthodox Education'. To begin with, pupils should be enabled to understand the presence of God throughout history and the ubiquitous presence of God as an answer to the fundamental questions of human existence. Children must also experience the existence, the teachings and the work

of Jesus Christ, as the highest contribution of God towards the multilateral fulfilment of mankind. In addition, children needed to experience the Christian way of love towards all people, regardless of color, religion and race and they should be introduced to the basic aspects of other religions and to evaluate them critically. In this way, they will be able to understand and respect the religious beliefs of other people.

Another aim of 'Christian Orthodox Education' was to provide pupils with the skills to appreciate the meaning of the Orthodox ethics, traditions, prayer and to make these things part of their everyday life. Pupils should also appreciate the beneficial influence of the Orthodox Church to the development and progress of civilization. 'Orthodox Education' also develops children's understanding of collective worship within the Church, and encourages them to participate in all the different forms of worship. Children have to respect the value and importance of the various ecclesiastical monuments. Finally, 'Orthodox Education', needs to promote children's responsibility for the continuation of the Orthodox faith and way of life (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128).

The teaching topics and the textbooks of RE

The RE textbooks are written by committees appointed by the government of Cyprus or by the government of Greece. Greek-Cypriots, historically, belong to the Greek nation so Greece is considered to be their 'motherland'. Therefore, in some occasions, Greece and Cyprus share common educational aims, policy and teaching books. As noted by Karagiorges (1986, p.152), the Greek-Cypriot community has looked towards its motherland, Greece, when developing its educational policies and therefore, the Greek-Cypriot education was focused on the Helleno-Christian Orthodox ideology (Koutsellini, 1997, p.400). The textbooks were also often issued and published in Greece, reflecting, in this way, the connection between the Greek-Cypriot community and Greece motherland. The textbooks issued and published in Cyprus are printed at the expense of the Ministry of Education and Culture and they are distributed to every pupil in every public school of Cyprus free of charge. Teachers teach from these textbooks almost exclusively, because their content is mandated in the national curriculum of Cyprus' guidelines and objectives. Also, for each year group there is a teacher's handbook, which provides some guidelines for the teaching of RE lessons. These handbooks also include the objectives of every lesson and some teaching strategies.

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Specifically, there are six textbooks for the teaching of RE in primary schools, one for each year group, since in Cyprus there are six year groups within primary education. The textbook for year one is called 'With the Grace of Christ: Orthodox Christian Education' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1999, pp.6f) and some of the teaching topics included in this textbook are: 'The holy sacrament of Eucharist', 'The birth of Jesus Christ', 'Prayers in the church', 'Love makes everything beautiful'.

The textbook for year two is called 'With the Love of Christ: Orthodox Christian Education' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1998a, pp.5f) and this textbook includes: 'The meaning of love', 'Love in the family', 'The church', 'The meaning of the Orthodox icons', 'The meaning of forgiveness', 'Virgin Mary', 'Love for the natural environment'.

The third RE textbook, for year three, is called 'God in our life' (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006a, pp. 5f). This textbook includes teaching topics such as: 'The cross: The symbol of Christianity', 'All the children of the world are brothers and sisters', 'True friends enrich our life', 'The good Samaritan', 'The Passions of Christ', 'The annunciation of Virgin Mary'.

The textbook for year four is called 'The course of our life' (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006c, pp. 5f) and a few of its teaching topics are: 'The prophets', 'John the Baptist', 'Christ is healing sick people', 'The Christian Orthodox missionary in Africa', 'An Ethiopian traveler becomes a Christian'.

The fifth textbook is called 'Christians in the struggle of life' (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006e, p.4) and some of the topics included are: 'Sharing our belongings with other people', 'Apostles continued Jesus' struggle', 'A sinful thief that became a Saint', 'Our mistakes can be fixed', 'A struggle for protecting our natural environment', 'Struggle for justice', 'Many children are starving to death every day', 'Fasting: Preparing for Easter'.

The textbook for the sixth and final year of primary school is called 'Searching for the truth in our life' (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006g, p.126) and a few of the topics are: 'Christ has said: I am the truth', 'Gospels: The book of truth', 'Religious schisms damaged the unity of all Christians', 'Heresies damage the truth', 'Meeting the Roman-Catholic Christians', 'Meeting the Protestant Christians', 'The worship of Jews in the Synagogue on Saturdays', 'The prayer of Muslims in the mosque on Fridays'. The teaching topics of the RE textbooks are

presented in a more detail in 'Appendix B: Religious Education Textbooks in Cyprus (Previous Syllabus)' on page 430 of this thesis.

Finally, as stated by Tapakis (2003, p.54), the teaching topics of RE in Cyprus can be divided into two categories: the hagiographical category and the child-centered category. The former category includes topics from the Bible (Old and New Testament), the history of the Orthodox Church, the lives of Saints, hymnography, which includes the hymns of the Christian Orthodox Church and hagiography, which is the art of creating Christian Orthodox icons for the Church (Tapakis, 2003, p.54). The latter category, the child-centered one, consists mainly of topics from children's everyday life, as well as topics from Christian Orthodox poetry and literature (Tapakis, 2003, p.54). Tapakis (2003, p.54) explains that both the hagiographical and child-centered categories relate RE with children's own life experiences.

Examples of some teaching topics included in the RE textbooks

Within the RE textbook of the sixth year of the primary school (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.97-110) there is a chapter on "Heterodox and other believers". On the one hand, 'heterodox' refers to people who are Christians but not Orthodox, plus those from any Christian denomination other than Orthodox, such as Roman-Catholics and Protestants. On the other hand, 'other believers' refers to people who are not Christians, such as Muslims or Jews. Therefore, this chapter of the RE textbook includes topics such as 'Meeting Roman-Catholic Christians', 'Meeting Protestant Christians', 'The worship of Jews in the Synagogue on Saturdays', 'The prayer of Muslims in the mosque on Fridays'. It is possible, perhaps, that these four religions were chosen to be included in this chapter because are the ones most prevalent in the Greek community.

The main aspects of each religion or denomination (Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and Islam) are described briefly. These aspects are mainly related to the historical background of each religion or denomination, the way they worship (i.e. prayer, liturgy), the place of worship (i.e. church, synagogue, mosque), holy objects of each religion (i.e. Ark, Holy Chalice, menorah), holy books (i.e. Gospels, Koran, Torah), prophets of each religion (i.e. Mohammed, John the Baptist), important people for each religion (i.e. priest, rabbi, archbishops, imam), pilgrims, holy places (i.e. Vatican, Jerusalem, Mecca, Medina), religious art (i.e. the architecture of the churches and temples, statues, Byzantine icons, hagiographical tradition), religious music (i.e. hymns, psalms, ecclesiastical music, musical instruments), religious ceremonies (i.e. holy sacraments), religious symbols (i.e.

cross, half-moon and star), religious celebrations (i.e. Ramadan, Christmas, Easter) and important religious people (i.e. Jesus, Mary, Pope, Mohammed, Allah, God).

A brief account of each of the four religions/denominations follows in this chapter. The focus on Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and Islam has been presented in this part of the thesis because it is important to show how the different Christian denominations and other religions were treated within Greek RE textbooks.

The first of the textbook chapters is about Roman-Catholic Christians, and focuses on the Vatican and Saint Peter's Cathedral. It refers to Roman-Catholic churches in Greece by describing their history, worship and religious traditions (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.98ff). Then it compares an Orthodox and a Catholic church. It starts by comparing the icons in a Roman-Catholic and an Orthodox church and explains that Roman-Catholics have their own hagiographic tradition, which it is influenced by secular art. The Byzantine hagiography has a special style and theology and it expresses the Orthodox spirit in a unique way. It then goes on to compare the Catholic priests' appearance with that of Orthodox priests, by stating that Catholic priests have no beard, do not wear their clerical robes outside of church, and that it is forbidden for them to marry. Subsequently, it contrasts the Catholic and the Orthodox rituals of Holy Communion. Giving of the Host, a sacramental bread, is the Catholic Holy rite of communion where the Catholic priest places it in the mouth of the Catholic person. However, Orthodox Christians receive "the body and blood of Jesus", as the Holy Communion is called, directly from the holy chalice on a spoon. This chapter also compares ecclesiastical music of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. The ecclesiastical musical instrument is a special type of organ which is used in all Catholic and Protestant services; the most well-known music composers have composed unique ecclesiastical melodies specifically for performance on the organ. Finally, it discusses the places in Greece where Catholics usually live; most Greek Catholics live on the islands of Cyclades, the Ionian Islands and in Athens (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.98ff).

Occasionally, the textbook indirectly presents Orthodox Christianity as being more spiritual and Catholicism as more secular. For instance, the Roman-Catholic hagiographic tradition is implied as being secularized, whereas it suggests that the Orthodox tradition is more spiritual. The textbook mentions that the Catholic hagiography is inspired by secular ideas, while Orthodox hagiography is inspired by spiritual ideas.

The second chapter is about Protestantism, focusing on its basic characteristics and identifying the basic differences between Protestantism and Orthodox worship and

tradition (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.101ff). Firstly, this chapter describes the interior decoration of a Protestant church and states that this is very simple and plain, because there are no icons or temples; the only symbol present is the cross. It criticizes the Protestant churches for having simple and plain decoration, whereas the Byzantine-Orthodox church's decoration is described as luxuriant and spiritual. It goes on to argue that the Byzantine church provides a spiritual exaltation for Orthodox believers/worshippers. Secondly, the basic and most important aspect of Protestant liturgy is the pastor's preaching and the only source of the Christian faith is the Bible (Gospels). Thirdly, the holy sacrament of the Eucharist is conducted only once a month, whereas in the Orthodox tradition the holy sacrament of the Eucharist is conducted in every liturgy (which means several times a week). Fourthly, music and ecclesiastical hymns are very important for every Protestant liturgy. It refers to Martin Luther who had played an important role in the enrichment of the liturgy with music accompanied by the ecclesiastical-musical instrument (organ). Fifthly, in every church seat (pew) there is a special small book for every Protestant and it includes hymns and psalms for every occasion. Thus, when the organ begins to play, all Protestants open the book and sing together. At the end of this RE lesson, it is pointed out that for many decades the Orthodox and the Protestant Churches have been involved in a continued dialogue which contributes to the rapprochement of the two Christian groups (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.101ff).

It is clear that the aim of the textbook is to compare and contrast Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity and to implicitly criticize the former and thus devalue its beliefs and religious tradition. For instance, it implicitly denigrates the decoration of the Protestant churches by saying that this is very 'simple and plain' compared to the Byzantine-Orthodox churches' decoration which is 'luxuriant and spiritual'. This is somehow misleading because some Protestant churches may be indeed very simple and plain in style, but others, for example some Church of England churches, can be very ornate. Also, indirectly, it criticizes the Protestant holy sacrament of the Eucharist because it is conducted only once a month, whereas the Orthodox services are conducted several times a week. Another issue about this chapter in the RE textbook is that the half of the content is devoted to describing in detail the differences between Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism. Apparently, the aim is to illustrate that the Orthodox tradition is richer, more luxurious and more spiritual than the Protestant one.

The third chapter is about Judaism and it focuses mainly on the internal design of a Synagogue (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.104ff). In a

Synagogue there is the "case" or the "Ark", in which the holy scriptures are placed. There is also the "step" or "pulpit" which is located in the center of the synagogue, and the person who reads the Torah or recites the prayers stands on this "step". In addition, there is the seven-light lamp (menorah) which is one of the most important holy objects in every synagogue. It is mentioned that Jews hold most of their celebrations within the synagogue (although some are also celebrated in their homes) but they also celebrate every Saturday because it is their holy day (Sabbath). Finally, the Jewish service is divided into three parts: reading of the scriptures, preaching, and praying, which is accompanied by psalms (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.104ff).

It is clear that in the case of Judaism, the textbook does not compare it with Orthodox Christianity or devalue its traditions. The reason for this might be because Orthodox Christianity is always in 'competition' with both Catholicism and Protestantism, since all three of them are Christian denominations. However, in the case of Judaism, which is a completely different religion, any such comparison might be perceived as pointless.

The last chapter in the textbook is about Islam and describes the Muslim temple, which is called a mosque. The textbook describes a mosque in detail as being a big square room inside and having minarets outside, which can be seen from far away because they are very tall towers symbolizing the only and true God. The number of minarets varies from mosque to mosque; they can have anything between one to six minarets. The muezzin is the person who calls to Muslims from the minaret five times a day in order to pray. Another important part of the mosque is the 'source', which is located in the yard of the mosque, where all Muslims wash themselves before they enter the mosque for prayer. There is also the prayer room, which is covered with decorated carpets inspired by Islamic art. The interior of the mosque is decorated with Arabesque and verses from the Koran. Islam prohibits the use of any icons or pictures, and so there are no images in the mosques. The mosque also has a pulpit which is used by the imam when he addresses believers/worshippers. Finally, there is the Mihrab, which is a recess in the wall indicating the direction to Mecca, the Muslims' holy city. Muslims are obliged when they pray to turn their bodies towards Mihrab/Mecca (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.107ff). After describing the mosque, the textbook goes on to present Muslims' prayer and worship. It explains that Friday is Muslims' holy day so they gather in the mosque in order to pray. The imam stands in front of them and recites verses from the Koran. The worshippers pray behind the imam (who is also facing Mecca) and at the same time, they perform rhythmic prostrations; the Islamic prayer has a strictly ritual rhythm.

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The mosque is the most important part of Muslim worship, especially during their religious celebrations such as Ramadan. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast and maintain self-discipline; it is forbidden for them to eat or drink anything between sunrise and sunset (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, pp.107ff).

Here again, as noted in the case of Judaism, the textbook does not compare Islam with Orthodox Christianity and nor does it devalue its traditions. The textbook approaches Islam descriptively without any attempt to criticize or denigrate it in any way. Implicit criticism is only evident on one occasion, when the textbook refers to the most impressive mosque - the Blue Mosque in Istanbul – where it argues that the architectural style of the Blue Mosque "was really influenced by the Byzantine ecclesiastic architectural style" (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, p.108). This indirectly suggests that the Blue mosque is the most impressive one because it is architecturally influenced by the Byzantine ecclesiastical style.

In conclusion, the RE textbooks in Cyprus approach other religions in a skeptical way and their aim is to inform students about just a few Christian denominations and other religions in terms of how these differ from Orthodox Christianity. At the same time, they encourage students to criticize and reject the other religions by using Christian Orthodox arguments against them (Philippou, 2010, p.22) and the Orthodox view is taken as unquestionably normative. At many points, the textbooks present, indirectly, Orthodox Christianity as the only true and normative religion and all other religions as not normative. It is clear that the way other religions are presented in the RE Syllabus contributes to the sense of "us" (Greek Orthodox) and "them" (non-Greek-Orthodox) (Latif, 2014, p.57).

The very title of the subject "Christian Orthodox Education" in the previous RE syllabus can be considered as problematic because it indicates that the specific teaching was focused mostly, or even exclusively, on Orthodox Christianity. At the same time, looking at the teaching topics in the RE textbooks, it is evident that they were achieving some of the purposes of the syllabus, such as enabling pupils to realize that they are members of the Christian Orthodox Church, to learn the fundamental truths of Christianity, to experience the person, the teachings and the work of Jesus, to appreciate the Orthodox ethics, tradition and prayer. However, it seems that they do not respond to the rest of the aims, such as being introduced to the basic aspects of other religions and understanding and respecting the religious beliefs of other people. Children were only introduced to the basic aspects of other religions when they reached the sixth year of primary school, so were not efficiently prepared to understand and respect the religious

beliefs of other people. It is not possible to achieve this aim by only teaching about other religions a few times and especially at this age (12 years old). In order to achieve the understanding and respect towards other religions and beliefs it is necessary to teach them from an early age and more consistently.

At the same time, the RE textbooks present other religious traditions in mostly descriptive terms; they mainly describe other religions' way of worship, holy places, symbols, important people, pilgrims, ceremonies, religious celebrations, religious art and music. The coverage of Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and Islam seems to provide a rather simplified and monolithic account of each of them and occasionally even gives inaccurate information. It neither aims to promote students' critical thinking nor encourages them to investigate and gain knowledge on their own. The textbooks mainly include two types of exercises/assignments: knowledge and research based. The exercises that are based on knowledge aim to teach pupils some information about the religions. For instance, 'What are the basic teachings of Roman-Catholicism?' (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, p.100). The exercises which are based on research request pupils to independently find some information about a specific topic. For example: 'Do research and find some information about some important Protestant people, such as Martin Luther King, Albert Schweitzer, Desmond Tutu' (Ministry of National Education and Religions, 2006g, p.103). Therefore, there are not any assignments that will promote students' critical thinking skills.

Another issue is the title of the chapter itself: "Heterodox and other believers". On the one hand, the word 'heterodox' comes from the Greek word 'eterodoxos' (ετερόδοξος), which is composed of two other words 'eteros' (έταιρος) and 'dogma' (δόγμα). 'Eteros' means the 'other' and 'dogma' means 'doctrine'. Thus, 'heterodox' are the people who profess or belong to a different religious doctrine. On the other hand, the word 'Orthodox' comes from the Greek word 'orthodoxos' (ορθόδοξος), which is composed of the words 'orthos' (ορθός) and 'dogma' (δόγμα). 'Orthos' means the most correct/right/truthful/most accurate one. Therefore, 'Orthodox' means the one who believes the most correct doctrine. It seems that the book clearly separates Orthodox Christianity from other religious doctrines. However, this gives pupils overt messages; i.e. that the Orthodox tradition is superior to any other Christian denomination or religion. There is Orthodox Christianity and the 'others', who are different to us because they come from a different culture and have huge cultural and religious differences.

Moreover, there is not a variety of lessons about the different non-Christian religions; only about Judaism and Islam. The presentation of only two non-Christian

religions is not adequate for a chapter called 'Heterodox and other believers'. At the same time, it presents four monotheistic religions without mentioning the phrase 'monotheistic religions' and it does not present any polytheistic religions, such Hinduism.

An additional problem of the chapter 'Heterodox and other believers' is that it fails to study the religions as a phenomenon because it is constantly aiming to prove that Orthodox Christianity is superior and therefore more valid than the other religions. In particular, the other Christian doctrines, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, are not explained so they can be understood in their own terms, but instead are explained in terms of Orthodox Christianity, because the textbook constantly compares them with Orthodox Christianity. A more effective method for teaching the different religious traditions is the phenomenological approach to RE, because it describes and analyzes some common religious phenomena that can be found across a number of religious traditions, such as sacrifice, prayer and worship (Chantepie de la Saussaye, 1887 in Barnes, 2001, p.2). According to Swann (1985, p.518) the phenomenological approach to RE would enable all pupils, regardless their religious backgrounds, to understand and appreciate the meaning of religious belief, the religious dimension of human experience and the variety of faiths in the contemporary society. This is very important in order to meet the needs of an increasingly plural society which values the cultural and religious traditions of all its members.

The present/new RE syllabus (2009-today)

After thirteen years of using the old syllabus, a new RE syllabus was developed. The departments of Primary and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus had, over previous years, been developing the new Educational Curricula of Cyprus. In the spring of 2009, they established "working group-committees" in order to reform the Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education Curricula.

Those groups constituted of different kind of educators: primary and secondary teachers, school inspectors and university professors from Cyprus and Greece (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). The university professor from Greece was called in order to coordinate the Educational Reform in Cyprus. Undoubtedly, the connection between the Greek-Cypriot community and Greece 'motherland' is strong regarding religious and educational issues. Besides, as it was mentioned earlier in this thesis; Greek-Cypriots have looked towards their motherland Greece in developing their educational policies (Karagiorges, 1986, p.152). Thus, the Greek-Cypriot education was

focused on the Helleno-Christian Orthodox ideology (Koutsellini, 1997, p.400), with the Orthodox Church playing a great role in promoting Greek nationalism (Latif, 2014, p.54).

Other groups were also involved in the curriculum reform, for example parent committees, educational committees, politicians, social and religious organizations (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). At this point, it should be mentioned that I myself, as a primary school teacher and as an employee of the Ministry of Education, also participated in the "working group-committee" for reforming the RE syllabus.

My experience in developing the new Religious Education Syllabus of Cyprus

This part of the thesis aims to present my personal experience when participating in the educational "working groups-committees" for developing the new RE syllabus in Cyprus. As a primary school teacher myself, and as an employee of the Ministry of Education, I contributed to the "working group-committee" for reforming the RE syllabus.

In February 2009, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus invited primary and secondary education teachers to participate, as volunteers, in the development of the new Educational Syllabus. They invited teachers who had special knowledge, expertise and teaching experience on one of the different teaching disciplines, for instance Mathematics, Linguistics, Religious Education, History, Geography, etc. However, not too many applications were submitted by teachers willing to participate in the development of the RE syllabus. In fact, only ten teachers from the primary education sector volunteered, plus another ten from the secondary sector. Therefore, all applications were approved and about twenty teachers, from both Primary and Secondary Education sectors, joined the teaching committee for developing the new RE Syllabus.

Initially, the two groups, from primary and secondary education schools, met together twice and were subsequently separated to start working in the development of the new RE syllabuses. Both of the groups had academic guidance from a Religious Education Professor. This professor worked for University of Cyprus and he taught trainee primary teachers how to deliver RE lessons. Thus, his role was to guide the two groups in the development of the new RE syllabus and especially in the design of lesson plans for every age group.

Confessional Vs Multicultural Approach

During the first few meetings, the members of the group were somewhat confused because they did not know where to start; they had not been given clear guidelines. Also,

there was some tension within the group since there was division between those supporting a confessional, conservative and theological approach to RE and those who were supporting a more sociological and multicultural approach. The professor tried to ease this tension and remain impartial, while also trying to balance the two groups. However, from the outset of these meetings, the professor announced that he had received instructions from the main curriculum committee that RE teaching had to remain mainly confessional, but that some multicultural topics should be added too. Thus all participants within the working groups were told to work towards that aim; to develop a confessional RE syllabus that included some multicultural additions.

Developing the new Curriculum

Within the group there was also some additional tension around the theories of curriculum development. One of the secondary RE teachers, who has a PhD in curriculum development, insisted that the new RE syllabus should be based on scientific curriculum development theories. She argued that the development of the new educational curriculum of Cyprus should have been based on the different theories of curriculum development and that those theories and methodologies had to been taken into consideration when developing the new syllabus. According to her, relevant references, bibliography and literature about the curriculum development should also have been taken into consideration. Another important issue, according to this teacher, was to study and be familiar with the RE syllabuses of other countries. However, it seemed as if the head of the group, the university professor, and many other educators constantly ignored her suggestions and concerns. Therefore, the new RE syllabus was being developed without any consideration of curriculum development theories, as the professor instructed us to start writing the new Syllabus' aims immediately without taking into consideration any guidelines for developing a curriculum, as the secondary education teacher had been suggesting. It must be also mentioned that, neither any curriculum development theory had been taken into consideration, nor any discussion about the European Court of Human Rights/United Nations Human Rights Council was made. Therefore, the New Syllabus has been developed without taking into consideration any scientific/academic theory or Human Rights' principles. As a result of all these, the teachers-members of the group, did not feel confident writing the RE aims for the new Syllabus because they had no experience or academic knowledge in doing so. The only academic knowledge most of them had was from their batchelor degree, where they studied a subject called "Methodology and Curriculum" which focused on the theories of curriculum

development. However, this was not enough to help or enable them to write aims for the new Syllabus.

Another surprising idea, came from one of the members of the group, a primary education inspector, who was a theologian as well, who suggested that just maintaining the previous RE syllabus and books and making a few changes, by merely reforming them slightly, would be enough for the new Syllabus to be ready! As he claimed, there was no need for any significant changes to RE because the syllabus had to remain confessional anyway. Thus, only a few minor changes and a minimal amount of multicultural enrichment would be required, according to him. Even though many of the educators supported this theological approach to RE and insisted on keeping the RE syllabus strongly confessional, eventually some of the suggestions of the rest of the participants, who supported a more sociological and multicultural approach to RE, seemed to be taken into consideration. For instance, I myself suggested that the new RE syllabus should include the different religious communities-minorities of Cyprus, such as Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Latins and Armenians. I can see that this is now included in the year three of primary school, whereas it appeared nowhere in the previous one. In addition, other topics that I had personally suggested, such as the teaching of different religious traditions, about wealth, poverty, peace and war, were also included.

While the new Syllabus was being developed, there were constant (once a week) face to face meetings and communications (via email) between members of the groups, even though the last part of the process, when the Syllabus was being finalized, was the absolute responsibility of the university professor, who completed it by himself. In the very early stages, each one of the member teachers took the responsibility for writing the aims for one age group of the primary school. Therefore, the previous syllabus and textbooks, for that specific year group, were taken in order to change the previous aims, added new ones, deleted some, made new suggestions about the teaching aims and materials, but also kept some of the aims the same. As mentioned above, there were constant (once a week) face to face meetings and communication between the members of the group, in order to exchange ideas, materials and to avoid repeating the same aims in every age group. All participants in the group tried to set completely different aims for each age group, so pupils would learn something new every year. During the meetings, it was often realized, that some teaching topics should not be included in a specific age group because children were not mature enough to understand the specific knowledge. Also, while the teacher-members were writing up the new aims, they were emailing them

to the university professor, who provided them with feedback and offered suggestions as to how these could be improved or changed.

There was a certain lack of coordination between the different working groups working on the different teaching subjects; there was very little communication or contact between them. The RE working group never met with any other group to share any ideas or thoughts about the Syllabus; every group worked separately from the others. They never even met up with the central committee, and nor were they ever issued with a single guideline or instruction directly from it. Only once did the Minister of Education attend one of the group's meetings, and it was just for a few minutes; and he only asked if they were encountering any problems or obstacles in developing the new Syllabus. Our group complained about the time available and that it was very difficult for teachers to work in schools and at the same time to work on the development of the new curriculum. The group members requested him to ask Parliament to approve and provide some teacher positions within the Ministry of Education as educational secondments, in order to have extra available time to develop the new curriculum. In this way, teachers would work only on the development of the new Syllabus and they would be more effective. This request was finally (and fortunately) heeded by the Parliament and the Ministry of Education, and in May 2010, which granted approval for five teachers, one for each teaching discipline, to be seconded and to work full time on the development of the new Syllabus.

Finally, when everybody had finished writing the aims for each age group, the professor was responsible for collating them and finalizing the RE syllabus. However, he announced that he was not going to finalize the text by himself but with the assistance of another professor from a Greek university. As a result, no one knows for certain what happened; who finalized the Syllabus, who helped or who influenced the final syllabus. As far as the aims that I had personally submitted were concerned, they had definitely been modified from my original ones, but many of the topics I had suggested were included in the final RE syllabus.

Developing and piloting the new RE booklets

In September 2010, after the RE Syllabus had been officially finalized, another procedure began: that of developing the new RE textbooks. In order to achieve this, teachers were required to contribute. Therefore, the Ministry of Education again invited primary and secondary education teachers to participate voluntarily in the development of the new textbooks. They invited teachers who had special knowledge and teaching experience in

the different teaching disciplines, i.e. Mathematics, Linguistics, RE, History, Geography and preferably, the teachers who had already worked before on the development of the Syllabus. These teachers were likely to be more aware of the new syllabus' aims, so therefore it would be easier for them to develop the new textbooks. I volunteered again to join groups to help develop the new RE textbooks.

A similar procedure was followed; all the educators were separated once more into different groups, and each of them chose an age group to work on. Each of them was required to develop a teaching unit with about five-six lesson plans. Myself, I chose year two of primary school and my own unit was about: "Friends with everybody". This unit contained six lessons: "Friends across gender", "Friends across race", "Friends across religion", "Friends across skin color", "Friends across biological characteristics" and "Friends across civilization". The aim was for all members of the group to create a small booklet for each age group which would include different units/lesson plans. The booklet would be taught to students as supplementary material; this new material was going to be taught alongside the old one. This meant that teachers would continue to teach from the previous textbooks but would also teach additional content from this booklet.

However, before publishing and distributing these booklets to schools, it was necessary to pilot them and see whether they were effective in teaching and to identify whether any changes were required. This piloting procedure was named, by the Ministry of Education "Grafting Procedure", similar to the horticultural technique whereby tissues from one plant are inserted into those of another so that the two sets of vascular tissues may join together. Likewise, the Ministry of Education was aiming to "insert"/introduce the teaching aims and techniques of the new syllabus into those of the previous syllabus, so that the two syllabuses join together and the educational reform is thus achieved gradually and smoothly. This "Grafting Procedure" had a dual purpose; firstly, to pilot the new teaching material and to identify if there were any problems and secondly, to introduce the new RE Syllabus gradually and smoothly to both teachers and pupils.

While the members of the group were working on the piloting/"grafting" procedure, they were requested by the Ministry of Education to teach one lesson in their own class and an inspector, whose specialism was RE, would come and observe it in order to identify any problems and give her own feedback with suggestions for improvement. Also, other teachers could come and observe the lessons and give their own opinion and comments as well.

According to Fotiou (2011), the philosophy upon which the new RE syllabus was based was that every RE lesson should aim to teach pupils about meanings, attitudes

and social skills. Therefore, every lesson should include one contemporary social problem and one theological text (Fotiou, 2011). Also, every lesson should be enriched with supplementary material such as texts about contemporary problems (e.g. about famine in the third world), hymns, poems, songs, pictures, icons, art work (e.g. 'Guernica' by Picasso), painting, photograph, video, map or anything else that is relevant to the topic of the lesson (Fotiou, 2011). A theological text is a compulsory element to be included in every RE lesson and it can be either a text from the Bible or an interview with a priest or texts taken from a religious book written by a priest/monk/religious person (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2011, 2012a-f). Other texts can be extracts from a newspaper, a fairy-tale, an environmental text, a historical text, texts written by important people (i.e. Martin Luther King), texts written by priests or Saints or interviews with important people (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2011, 2012a-f).

In the early stages of the educational reform, before the new textbooks were finalized, these RE booklets were used in the interim by the teachers as a supplementary material. This means that teachers were teaching RE from the previous RE textbooks (the ones presented in Appendix B: Religious Education Textbooks in Cyprus (Previous Syllabus) pages 408 of this thesis) but at the same time, they were using materials from the new RE textbooks as supplementary teaching material. Finally, the new RE booklets were completed and finalized, and they are now used exclusively for the RE lessons; the old books are no longer in use.

The new RE textbooks include extra topics that were not included in the previous ones. They are also written in a very clear way; they are well organized and very easy to use, giving clear and understandable guidelines to both teachers and students. The textbooks are also available electronically and online in the Pedagogical Institute Website. Any hymns, poems, songs, pictures, icons, art works, paintings, photographs, videos, maps are all also available electronically and online. The teachers and pupils only have to switch on their computer and everything is there available for them, either to read it, present it, print it out or download it.

The aims of RE within the new educational curriculum of Cyprus
The general purpose of the new RE syllabus is that:

> "The pupils to be taught about the Orthodox Church, the main world religions and the religious phenomenon".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013)

Firstly, pupils are required to learn about 'The Orthodox Church' and about God, humanity and the world, through the Christian faith, tradition, symbols, holy scriptures

and monuments, as well as the history of the Orthodox Church through culture and civilization (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). Pupils should realize that God is related to the freedom and love of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity represents 'me, you and the other person' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). In the society of God every person is unique and irreplaceable and each is connected with everyone else in society (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). The new syllabus uses the traditional doctrine of the trinity to convey a message of universal neighbourliness and to underline the uniqueness of each human individual. The Holy Trinity is revealed through the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ and it can be experienced by humans within the Orthodox Church (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). Humans can experience truth, freedom and love only when they are connected to God, to their selves, to their fellow people and to nature (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013).

Secondly, pupils should be taught about 'The different religious traditions' and their relations to God, humans, faith, tradition, symbols, holy scriptures and monuments, as well as the history of the different religious traditions and their relation to culture and civilization (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013).

Thirdly, pupils should be taught about 'The religious phenomenon' and humanity's effort to answer to their existential questions (where do they come from? Where are they heading to? Is there life after death?) and to be attached to the supernatural (God) (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013).

It seems that the new RE syllabus is still focused primarily on the teaching of the Christian Orthodox doctrine, so the teaching content remains mostly confessional rather than multicultural. However, a confessional RE is difficult to deliver to a multicultural society, to promote the vision of reconciliation and reunification of the island of Cyprus and the peaceful coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

The teaching topics and the textbooks for RE

The present RE syllabus focuses mainly on six themes. Firstly, it includes topics about developing the Human Personality, such as 'I am happy that I am living', 'Myself', 'I realize my mistakes and I change myself', 'Mistakes can be fixed: The repentance', 'Selfishness'. Secondly, it includes topics about developing and improving Family Relationships, such as, 'My parents', 'My brothers and sisters', 'My grandparents'. Thirdly, it is also focused on Friendship: 'My classmates love me and play with me', 'I forgive others and we become friends', 'I share my things with everybody'. Fourthly, it

includes topics about Environmental Issues: 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from the environmental pollution', 'Taking care of the animals and other creatures', 'Environmental pollution'. Fifthly, Theology and Orthodox Christianity is another theme of the new curricula, which includes topics such as 'The baptism', 'Virgin Mary', 'The birth of Jesus Christ', 'The Holy Liturgy', 'Life in a Monastery', 'I understand myself better when I communicate with God: Prayers, Fasting'. Lastly, the present curricula includes topics on Diversity and Multiculturalism: 'All of us are different, all of us are united: Men and women', 'All of us are different, all of us are united: yellow, black and white people', 'Friends with everyone: Beyond the biological differences', 'Beyond the religious differences', 'Beyond the cultural differences', 'Beyond the gender differences', 'Beyond the racial differences'.

The topics included in the textbooks are mainly about famine, discrimination and the isolation of people with special needs, ill and disabled people, the missionaries of the Greek Orthodox Church in Africa, racism, problems due to war, peace, environmental pollution, violence and hooliganism, gender equality, Justice, Hymns, personal freedom, personal limits and responsibilities, addictions (i.e. television, computer games, internet), personality improvement, illegal child work (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

More specifically, the textbook for year one is called 'The joy of our life' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012a) and some of the teaching topics included in this textbook are: 'I am happy that I am living', 'I am friends with everybody', 'Life full of love', 'Love means to share with others', 'Christmas', 'Easter'.

The textbook for the second year is called 'The joy of love' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012b) and a few of the teaching topics included in the textbook are: 'Friends with everyone: Beyond the biological differences', 'Beyond the religious differences', 'Beyond the cultural differences', 'Beyond the gender differences', 'Beyond the racial differences', 'A big family: The Church', 'Our father: God', 'Our brother: Jesus', 'Our mother: Virgin Mary'.

For the third year, the textbook is called 'All of us are brothers and sisters' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012c) and some of the teaching topics included are: 'The baptism of Jesus', 'We respect others' differences', 'Children with special educational needs', 'Our brothers: The Saints', 'My neighbors: Different and Loved', 'My neighbors: Turkish-Cypriot and Latins', 'My neighbors: Maronites and Armenians', 'My neighbors: A foreigner moves in my neighborhood'.

For the fourth year, the textbook is called 'We struggle to be good' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012d) and its teaching topics are: 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from famine', 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from social rejection', 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from wars', 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from the environmental pollution', 'Mistakes can be fixed: The repentance', 'God always is helping us: The parable of the Merciful Father'.

The textbook for the fifth year is called 'Life full of love' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012e). Some of the teaching topics included in this textbook are: 'Guidelines for authentic life: The Ten Commandments', 'Authentic life: The Gospels', 'Life in a Monastery', 'Selfishness', 'Taking care of the animals and other creatures', 'Environmental pollution', 'Technology in our life', 'The freedom', 'Equality between men and women', 'The peace'.

Finally, the textbook for the sixth year is called 'Our way throughout love' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012f) and some of its topics are: 'All of us are different, all of us are united: Men and women', 'All of us are different, all of us are united: yellow, black and white people', 'The Protestants', 'The Jewish', 'The Muslims', 'The truth: The Symbol of the Christian Orthodox belief', 'The social isolation', 'The famine', 'The war', 'Environmental problems', 'The Roman-Catholics', 'I understand myself better when I communicate with God: Pray and Fasting'. The teaching topics of the new RE textbooks are presented in a more detail in 'Appendix C: Religious Education Textbooks in Cyprus (Present Syllabus)', on page 433 of this thesis.

To sum up, the teaching topics included in the new RE textbooks are mainly focused on Orthodox Christianity. Despite the fact that the phrasing of the topics seems more multicultural and less confessional, the content of the textbooks remains mainly confessional. It looks like a camouflage; behind the multicultural phrasing of the titles, the confessional texts are hiding. However, it seems that the new textbooks include fewer teaching topics on Orthodox Christianity than the previous ones. They still focus mostly on Orthodox Christianity, by including Bible's parables, Saints' biographies, Christian worshipping practices but at the same time, the new textbooks focus on different teaching topics such as human personality, family relationships, friendship, environmental issues, Orthodox Christianity, diversity and multicultural issues. At least, every school year includes topics for promoting the respect on diversity and multiculturalism; so there is some effort to introduce children in multicultural RE from an earlier age. Nevertheless, one aspect remains the same; that is the focus on Orthodox Christianity. It is compulsory in every RE lesson to include a theological text, so everything starts from a theological

text and then the supplementary material (pictures, videos, songs) follows/supports this text. Even the new RE textbooks' cover pages are decorated with Christian icons, Saints and churches. Therefore, the new RE syllabus remains confessional, by promoting Orthodox Christianity as the normative religion.

Reactions from the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, groups and organizations regarding the new RE syllabus of Cyprus

Unofficial and off-the-record reactions were expressed while the new RE syllabus was being developed but nothing official was reported. Informally, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus expressed worries about the future of RE as a subject. More specifically, the Church was worried that the Ministry of Education might decide to change RE from a compulsory lesson to an optional one, and this raised a heated reaction from the Church, which wanted the lesson to remain compulsory. Another demand made by the Church was that RE should remain confessional and focus mainly on Orthodox Christianity. For instance, one priest complained to a member of the group that secondary school pupils must be taught about the Christian Orthodox liturgies and that it was wrong to exclude the teaching of the liturgy from the secondary education RE syllabus. Therefore, unofficially there were many complaints and reactions, mainly from the Church, about the new format of the RE syllabus. Even though the suggested change represented a moderate reform of the RE subject, with the incorporation of a limited amount of material into the existing syllabus, it seems to have produced serious reactions from some members of the Orthodox Church. A more radical reform would certainly have caused more serious reactions from these confessional groups.

Does the new RE syllabus and textbooks meet the expectations of a multicultural society?

The new RE syllabus and textbooks do not meet expectations of a multicultural society. The RE curriculum in Cyprus has remained confessional and this is not appropriate for the contemporary Cypriot society. Cypriot society has become multicultural, and thus a more multicultural RE is needed in order to respond to the demands of modern Cypriot society. Anyone reading the aims of the new RE syllabus will receive the impression that is more like a Sunday school than a school subject. It is apparent that it is aiming to promote and further develop Christian Orthodox ideas, ethics and practices. If a child wants to learn in more depth about his or her own religion, about liturgies, Saints, religious celebrations, then they can attend Sunday school at church, or even go to the

church more often. It is not a school's responsibility to indoctrinate pupils into a specific religious tradition. RE should focus mainly on the teaching of moral and social issues, as well as on the teaching of the different religions and worldviews, because these are more interesting and appropriate for children.

Training for teachers

Soon after the development of the new RE syllabus and textbooks, it was necessary for all teachers to be informed, educated and trained about the new syllabus. Therefore, the Ministry of Education arranged seminars and workshops for all teachers, primary and secondary, for all teaching subjects. The University professor, who was responsible for the development of the RE Syllabus was also responsible for the teacher training for RE. He arranged seminars and workshops about the new RE syllabus and booklets. Even though only four seminars and workshops were organized, they were very helpful; however, perhaps more seminars and workshops would have been helpful for RE teachers, because they would then have had the opportunity to be informed and trained in more depth about the new syllabus and textbooks.

In some of these seminars, the members of the working groups presented some of the new teaching topics. In one of the seminars, in March 2011, I myself presented a session about the teaching of Judaism in year six of primary school. Many teachers had chosen to attend to the seminars and they subsequently reported that they were very pleased because they found them to be helpful. They specifically commented on how the university professor of RE explained everything very clearly, and was not theoretical at all; on the contrary, he gave examples from everyday life and he illustrated everything in a practical rather than a theoretical way. Teachers were also pleased and satisfied about the new RE textbooks. They found them very helpful for their lessons, because they give clear guidelines and everything is available online so they are accessible for every teacher and pupil.

Reactions from the Teachers' Union

The Teachers' Union in Cyprus has disagreed several times with the Ministry of Education regarding the Educational Reform's policies. As a result of this, from May 2010 the Teachers' Union proclaimed restrictions and measures against the Ministry of Education, and primary education teachers were not allowed to attend any seminar or workshop arranged by the Ministry of Education. The reasons for these restrictions were mainly economic and educational.

In May 17th 2010 the Teachers' Union sent a letter to the Ministry of Education with demands about the new syllabus (POED, 17 May 2010). This letter included the following. Firstly, the new syllabus should have been developed at the same time with the new school timetable; syllabus and timetable should be developed together (POED, 17 May 2010, par.2). The working groups that were developing the new syllabus did not take into consideration the new school timetable and for this reason, problems occurred between the teaching hours and the context of the new syllabus (POED, 17 May 2010, par.7). Secondly, alongside the new syllabus other important issues should have been taken into consideration, such as new assessment methods for teachers, teachers' training, violence and bullying in schools (POED, 17 May 2010, par.3). Thirdly, the teaching subjects included within the new Syllabus are not well structured and lack coherence; it is clear that they were developed separately from each other. All teaching subjects should have been developed following the same structure and organization (POED, 17 May 2010, par.6). Fourthly, the Teachers' Union was demanding that the New Syllabus Committee take into consideration the suggestions made by teachers or other groups about the improvement of the new syllabus (POED, 17 May 2010, par.8).

Many teachers and other social groups provided written suggestions to the central committee regarding the new syllabus. These suggestions were concerning how the new syllabus could be improved and what changes could be made (POED, 17 May 2010, par.8). It would also appear that on many occasions, the suggestions made by the teachers who were working in the groups had not be taken into consideration and this meant that in some lessons the context was rather more academic, using academic terms and difficult for pupils to understand (POED, 17 May 2010, par.14). Another issue related to teacher training on the new syllabus. The teachers' union suggested that the teacher training should be more organized and that it should take place during school working hours; and that the Ministry should also arrange for supply cover while the teachers were away from school doing compulsory training (POED, 17 May 2010, par.9). In addition, the new syllabus and textbooks should be piloted firstly in a few schools, then be assessed in order to identify any problems, before being improved and finally introduced in all Cypriot schools (POED, 17 May 2010, par.10). Also, the new Syllabus and the new textbooks should be developed at the same time and the teaching aims for each class should take into consideration the pupils' age and their previous knowledge (POED, 17 May 2010, par.12-13).

Additionally, the teachers' union raised some extra issues and demands from the Ministry of Education. Firstly, the union reacted against the decision of reducing teachers'

wages and excluding trade unions from involvement in governments' decisions regarding the Cypriot economy (POED, 25 August 2011, par.1). Secondly, the union demanded five extra teaching hours per week for the 'Consolidation'[5] lesson (POED, 27 August 2010, par.3) and rejected the Ministry's suggestion for 'zero homework', arguing that pupils should be given homework for further practice at home (par.8). Thirdly, it was asked that the school timetable should include thirty-five teaching periods per week and the lessons on 'Life Education' should be taught twice a week (par.3). Finally, the union requested for providing class teachers with one extra hour for their lessons' preparation (par.4) and it demanded a sufficient training for teachers regarding the new syllabus, in order to achieve its smooth implementation within schools (par.6).

For all the above reasons, the teachers' union proclaimed restrictions and measures against the Ministry of Education: teachers were not allowed to attend any training regarding the new syllabus and textbooks. However, this had a negative effect on the progress of the Educational Reform and on teachers' training; since teachers were not allowed to attend in any training, they could not be informed about the new Syllabus, and this meant that Educational Reform could not be progressed properly. No educational system can achieve successful reform if its teachers are not trained or informed. The seminars would have been very useful for teachers because they would have had the opportunity not only to be informed about the new Syllabus, but also to be given the opportunity to solve any problems, share their teaching experiences with others, ask questions and receive advice and useful guidelines.

Finally, some members of the teachers' union had disagreed with some aspects of the new RE Syllabus. These teachers' union members were mainly belonging to left wing parties or having left-wing political views. More specifically, these members expressed their preference for a more multicultural RE and suggested a full reformation of the syllabus with a variety of contemporary teaching topics. Ministry officials had consider, up to some point, these teachers' union members' views and few of the teaching topics that they had suggested were included within the new RE syllabus.

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[5] It was a new type of a school subject where pupils were receiving some extra support regarding the subjects of Linguistics and Mathematics or even to complete their homework.

Problems in developing the new RE syllabus

As in any educational reform, Cyprus also experienced some problems in developing the new syllabus. These problems were mainly focused on issues such as lack of time, economical problems, political issues and educational issues.

The first problem that members of the group faced while developing the new syllabus was the time; there was just not enough time because they had to complete a large amount of work within a short time. Everything was rushed because the new government elected in 2008 wanted to complete the educational reform before 2013 when the next elections would take place. The teachers who were working on the development of the new curriculum were teaching in schools during the morning, and in the afternoon they had to work on the new syllabus' development. All of them were excited and willing to work on the new Syllabus, but the time given was simply not enough. They had to work as volunteers, and thus no overtime was paid to them. It might have been understandable if they were required to do this for a short time, but this went on for a long time. Eventually, in 2011, they requested that the Minister of Education second some teachers in the Ministry Education offices (curriculum authorities) during the development of the syllabus. This would ensure that those teachers were granted paid educational leave from the school, and would be able to work full time at the Ministry of Education for this specific purpose. This concession was very promising because teachers would be given adequate time to work on the new RE textbooks.

Another problem raised was that the educational reform was based on the grounds of political expediencies. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, everything was rushed because the new government elected in 2008 wanted to complete the educational reform up before 2013 when the next elections were due. The government was aiming to complete the educational reform so they would be able to present it as an accomplishment during the election campaign. This gave us the impression that they wanted to finish the reform as soon as possible; but how can anyone achieve a successful educational reform in such a short time, and under so much pressure?

An extra problem for Educational Reform was the economic recession in Greece and Cyprus. The Cypriot government could not provide sufficient financial support for the reform, but in order to accomplish such wide ranging educational reform, sufficient financial support by the government was crucial. Without adequate financial support, neither the development of a new Syllabus, the issuing of new textbooks, the development of educational websites, nor the organization of seminars or workshops were possible. Therefore, due to the economic recession, the new RE textbooks had to be developed

separately. However, the fact that the new RE syllabus was completed without the textbooks having been developed made the job much more difficult for teachers. Teachers had been given the new aims of RE, but they did not have the textbooks in order to apply the new aims. Not all teachers had enough time or sufficient knowledge to develop appropriate RE lessons based on the new aims.

A fourth problem was the fact that whereas the educators participating in the working committees had adequate qualifications and appropriate pedagogical knowledge, they were not trained efficiently and professionally before they started working on the development of the new Syllabus. In other words, they had the educational knowledge, but not the training. Seminars and workshops were necessary to help the educators gain the necessary qualifications and guidelines for devising educational reform. Through seminars and workshops they could have been informed about the different theories of curriculum development as well as on the theories of teaching RE. The Ministry of Education failed to provide educators the rationale and vision behind developing the new syllabus and it also failed to recognize that educators needed to be trained in order to enable them to devise the new syllabus.

Finally, a further problem that the younger members of the group experienced while participating in the working committees was that of inter-generational differences. During the first meeting of the group, some of the older inspectors and teachers doubted younger teachers' abilities and knowledge. They appeared to consider their knowledge to be more appropriate, and they themselves to be more able, because of the length of teaching experience they had.

The teachers' views about the implementation of the new curriculum

University professors Dr. Stavroula Philippou, Stavroula Kontovourki and Eleni Theodorou have all studied the teachers' views about the implementation of the new curricula in primary schools (Kontovourki, Philippou and Theodorou, 2013). Their research was based on one to one and group interviews with primary school teachers. These interviews aimed to examine teachers' attitudes, views and professionalism towards the implementation of the new curricula in primary schools (Kontovourki, Philippou and Theodorou, 2013, p.291).

The findings of the interviews revealed four attitudes among the teachers about the introduction of the new curricula in Cyprus": "Teachers as Spectators, as Receivers, as Implementers and as Reformers" (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.298).

Teachers as Spectators

Teachers who were identified as spectators were those who did not really engage in the reforming and implementing activities of the new syllabus (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.299). They distanced themselves from any responsibility for reforming and implementing the new syllabus in schools. During the interviews, these teachers described the whole procedure of reforming the curricula as something they were distanced from; they talked in terms of it being something that was happening to them, but which was organized by others, and they (the spectator-teachers) were just the observers (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.299). It seemed that the spectator-teachers were just passive viewers, waiting for others (i.e. the Ministry of Education, school inspectors, university professors, etc.) to reform and implement the new syllabus and to find ways to inform and train the teachers. They neither wanted to take any responsibility themselves, or to develop their professionalism regarding the new syllabus (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.299). Furthermore, the spectator-teachers considered themselves as people who did not have an important role to play in the procedure of reforming and implementing the syllabus, and for this reason they offered few comments and criticisms regarding the context of the new syllabus and their expectations for the Educational Reform (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.300). A small extract from an interview with a spectator-teacher is presented below:

> "The aims of the Syllabus were placed by the state, by the government. The implementation of these aims depends on the university professors who are responsible for each teaching subject. The only thing that teachers can do is to view the different assignments and how a subject can be taught in the classroom. The theory and the aims of the Syllabus were based on the university professors' views, on the Syllabuses of other countries and on the Cypriot society, as people say..."
>
> (Interview 5)
> (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.300)

Teachers as Receivers

The receivers' views were similar to the spectators' ones. In the same way, they believe that the Syllabus' reform is the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Education, school inspectors and university professors, and that the Ministry of Education is also responsible for teachers' professional development (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.300). The receivers, in a similar way to the spectators, did not see development of the new syllabus as an opportunity for reflection or self-development, but considered the Ministry of Education to be responsible for doing this, thus placing the responsibility on others and not on themselves (Kontovourki et al., 2013, pp.300f). The difference between the

spectators and the receivers was that the latter were critical the Ministry of Education regarding the teachers' training and workshops (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.301).

> "They should train the teachers (...) but in a different way, not just theory. They should do workshops and the teachers who involved in the Curriculum development should give lessons to us (...) I want to become a pupil in the classroom, to sit in front of the desk and observe a lesson given by a specialized teacher. To see how this teacher teaches the specific lesson (...), what he teach and how he teach it".
>
> (Interview 2)
> (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.301)

The receivers were looking for a 'recipe' and specific guidelines of how they can teach. They wanted to attend special workshops, where the more specialized teachers or university professors would provide them with the necessary 'tools' and 'recipes' in order to become able to implement the new Syllabus in their own classroom (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.301). They were acting as passive learners who were seeking to gain the essential knowledge from the more specialized, more educated ones: the university professors, the school inspectors and the specialized teachers working on the Syllabus' development (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.301). The receivers were denying their own professionalism and experience as teachers, and lacked the self-confidence to work on their own; they were reliant upon others' support (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.301).

The receivers also expressed a sense of stress and insecurity because the new syllabus was requesting teachers to work independently from the textbooks and to use extra teaching material which would be more interesting to children. This caused receivers considerable stress as to how they could choose the right and appropriate material (Kontovourki et al., 2013, pp.301f).

> "When you teach something from a textbook and the parents do not like it, then nobody can say anything to you because this book is published by the Ministry of Education. In this way nobody can judge you, nobody can criticize you. Especially in Cyprus where there are so many political issues, nationalistic and historical issues. What can we do for this if there is not any book to teach from it?" (Interview 32)
> (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.303)

Teachers as Implementers

The implementer-teachers seem to be the complete opposite of the spectators and receivers regarding their views on the implementation of the new syllabus (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.304). Importantly, they considered that the study and training about the new Syllabus was their own responsibility. They considered themselves to be responsible for self-education, and so they stated that they often read the material uploaded on the

Ministry of Education website, the material uploaded by the Teachers' Union and other Unions, instructions from their head teachers and other teachers within their schools, and they also read any articles which were published regarding the Educational Reform and about attending seminars and workshops (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.304).

The criticisms made by the implementer-teachers were centered on the qualifications of the people who were delivering the training on the new syllabus (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.304). The implementer-teachers seemed to doubt the abilities and qualifications of the university professors and school inspectors who were training the teachers. They suggested that neither the professors nor the inspectors had the relevant teaching experience to train the teachers, simply because they had not worked in primary schools (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.304). They complained that the training provided by the professors and inspectors was not enough and that it was mainly based on theoretical aspects and not on practical issues (Kontovourki et al., 2013, pp.304f).

However, despite the criticisms made by the implementer-teachers, it seems that they acknowledged the importance of the training. They regarded the training as a way to liaise with other teachers, and to exchange and share views on the new syllabus (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.305).

> "For sure all of us at the beginning we were thinking of all these educational changes and of all the problems. But when we meet with others and we talk, we have the chance to apply questions and to clarify any misunderstandings or solve any problems. We have the opportunity to express our own thoughts and to interact with other teachers, with professors and inspectors. It is important for us to give our opinion on the development of the new syllabus and feel that we contribute on this as well. Because, end of the day, it is the class teacher who is going to implement the new curriculum".   (Interview 23)
> (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.305)

Teachers as Reformers

The reformer-teachers are the polar opposite to the spectators-teachers. The reformer-teachers were happy about the Educational Reform and they saw it as both a challenge and an opportunity for the development of their professionalism and creativity (Kontovourki et al., 2013, pp.308f).

> "Personally, I am not stressed because of the Educational Reform. On the contrary, I am excited about it because I am doing something different, something that children like. I teach in the sixth class of the primary school and many times when I teach from the books, the children are keep complaining that it is not interesting for them. But when I use material outside the book, I can see that they are happy and enjoy it a lot. Thus,

personally, I like this change, to teach something extra. It is a challenge for every teacher who is willing to improve".   (Interview 32)
(Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.309)

However, even though the reformer-teachers were happy and excited about Educational Reform, they also expressed criticism (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.309). Their criticism focused mainly on the fact that the Ministry of Education was trying to force the implementation of the new syllabus using non-appropriate trainers, such as university professors, school inspectors etc. They claimed that these people were not teachers and that they had no experience in what was happening in the schools (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.309). Reformers demonstrated self-confidence; they believed in their own abilities and professionalism and they considered themselves to be scientific practitioners able to cope with the challenges of Reform (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.309).

> "All teachers we know what the Curriculum is. The Curriculum is the guide not the textbook. Therefore, teachers can follow the Curriculum and they can enrich their teaching with other activities, not from the book. This is a chance for the teachers to do something different, something more interesting".   (Interview 21)
> (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.310)

In conclusion, the above research revealed that the majority of the teachers were identified either as Receivers or as Implementers and the minority of them either as Spectators or Reformers (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.299). It is somehow encouraging that so many of the teachers were identified as implementers, because this shows that they considered themselves responsible for their self-education regarding the new syllabus and were not just passive viewers in the curriculum development. Also, they have acknowledged the importance of the training, which they saw as a way to liaise with other teachers, and to exchange and share views on the new syllabus (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.305). At the same time, however, they doubted the abilities and qualifications of the university professors and school inspectors in training the teachers, as they considered them to have inadequate teaching experience to train the teachers, simply because they did not work in primary schools (Kontovourki et al., 2013, p.304).

Comparing the previous and the present RE syllabus

Comparing the new and the previous RE syllabuses, it is apparent that there are some obvious changes, such as the renaming of the lesson which changed from 'Christian Orthodox Education' to 'Religious Education'. The change of name is significant because it explicitly states the main purpose of the subject. Whereas the previous name; 'Christian

Orthodox Education', indicates that the aim was to teach mainly about Orthodox Christianity, the new name; 'Religious Education', reveals that the aim is to teach a variety of RE topics, including about different world religions. Another important change is the main aim of the lesson. In the previous syllabus the aim was that "pupils have to realize that they are members of the Christian Orthodox Church, to learn the fundamental truths of Christianity and to experience a loving relationship with God" (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128), in the present syllabus it is now required that the "pupils to be taught about the Orthodox Church, the main world religions and the religious phenomenon" (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). This is a substantial change because it suggests a shift from a completely confessional approach to a less confessional one and, to some extent, to a more phenomenological and multicultural approach. The previous syllabus focused exclusively on Orthodox Christianity but the new one, although still focusing on it, also includes teaching about other world religions.

Additionally, the new Syllabus focuses on a variety of teaching aims and includes different teaching topics which cover many educational purposes: topics which aim to develop pupils' personality, such as human personality, family relationships, friendship, environmental issues, Orthodox Christianity, diversity and multicultural issues. In the previous syllabus, this variety of topics could not be found as the syllabus mainly focused on Orthodox Christianity.

Moreover, when comparing the two RE curricula, the previous and the new one, it is obvious that there is a large amount of topics on Theology and Orthodox Christianity. It seems that the new syllabus includes fewer teaching topics on Orthodox Christianity than the previous one. The majority of the teaching topics of the previous syllabus were focused on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity. However, the new syllabus still focuses mostly on Orthodox Christianity by including Bible parables, Saints' biographies, Christian worshipping practices such as, fasting, praying, holy Eucharist and others.

However, despite this, the new syllabus also includes a focus on multiculturalism, whereas in the previous syllabus, there were school years that did not even include one topic on multiculturalism. At least in the new one, every school year includes topics for promoting the respect on diversity and multiculturalism; and there is some effort to introduce children in multicultural RE from an earlier age. The teaching topics, for years one and two, such as 'I become friends with everybody despite their gender, culture, religion, civilization and skin color', show that the new RE syllabus aims to develop pupils' multicultural skills, to some extent, and to enable them to respect and understand different cultures and religions from an early age.

In the present syllabus the teaching guidelines are clear and understandable, compared to the previous one where the guidelines were confusing. Alongside the main RE syllabus a very useful guide booklet is issued to assist teachers to teach the lesson effectively. This booklet guides teachers, in a very comprehensible way, how to teach the lesson by giving instructions and teaching ideas. This is very helpful, particularly as the teachers who teach RE in primary schools are not RE specialists and therefore they do not have the scientific knowledge to teach the specific lesson; so this booklet is very useful in assisting them to teach RE lessons more effectively.

Another advantage of the new RE syllabus and textbooks is that every RE lesson approaches each topic in different ways, by including a variety of resources such as theological texts, maps, videos, pictures, art works, poems, songs and photographs. All this supplementary material makes it easier and more interesting for pupils to assimilate the new knowledge, even though the majority of the lessons are still theological. Also, the teaching topics take into consideration pupils' experiences and interests, such as computer games, football, everyday relationships with their families and friends, whereas the previous syllabus did not engage with the children's interests.

Regarding the textbooks' exercises, it is again evident that there has been an improvement from the previous to the present RE textbooks. The previous ones included mainly knowledge and research based exercises, whereas the present syllabus includes knowledge and research based exercises as well as some critical thinking exercises. The knowledge based assignments aim to assess pupils' knowledge about different information, such as "what does Apostle Paul say about our freedom?" In this assignment, pupils need to recall the information from memory, or look into the theological text and find the answer there. The research based assignments encourage the pupils to search for the answer. For instance "Find some information about Martin Luther King". In this assignment, children will need to search somewhere, either in Google or in an encyclopedia, or maybe ask someone in order to find some information about Martin Luther King. Another example of a research question is to "Ask your grandparents about their experiences during the 1974 war in Cyprus". In this assignment, too, the children need to search for the answer – in this case, by interviewing their grandparents. The critical thinking assignments, on the other hand, are intended to develop pupils' thinking skills and their critical thinking, and to encourage them to support their opinion. One example of a critical thinking assignment is "Which things in our everyday life can gradually became bad habits and eventually become addictive? And how can we prevent these addictions from developing?".

However, one aspect remains the same in both the previous and the present syllabus and textbooks, and that is the focus on Orthodox Christianity. It is compulsory in every RE lesson to include a theological text, so everything starts from a theological text and then the supplementary material (pictures, videos, songs) follows/supports this text. Even the new RE textbooks' covers have Christian icons, Saints and churches. Therefore, the new RE syllabus remains confessional; both the previous and the present textbooks imply that Orthodox Christianity is the normative religion, that holds the only truth and that it is the best for someone to follow.

The new RE teaching topics seem to respond effectively to the aims of the new RE syllabus, which were "to enable pupils to be introduced in the Orthodox Church, the world religions and the religious phenomenon". The new textbooks include topics about the Orthodox Church, the world religions and the religious phenomenon, even though the majority of the topics still focus mainly on Orthodox Christianity. It would seem that the textbooks respond successfully to the first aim of the syllabus, which is the students should be taught about the Orthodox Church, Christian faith and the Holy Scriptures; the majority of the topics are focused on Orthodox Christianity, such as parts from the New Testament, from the Holy Bible, Jesus' Parables and Miracles. RE in Cyprus has remained confessional even after the reform and the effort made to give it a more multicultural approach.

It is apparent that RE in Cyprus is aiming to teach religion (Orthodox Christianity) and not to teach about religion. The distinction between teaching religion and teaching about religion is important when teaching the RE subject in schools. On the one hand, teaching religion means to promote 'a particular faith perspective'; it is a faith-based exploration which intends to 'promote a particular theological worldview and to encourage practitioners to articulate values and adopt practices that are consonant with that set of beliefs' (Moore, 2010, p.4). On the other hand, teaching about religion, intends 'to introduce students to the vast array of faith-based expressions that exist within and between traditions with the aim of deepening understanding about religious diversity and the roles that religion plays in political, economic, and cultural life across time' (Moore, 2010, p.4).

Religious studies scholar James V. Panoch (1974 in Moore, 2010, p.7) has developed a set of guidelines for distinguishing between teaching religion and teaching about religion (Moore, 2010, p.7). Firstly, religion in school should be approached in an academic and not in a devotional way (Panoch, 1974 in Moore, 2010, p.7). Secondly, the school should encourage students' awareness of religions and not to push students to

accept any specific religion (Panoch, 1974 in Moore, 2010, p.7). Thirdly, 'the school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion' (Panoch, 1974 in Moore, 2010, p.7). Fourthly, the students should be taught about the several religious views but they should not be imposed with any particular view (Panoch, 1974 in Moore, 2010, p.8). Fifthly, the school should educate students about all religions, but it should not promote or degrade any religion (Panoch, 1974 in Moore, 2010, p.8). Lastly, the school must inform students about the various beliefs but must not conform them to any particular belief (Panoch, 1974 in Moore, 2010, p.8). According to Moore (2010, p.8), these guidelines provide a helpful sketch for guiding educators in the public schools of how to teach about religion. RE in Cyprus is aiming mainly to teach about Greek Orthodox Christianity since is focusing on the doctrines of this specific religion. Only few of the teaching topics (i.e. the ones about world religions and Cypriot communities) included within the new RE textbooks are aiming to teach students about religion.

Overall, the new RE syllabus has remained confessional primarily because the Orthodox Church and some religious groups were not yet ready to accept a non-confessional RE. Despite the fact that many multicultural topics have been added to the new syllabus, a significant part of it has remained confessional by focusing mainly on Orthodox Christianity. However, it is not only the Orthodox Church which is reluctant to countenance change; most societies in general would only accept a gradual reform of an RE syllabus, and any sudden changes would be likely be rejected and to fail. This is particularly true in the case of Cypriot society, which is a small, traditional and conflicted society highly unlikely to readily accept the idea of a non-confessional RE syllabus.

Part II: RE within the European context

> "Cyprus, a country at the margins of (traditional geographical definitions of) Europe, where historically "East" and "West", Islam and Christianity have met, interacted and opposed each other and characterized by extreme nationalisms that have long divided its society, must now respond to demands of revisiting its meanings of citizenship as a condition of its EU membership".
>
> (Philippou, 2007, pp.68f)

It is important to take a look at the way in which RE is taught throughout Europe and the curricular frameworks of other European countries. This is necessary considering the fact that Cyprus is now part of the European Union and, together with other countries within the EU, share similar visions regarding the importance of RE, as well as similar educational goals. Undoubtedly, there are many advantages that Cyprus can receive and

enjoy from its membership in the EU. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus in the 1996 Primary Education Syllabus emphasized the need to prepare children for the "European Orientations" (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.13). But is Cyprus responding to the demands of its EU membership, regarding the way that RE is being taught?

It is also important to look at the way RE is taught throughout Europe because for thousands of years Cyprus had many close bonds to the European world; many European conquerors passed through Cyprus, including the British, Venetians, French, Greeks and others. Therefore, as a result of the historical connection of Cyprus to the European world, in addition to its European membership since 2004, the Cypriot education system shares common values, principles, visions and educational goals with Europe.

> "Cyprus´s geographical position, the deep-lying bonds which, for two thousand years, have located the island at the very fount of European culture and civilization, the intensity of the European influence apparent in the values shared by the people of Cyprus and in the conduct of the cultural, political, economic and social life of its citizens, the wealth of its contacts of every kind with the Community, all these confer on Cyprus, beyond all doubt, its European identity and character and confirm its vocation to belong to the Community".
>
> (European Commission, 1993, pp.16f)

The study of other European RE syllabuses can also provide some ideas and guidelines about the teaching of RE which could enrich and guide the development of the RE syllabus in Cyprus. The fact that most EU member countries are larger in population, and also more industrially and more technologically developed, means that it is likely that their educational syllabuses would be useful for Cyprus to consider; to be inspired by them, and to adopt what is useful and appropriate for the Cypriot educational system. Other European RE syllabuses include a variety of aims, techniques, approaches and teaching material which might offer some fruitful solutions for RE in Cyprus, particularly as most EU member countries are multicultural; this knowledge and expertise could be very useful for Cyprus in order to help develop a more multicultural RE syllabus.

To develop a new syllabus with updated teaching aims and material, it is useful to consider first other educational systems; and since Cyprus is a member of the European Union, it is important to view how RE is taught in other European countries in order to gain some ideas. It is a fact that other EU countries have more experience of immigration and also in handling religious diversity. Above all, however, Cyprus is a member of the European Union, which means it shares with other members the "European Convention on Human Rights" (European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe, 2010). For

instance, Article 9 of the European Human Rights refers to the "Freedom of thought, conscience and religion", Article 14 underlines the "Prohibition of discrimination", and Article 2 the "Right of Education". In particular, Prot. 1, Article 2 emphasizes that:

> "No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions".
> (European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe, 2010, p.34)

Therefore, it is important to develop a RE Syllabus which will respect the different religions and cultures and encourages freedom of thought.

Another reason why it is important to look at the way RE is taught throughout Europe is because educational surveys are likely to be more developed in most other European countries, and surely any survey enriches and improves an educational system. For instance, many surveys have been conducted in European countries studying religious education teachers' perceptions about the diversity within their classes (Everington, et al., 2011).

Additionally, the EU Commission often provides educational initiatives, programmes and projects, such as "Erasmus", "Comenius", "eTwinning" and others, for all EU members. It would surely be very helpful for Cyprus to be informed about these programmes, especially when such programmes are financially sponsored by the EU Commission. Most of these programmes focus on multiculturalism, on the encouragement of friendship and collaboration among European teachers and pupils, and they create school partnerships in Europe. School partnerships in Europe can be achieved easily, not only through internet opportunities but also because of the freedom of movement within the EU.

The freedom of movement within the EU also gives the opportunity for teachers to work abroad, in other European countries, and this is a great advantage for them because enables them to understand and appreciate the religious and cultural diversity in other countries. As Everington et al. (2011, p.248) argue, "for a significant number of the teachers, awareness and appreciation of religious and/or cultural diversity began when travelling or working abroad". During their (Everington et al., 2011, pp.248f) survey, a German teacher argued that "interreligious classroom dialogue can only be meaningfully entered into once important terms and their connotations in different cultures are clarified". This teacher based his argument on his experiences of living and working abroad and specifically, in Latin American countries (Everington et al., 2011, p.249).

Basic human values, such as democracy, peace, tolerance, equality are likely to be more developed in European countries; therefore, this offers a good example for the Cypriot education to follow as well. More specifically, Emerson (2005, p.9-15) summarized some traditional "EU values" found in the draft constitution of the EU. Briefly these traditional "EU values" are: democracy, respect of human rights, freedom of movement (in goods, services, capital, labor), social cohesion, economic development, rejection of nationalism, federative multi-tier governance, secular governance, multicultural pluralism, multilateral order in international affairs, abstention from threat or the use of force, and openness, inclusiveness and integration with neighbors (Emerson, 2005, p.9-15).

During the last 30 years, the idea of a 'European dimension in education' has been promoted by the European Union and the Council of Europe, in order to indicate their concerns with, and influence on, the educational systems of the EU countries (Philippou, 2007b, p.249). Over the last decade in particular, the Council of Europe has paid specific attention to dealing with the teaching of religions in public schools across Europe (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.255).

More specifically, in 2002, the Council launched a project about the study of religions, which was entitled "Intercultural Education and the Challenge of Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe" (Jackson, 2007, 2010). This project's aim was the protection of human rights, pluralistic democracy, the rule of law, development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity; and to combat ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance (Council of Europe, 2008). The Council of Europe's project on intercultural education resulted in a book and a Ministerial Policy Recommendation, where the Committee of Ministers recommended that the member states of the European Union focus on two elements regarding the teaching of religious and non-religious convictions: objectives and educational preconditions (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.255). Firstly, the objectives include the development of a tolerant attitude and respect towards all religious beliefs, the respect of all religious and non-religious convictions, the promotion of communication and dialogue, addressing sensitive and controversial issues, the development of skills of critical evaluation and the combat of prejudices and stereotypes (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.255). Secondly, the educational preconditions include the respect of the dignity of all individuals, the establishment of mutual trust and understanding, development of co-operative learning where people of all traditions can participate, and the provision of a safe learning space where all individuals can express what they think without the fear of being judged (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.255).

In addition, in 2007 the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe launched some guiding principles which aimed to improve the understanding of religious diversity and to promote the study of religions and beliefs, in order to enhance religious freedom and tolerance (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.256).

Different research, conducted at European level, pointed out the importance of RE for young people (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.256). For instance, the REDCo project revealed that: pupils consider the RE classroom as a 'safe space' for dialogue without feeling threatened by others, that pupils want to co-exist peacefully with other pupils, want to have knowledge about others' religions and worldviews and wish to share common interests and do things together (Jackson, 2012b in Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.256f).

Approaches to Religious Education in Europe

Schreiner (2005, p.1) has identified six types of approach to RE in Europe: "Confessional", "Non-confessional", "French or American model", "Education into religion", "Education about religion" and "Learning from religion". Firstly, the "Confessional" one is a conservative form of RE (Wright, 1993, p.15), "a faith-based approach, usually described as nurture, which seeks to further the religious goal of promoting faith" (Cooling, 1994, p.153). Secondly, the "Non-confessional RE" is exactly the opposite; it is a more liberal form of RE which it does not focus on the promotion of only one specific faith. Thirdly, the "French or American model" is based on the strict separation of church and state, so confessional RE is not allowed to be taught in public schools (Kodelja, 1999, p.157). Fourthly, some countries of the European Union focus on "Education into religion", which means that they teach pupils only about one specific religion. The fifth type of RE in Europe is "Education about religion", which it is related to religious knowledge and religious studies. Finally, "Education from religion" seeks to offer pupils the chance to consider some answers to important religious and moral issues and to develop their own personal views and thinking (Schreiner, 2005, p.3).

Religious Education in different European countries

Introduction

This part of the thesis presents how RE is taught in different European countries, such as: in Hungary, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Northern Ireland, Estonia, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, United Kingdom and France. These specific countries were selected mainly because are members of the European Union (EU)

(apart from Norway) so they share common educational visions with Cyprus, which is a member of the EU as well. The way RE is taught varies significantly from country to country. Also, all of them are religiously and socially diverse; they have differences in majority faiths, some of them are post-communist countries (such as Hungary, Estonia, Slovenia), some others are secularized and high multicultural and multifaith (such as United Kingdom, Germany, France) and others are secularized but less multicultural (such as Norway, Finland). Therefore, it was fruitful and significant to know about the way RE is taught in the different types of societies across the different EU countries. This would consist a useful example for Cyprus and provide some ideas on how RE can be enriched and improved within a contemporary multicultural society. Apart from these reasons, the study of some of these countries is significant because they are well known for their successful educational systems and high educational outcomes. For instance, Finland is considered to have one of the best educational systems in the world with the highest students' achievements. As noted by Taylor (2012), 'a new global league table, produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit for Pearson, has found Finland to be the best education system in the world'. Taylor (2012) goes on to argue that 'the country's school system has consistently come in at the top for the international rankings for education systems', based on international test results and data. Thus, the educational system of Finland is significant to be studied because it can consist a good example for the Cypriot educational system and in this occasion, for the teaching of RE. Overall, the examples of other EU countries can provide the Cyprus' educational system with some useful guidelines for the teaching of RE.

Optional and confessional RE (Hungary and Spain)

RE in Hungary

RE in Hungarian schools is not a core subject, so it is interesting to view its historical and legal background. Since 1948, when the communist party took over, churches were excluded from the official educational sphere and they were not allowed to employ teachers or religious educators. The communist government also cancelled RE as a core and compulsory subject in schools. In comparison with other communist regimes, however, they lived in relative freedom and thus RE was never totally excluded. Although it was excluded from schools, the church took the responsibility for the teaching of RE instead (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

However, following the 1956 uprising in Hungary, the communist regime became less authoritarian than in other communist countries. The Hungarian constitution

proclaimed the "freedom of religion", although this turned out to be an empty promise (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

After the fall of communism in all European countries, in the 1990s, everyone had freedom of conscience and freedom of religion (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). It was then that the new democratic parliament of Hungary passed a law about the "freedom of religion" and another about the "cultural, social and medical activities of the churches". The latter law allowed churches to run schools and gave them the right to teach RE (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

RE is now an optional subject in Hungarian public schools, but no alternative subject is offered. The Hungarian state is responsible for providing the appropriate conditions, space, classroom and equipment for the teaching of RE (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). At the same time, the Hungarian church is also responsible for the teaching of RE; it is responsible for the RE syllabuses, textbooks, teachers' employment, supervision, examinations, announcements and registration. As a result, RE in Hungary is now taught in a confessional way (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

As previously mentioned, RE is an optional subject and no grades are given for it, so the subject is not included in the annual school report (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). However, if the number of pupils that choose RE as an optional subject is very small, then the Hungarian churches have the right to teach the lesson outside the school, within the church premises (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). Hungarian church schools set their own regulations and guidelines about RE and these include the following: RE is a compulsory subject and is taught twice a week (two hours) in a confessional way. There is only confessional RE in Hungary, except in some private schools, and this confessional RE aims to teach pupils about the Christian tradition, the Biblical, dogmatic and ethical aspects of Christian religion, the history of Christian religion, and to encourage pupils to be involved within their Christian religious community in order to be introduced in the Christian values (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). In addition, it aims to enable pupils to determine their own purpose in life, promote their spiritual development and to inform them about other worldviews and religions. In this way, they will be enabled to live in a multicultural world and to tolerate people who profess a different religion (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

Regarding RE teachers' training, the state universities in Hungary do not offer a RE training program for teachers. For this reason, the theological faculty of each university, in co-operation with the teacher training faculty, is responsible for RE teacher training (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). In this way, students have to complete two distinct

elements during their studies: a theological part and a pedagogical part (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

Despite the fact that many RE teachers graduate from universities, RE is taught by ministers of religion in many Hungarian schools. Ministers have the right to teach RE and there is no limit regarding the number of lessons that they can teach. However, the fact that the ministers have the right to teach an unlimited number of RE lessons in schools can cause problems and tensions between the parishes of RE teachers and pastors (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

Regarding public examinations, pupils that attend church schools can choose to be examined in RE as well. Pupils attending state or private schools and who wish to be examined in RE have to first study religion in a church school as a guest student and will only then be allowed to take an examination in RE. It should be mentioned that the pupils who wish to study theology are required to pass this examination in order to enter the university (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

In conclusion, Szabóné Mátrai (2006) suggest that RE in Hungary has to face some important challenges. Firstly, the curriculum requires review in order to change the aims and approaches of RE. The present curriculum focuses on the basic knowledge of Christian tradition and puts aside the teaching of other faiths and worldviews (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). Secondly, RE teacher training should be developed and improved. Thirdly, RE should become a core part of the curriculum and be joined with other school subjects because it currently remains separated from other school subjects as the church takes all the responsibility for its teaching. It seems to have become a church matter rather than an educational or cultural one. The church should try to extend the teaching of RE to all Hungarian schools and transform it into a compulsory subject and also offer an alternative subject (i.e. Ethics) (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006).

RE in Spain

The aim of education, according to the Spanish Constitution, is to develop fully the human personality (Guardia, 2006), whereas the aim of religious and moral education is to develop pupils' responsibility, awareness, critical thinking and freedom of thought. It also aims to enable pupils to respect other faith systems and worldviews and to help them achieve a balance between their spiritual, psychological and cultural development. Another aim of religious and moral education is to help pupils to understand and appreciate the cultural and artistic heritage of Spain and to be introduced to the Christian religious culture (Guardia, 2006).

The Spanish government also ensures that all children receive a religious and moral education that is in accordance with their own personal beliefs (Guardia, 2006). Despite these aims, effective legislation about RE is not fully observed by religious educators, because the majority (about 80%) of pupils receive Catholic RE teaching. Subsequently, religious educators do not pay enough attention on the teaching of other religions and worldviews (Guardia, 2006). As Guardia (2006) notes, it is necessary for the government to develop a "School Agreement for Religious Education", in order to satisfy everybody's needs and requirements and to resolve all the problems and conflicts once and for all. Guardia (2006) also suggests that a new "Administrative Control of Religious Education", that will count and evaluate all the parts involved, is needed.

Pupils who choose to study RE at school are subjected to "an unequal academic load" (Guardia, 2006). The reason for this is because these pupils have to study hard compared to those who do not choose to study RE, who are offered (instead of RE) activities with no academic value, or fun activities or revision time (Guardia, 2006).

Compulsory and confessional RE

(Austria, Belgium and Northern Ireland)

RE in Austria

In all Austrian public schools, RE is a compulsory subject for all pupils, except in the vocational schools where it is optional (Danner, 2006). However, the parents of children under the age of 14 have the right to remove their children from the subject, if they wish to, and pupils who are over the age of 14 can opt out from it themselves (Danner, 2006). Legally, pupils have the right to opt out from RE on grounds of conscience, but in the last few years a great number of pupils have not attended RE lessons for other reasons too, such as lack of interest for the specific subject or inadequate time-tabling (Danner, 2006). At the same time, children without any religious profession have to enroll onto RE, and some of these pupils attend protestant RE lessons (Danner, 2006). As Danner (2006) notes, one of the big problems of RE in Austria is that many pupils choose to opt out from it.

Law in Austria requires equal treatment to all religious communities and thus, schools offer Roman Catholic, Protestant and Islamic RE (Danner, 2006). The Protestant, Catholic and Islamic training institutes are responsible for the further education and training of teachers in the area of RE (Danner, 2006). Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Old-Catholic institutes seem to have cooperated for the first time in the field of teachers training in RE (Danner, 2006). For instance, since 2003 in some Vienna schools,

Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic teachers organize, experimental, confessional-cooperative RE lessons and this 'experiment' seems to be very promising (Danner, 2006).

RE in Belgium

Since September 2005, a team of teachers, school inspectors, lecturers and the department of religious studies of the Catholic University of Louvain have developed a curriculum for the Roman Catholic religion and this curriculum is compulsory for Catholic, Community and Official schools (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005). The new school curriculum of Belgium focuses mainly on communication and participation and for this reason, the in-service training course for teachers includes communication media (ICT). The new curriculum also focuses on 'how to use art and story books for children in combination with bibliodrama or philosophy for children' (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005).

The inspectors of religious and moral studies are chosen by the confessional and non-confessional authorities and they are added to the official-governmental inspectorate staff. Thus, these inspectors have the right to assess teachers for a long period of time (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005). At the same time, every educational authority (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Islamic) has its own Advisory and Support Service, which revises the curriculum, organizes training for teachers and supports the schools (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005).

Since 2003, only specialized teachers have been permitted to teach RE by the Ministry of Education of Belgium. However, this presents a problem, because the school inspectors have significant difficulty in attracting specialized RE teachers "and that some of them have several schools to realize a full time job" (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005).

The teaching of RE in primary schools in Belgium varies; there are 3 teaching periods of 50 minutes in primary catholic schools, and 2 periods of 50 minutes in the community and official schools (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005). More specifically, in primary schools RE includes three stages. Stage 1: "Jesus" (6-8 years), stage 2: "Joseph and Moses" (8-10 years) and stage 3: "Elijah and Saint Paul" (10-12 years). These three stages are based on security, solidarity or connection and growing in strength and every stage aims to develop different kind of relationship between the pupils (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005).

In the first stage ("Jesus") children are taught about the catholic tradition and religious stories, and this stage develops the relationship between "I" and "we" ("the formation of a class") (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005). The second stage ("Joseph and

Moses") focuses on the religious symbols and on the religious festivals of other traditions. This stage concerns the relationship between "I" and "you" ("the short term- relations with friendship and conflicts") (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005). Finally, the third stage ("Elijah and Saint Paul") concentrates on the 'spiritual roots' of the rituals are highlighted in the previous stages (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005). This third stage aims to develop the relationship between "I" and "they" ("the long term- relations with attention to the welfare of the Third and Fourth World") (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005).

Schools in Belgium have the right to choose their own RE textbooks, the only condition being that in order to use a new RE textbook, the editor gains explicit approval following evaluation from two commissions. The first commission is responsible for the content (regarding the catholic doctrine) of the book and the second commission is responsible for the validity and innovation of the book's methodology (Verkest and Radermacher, 2005).

RE in Northern Ireland

RE in Northern Ireland is a compulsory subject both in primary and secondary schools and there is a curriculum for RE that all schools are obliged to follow it (Nelson, 2004). This curriculum was developed in 1992 under the guidance of the fourth main Christian denominations of Northern Ireland (Nelson, 2004).

There are three types of schools: The state controlled schools, which are mainly Protestant, the Catholic maintained schools and the 'integrated' schools which are balanced religiously between Protestantism and Catholicism (Nelson, 2004). These three types of schools follow the same curriculum, so the content of RE in all schools is broadly similar. However, RE can depend to a high extent on a school's ethos and its parents' and educators' interests (Nelson, 2004).

The RE curriculum in Ireland includes three basic teaching topics: the Revelation of God, the Christian Church and Christian Morality (Nelson, 2004). The study of other religions (non-Christian ones) is not specifically included in the curriculum, but the Department of Education encourages teachers to teach beyond the core curriculum (Nelson, 2004). In particular, the Education and Training Inspectorate, Evaluating Religious Education in 2000 stated that the content of RE is not very satisfactory because it does not include the teaching of other world religions, faiths and beliefs systems (Nelson, 2004).

The school curriculum of Northern Ireland includes a special and unique educational theme which is under the title 'Education for Mutual Understanding' (EMU)

(Nelson, 2004). This educational theme is cross-curricular and it aims to deal with social and cultural issues such as religious and cultural diversity, interdependence, the resolution of conflict and social relationships (Nelson, 2004). This theme takes into consideration the local and international contexts. The EMU activities are very important for RE, so religious educators integrate these activities into their own subject (RE) (Nelson, 2004). For instance, they use the EMU schemes of work or they organize inter-school (cross-community) visits (Nelson, 2004).

However, a review team in Northern Ireland has suggested some changes for the RE curriculum (Nelson, 2004). Firstly, it has suggested a more extended reference to Old Testament characters during Key Stages 1 and 2, the introduction of World Religions at Key Stage 3 and the compulsory teaching of Protestant and Catholic traditions at Key Stages 3 and 4. In addition, even the local newspapers and inter-faith groups have raised some issues regarding the changes to the RE curriculum. One of these is that members of minority faith groups should not be involved in the preparation of RE curriculum. Another, is that RE should be related to other subjects in the curriculum, particularly to 'Personal Development' in primary education and 'Citizenship' in secondary education (Nelson, 2004).

Optional and non-confessional religious education
(Estonia, Germany, Sweden, Norway and Slovenia)
Estonia
Since the Education Act of 1992 in Estonia, RE has been a non-confessional and an optional subject (European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE), 2005). However, teaching RE in Estonia varies; for some schools, RE is a compulsory subject for at least one year, while for others pupils can choose RE or other alternative subjects, although there are not usually any other alternative subjects (EFTRE, 2005). It is compulsory for the school if at least fifteen pupils wish to choose it. However, 'it is not regulated how to know if there are some interested children' and thus, nobody knows how many children are interested in choosing the lesson (EFTRE, 2005). RE in Estonia is taught in about 40 schools (out of the 615 schools in total) (EFTRE, 2005). In primary education, parents decide whether their children participate in RE lessons, but in secondary schools children decide for themselves (EFTRE, 2005).

The teaching aims and topics of RE in the school curriculum are approved by the Ministry of Education of Estonia (EFTRE, 2005). RE in primary schools focuses mainly on Bible stories, and in secondary education focuses on the history of world

religions and on comparative religious studies (EFTRE, 2005). RE in Estonia might focus mainly on Christianity, but it does not aim to proselytize pupils since is not confessional (EFTRE, 2005).

The main purposes of RE lessons are to teach children about the different religions, cultures and worldviews, and to help them develop an 'open identity', mutual understanding and tolerance by understanding their own and other cultures as well (EFTRE, 2005). In addition, it aims to develop pupils' religious literacy, to teach them about the importance of dialogue in overcoming national and religious conflicts and to enhance their respect towards human rights and religious freedom (EFTRE, 2005). At the same time, RE in Estonia targets the promotion of students' spiritual values, moral development, social and ecological responsibility. Finally, it aims to enable pupils to be critical towards mass culture and consumerism (EFTRE, 2005).

Some of the teaching topics of RE as a core subject include: 'Grandparents' heritage', 'Culture and traditions', 'Ethics', 'Human ethics and the 10 commandments', 'World religions', 'Major religions', 'Humanity and religion' and 'Philosophy, anthropology, phenomenology of religion' (EFTRE, 2005). The teaching topics of RE as an optional course are: 'New Testament stories', 'Old Testament stories', 'Bible and culture', 'Ethical Issues', 'Bible studies', 'Religions in Estonia', 'Religion and Culture' and 'Church History' (EFTRE, 2005)

Germany

As noted in an official report of the Conference of Ministers of Culture and Education in 2003, RE in German public schools seems to be "an ordinary well established school subject" and few children choose to opt out from it (Schreiner, 2003). In 2004 it was decided by the Conference of Ministers that common achievement standards for final examinations should be set in secondary education, and these common standards were decided by the religious communities and by a committee of the state (Schreiner, 2003).

RE appears to have a positive image in German society since two public polls, in 2003, revealed that the 82% of Germans approve of the teaching of RE in public schools, and 65% approve of the involvement of religious communities and churches in schools. Also, 65% agree that RE should be a core teaching subject and only 7% disapprove of the teaching of the subject (Schreiner, 2003).

Some Protestant churches have highlighted the importance of RE as a part of overall education (Schreiner, 2003). More specifically, the Protestant Church of Germany issued a document in which it noted the importance of RE and emphasized the need for

intercultural and interreligious education as vital aspects of globalization (Schreiner, 2003).

Interreligious learning is included in the RE curriculum. However, the majority of teachers face significant difficulty in promoting interreligious learning because they are not qualified enough in this area. Schreiner (2003) states that "interreligious learning is influenced by hesitations and fear of the teacher, stereotypes and a lack of qualified teachers from non-Christian religions". At this point, however, it should be mentioned that the Comenius Institute published (in 2005) a special handbook for supporting interreligious learning (Schreiner, 2003).

At the same time, in Germany there are many Muslims and for this reason, there is a great need for the teaching of Islamic RE. However, Islamic RE is not promoted widely enough. For instance, only in Bavaria have schools stated an intention to introduce Islamic RE (Schreiner, 2003), and the Ministry of Education also plans to introduce Buddhist RE as an optional subject in only some schools (Schreiner, 2003).

Sweden

Since 1969, RE in Sweden has been non-confessional, but prior to that it was confessional. Confessional and ecclesiastical RE in Sweden has its origins back in 1650 where parents were obliged to help their children learn the Bible, the book of hymns and Luther's catechesis by heart (Tidman, 2005). The priest visited every house in order to inspect children's reading skills and whether they had learned all three by heart (Tidman, 2005). According to Tidman (2005), all protestant countries (compared to the catholic ones) during the middle ages demonstrated this obsessive stress regarding the development of children's reading and rote skills.

As previously mentioned, since 1969, RE in Sweden has been taught in a non-confessional way. Since then, two opposite groups of people have challenging the RE syllabus (Tidman, 2005). The first group consists of religious people who wish to include more Christianity in RE. The second group consists of more secular-minded people who would prefer no RE teaching in schools (Tidman, 2005). To support their view, a group of religious educators founded an organization (FLP) in 1969 in order to develop, protect and defend the new subject of RE. This organization supported the idea that RE in Sweden should not be confessional, and at the same time, it believed that all religions are very important to human's life, culture and history (Tidman, 2005).

During the ensuing four decades, Swedish society has become multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious (Tidman, 2005). Thus, Tidman (2005) suggests that RE

is very important for democracy, because it helps people to develop the necessary skills in order to live a "multi society". These skills involve the knowledge and the experience of different religions and cultures (Tidman, 2005).

The Swedish Department of Education has recently developed a new curriculum for secondary education. During their secondary education, pupils can now choose from a wide range of subjects (Tidman, 2005). There are eighteen national programs, plus many regional, local and special programs. These programs can be either theoretical or vocational. Every program lasts three years and it must contain some basic and essential subjects. One of these basic and essential subjects is RE and one course of RE comprises 50 lessons (Tidman, 2005).

However, whether RE is a basic and essential subject is an ongoing subject of debate. Recently, two other subjects appear to have become more popular in schools. The first, is called "Sustainable development" and deals with environmental studies; the second subject, called "Knowledge of Life", includes topics such as sexuality, gender and ethics. These subjects, however, are not related to religion or to education about religions (Tidman, 2005).

Norway

RE in Norway, since 1997, has been renamed "Christianity and General Religious and Moral Education (KRL)" (Svare, 2003). Pupils have three options; they either choose Christianity, or Moral Education, or do not choose either subject at all (Svare, 2003).

KRL is taught in a non-confessional way, where 55% of the teaching hours are spent on Christianity, 25% are spent on other religions and worldviews and 20% are spent on ethics and philosophy (Svare, 2003). KRL is mainly focused on the teaching of Christianity, because Christianity plays an important role in Norwegian society. However, it is not only focused on the Lutheran tradition, but on other Christian denominations as well (Svare, 2003). RE in Norway is non-confessional because it is taught in an objective, critical and pluralistic way (Svare, 2003). It aims to teach pupils about the various religions, worldviews and morals and it does not aim to teach about any particular faith or to deliver missionary preaching (Svare, 2003). It seeks to develop mutual respect and tolerance among pupils (Svare, 2003).

The legislation regarding RE gives the right to some pupils to opt out from the subject, if they belong to another faith (Svare, 2003). However, pupils cannot be totally withdrawn from the subject, but can only be withdrawn from specific activities. Thus, they will learn about the specific topic in other ways (Svare, 2003).

In upper secondary school, RE comes under the title Religion and Ethics and it is "a heavily knowledge-based subject" (Svare, 2003). Regarding examinations, pupils are now given the exam topics 48 hours before the examination in order to be prepared (Svare, 2003). They have the right to bring (to the examination) any notes with them and they have access to any information. This kind of examination evaluates pupils' ability to work with a problem and not just to memorize and reproduce facts (Svare, 2003).

Slovenia

In the past, RE was a compulsory subject in Slovenian schools and it was considered to be the most important of all subjects. In those days, there was a general belief that morality is related to religion and that there can be no education without morality, and so consequently there is no education without religion. That idea changed soon after the Second World War, because Marxist ideology dominated the Yugoslav State and demanded the separation of church and state. Therefore, a few years later, RE was finally banned from public schools and was only taught in church premises. Public schools replaced RE with the subjects of civic and moral education (Kodelja, 1999, p.153). However, all subjects were structured according to Marxist doctrines under the guidance of the communist party, so there was no neutral subject (Kodelja, 1999, p.154). Since 1991, the educational system in Slovenia has changed and the new educational system is based on human rights, political, cultural, moral values, pluralist democracy, tolerance and solidarity. Parents can choose whether their children attend a private school or a religious school (Kodelja, 1999, p.154).

In Slovenian schools, all pupils have to choose three of six optional subjects (Kodelja, 1999, p.155). One of these subjects is "Religion and Ethics", which is a non-confessional subject that aims to teach pupils, regardless of their personal faith, about different religions. "Religions and Ethics" is taught during the last three years of compulsory schooling, in the seventh, eighth and ninth years of secondary education (Kodelja, 1999, p.155). Firstly, in the seventh year, the obligatory teaching topics are: 'World religions', 'Christianity', 'Islam' and 'Buddhism'. The optional topics are: 'Judaism', 'Hinduism', 'Taoism', 'Confucianism', 'New religious movements' and 'Traditional religions' (Kodelja, 1999, p.155). Secondly, in the eighth year, the obligatory teaching topics are: 'Religious culture', 'Rites', 'Symbols and the religious communities', 'Religions and the problem of evil', 'Sin', 'Death and the direction of life', 'Ethical prospects for the religions'. The optional topics are: 'Churches', 'Sects and monastic communities', 'Relations between Church and State', 'Magic and occultism' (Kodelja,

1999, p.156). Thirdly, in the ninth year, the obligatory teaching topics are: 'Christianity and Western civilization', the 'Bible' (Old and New Testaments), 'Catholicism', 'Orthodoxy', 'Protestantism', 'Enlightenment', 'Christianity in Slovenia', 'Religions and the sense of life', 'Religious freedom and freedom of conscience'. The optional topics are: 'Religious tolerance', 'Wars of religion', 'Science and religious belief', 'Atheism and humanism' (Kodelja, 1999, p.156).

There are two kinds of teaching about RE in Slovenia: as "a specific subject, optional and non-confessional" or as "an integral part of some other subjects", such as civic, moral education, history and literature (Kodelja, 1999, p.156).

Finally, the Catholic Church of Slovenia considers "Religions and Ethics" unacceptable because it is non-confessional. The Catholic Church claims that the subject of "Religion and ethics" should have focused only on a particular religion and not on many religions (Kodelja, 1999, p.156). Also, the Catholic Church wants to take on the entire responsibility for religious teacher training and the preparation of programs and handouts[6] (Kodelja, 1999, p.156).

Compulsory and non-confessional RE
(Denmark, Finland, Netherlands and United Kingdom)
Denmark

In Danish public schools, RE is a compulsory subject and is taught once a week (Rydahl, 2004). It is called "Knowledge of Christianity" and it includes the following teaching topics: "Philosophy of life", "Ethics", "Bible stories", "Christianity throughout history", "Christianity's present context", "Non-Christian religions and other worldviews" (Rydahl, 2004). It should also be mentioned that in Denmark there are very few Christian and Muslim private schools (Rydahl, 2004).

Parents have the right to remove their children from RE lessons if they belong to a different faith group (Rydahl, 2004). However, many school headmasters advise such parents (who want their children to opt out) to keep their children within the RE class, and for this reason, not too many children (only 2-3% of them) opt out from the lessons (Rydahl, 2004).

Before 2002 the teaching of non-Christian religions and other worldviews was included in all nine school years but since 2002, they have been taught only in grades 7-

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[6] At the moment, the state has the whole responsibility for religious teachers' training and the preparation of programs and handouts (Kodelja, 1999, p.156).

9 (Rydahl, 2004). In 2002 it was decided to give priority to Christianity at the expense of other worldviews, and over the last few years, the Danish People's Church has also expressed great interest in the teaching of RE (Rydahl, 2004). Therefore, RE is now a compulsory subject in high school (Gymnasium) and is being taught one year earlier than previously (Fabber, 2005).

Since 2005 RE has been placed with History and Social Science in 'the culture and social science group' of subjects (Fabber, 2005). These three subjects (RE, History and Social Science) work closely together and they are taught using an interdisciplinary approach through projects (Fabber, 2005). The subjects are taught separately, but there are also teaching periods where the three subjects are combined through projects, and at the end of the second year there is one joint examination (Fabber, 2005).

In secondary school, pupils have to study the following compulsory RE areas: Christianity, Islam and one other major world religion of their own choice (either Hinduism, Buddhism or Judaism) (Fabber, 2005). Also, they have to study important religious phenomena, terminology and methods of the science of religion (Fabber, 2005). The teaching of Christian religion constitutes one third of the RE curriculum and the teaching of Islam is also a compulsory teaching area (Fabber, 2005). Besides the teaching of world religions, there are also some other additional teaching areas, such as: ethics, philosophy of religion, science of religion, rituals, and sociology of religion, psychology of religion, new religious movements or another religion (Fabber, 2005).

The teaching of RE in Denmark is taught on a non-confessional basis and it combines the study of "normative texts and modern interpretations of these" (Fabber, 2005). The main purpose of RE is "to enable students to understand and interpret the religious texts seen from inside (emic) and outside (etic)" (Fabber, 2005). At the end of each school year, pupils have an oral examination in order to test their knowledge and understanding in "particular religions taking as the starting point an analysis of a text and by applying the tools of the trade" (Fabber, 2005).

Finland

RE in Finland is based on the religion of the majority, which is in this case, Lutheran RE (84.2% are Lutherans) (Honkaheimo, 2005). All pupils, even non-Lutherans, have the right to attend Lutheran RE classes and for this reason, many non-Lutherans children study Lutheran RE (Honkaheimo, 2005). However, if there are minimum of three pupils who are members of another religion, their parents have the right to request the school to organize another class where these pupils can be taught about their own religion

(Honkaheimo, 2005). However, the status of Orthodox RE differs from other religious minorities in Finland. If there is a minimum of three Orthodox pupils, then the school automatically organizes Orthodox RE classes, without the requirement of parental request (Honkaheimo, 2005). The RE curriculum of these religious minorities has to be approved by the National Board of Education of Finland (Honkaheimo, 2005). Regarding the pupils who do not belong to any religious group, they are taught about secular ethics and about the various worldviews (Honkaheimo, 2005).

RE in Finland is a compulsory subject, not only for primary education but for secondary education as well (Honkaheimo, 2005). In upper secondary education there are three compulsory RE courses, but pupils can choose more courses if they wish; they can choose from two extra courses: world religions and religion in Finland (Honkaheimo, 2005).

Since 2003, RE in Finland has been based on the concept "according to one's own religion", whereas previously it had been denominational and confessional, an approach which caused many problems (Honkaheimo, 2005). As a result, the Act for Religious Freedom in 2003 was passed, which established "freedom for religion" (Honkaheimo, 2005) and so there are now eleven different curriculums for the teaching of RE, and each one of these has its own name; for example, Orthodox, Lutheran (etc.) RE (Honkaheimo, 2005).

The main purposes of RE in Finland is to provide pupils with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience in order to develop an identity and a worldview (Honkaheimo, 2005). Specifically, the aims of RE in the primary school are primarily to help pupils understand their own religion and the Finnish spiritual tradition (Honkaheimo, 2005), and also to introduce pupils to other religious traditions, enable them to appreciate the cultural importance of every religion and understand the ethical dimension of every religious tradition (Honkaheimo, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, RE in Finland is mainly based on Lutheranism because the majority (84%) of Finns are Lutherans (Honkaheimo, 2005). The most important aim of the Lutheran RE is to introduce pupils to the religious culture and tradition of Lutheranism and to help them understand the influence of religion in society and culture (Honkaheimo, 2005). During 2003, the National Board of Education set some aims for the effective learning of Lutheran RE, concerning mainly the fifth grade (Honkaheimo, 2005). Specifically, Lutheran RE should aim to teach children the key facts about the Bible and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (Honkaheimo, 2005). Children should also be enabled to understand the Lutheran religious language and to recognize the religious

symbols, metaphors and concepts (Honkaheimo, 2005). Another aim of Lutheran RE is to enable pupils to use what they have learned in order to gain more knowledge (Honkaheimo, 2005).

The textbooks (including RE textbooks) are published by commercial publication companies and they are distributed to every pupil in every school in Finland free of charge (Honkaheimo, 2005). Even though the context of the textbooks is based on the national curriculum, there is some freedom of context since schools have the right to choose what book they wish to use for their subjects (Honkaheimo, 2005).

Regarding the teaching of RE, in the primary school there are not specialized teachers for every subject, so primary school teachers usually teach all the subjects (including RE) (Honkaheimo, 2005). However, it is argued that the teacher training program does not provide adequate guidance for the effective teaching of RE and that primary school teachers do not pay enough pedagogical attention in the teaching of specific lessons (Honkaheimo, 2005). In secondary education, however, there are specialized teachers for every subject, so RE is taught by teachers who have a Master's degree in Theology (Honkaheimo, 2005).

Over the last few years, multiculturalism in Finland seems to have become an important social issue. Multi-faith schools have developed within the largest cities in Finland, especially in the capital, Helsinki (Honkaheimo, 2005). If all these faith traditions wish to develop and promote their own religious curriculums in schools, then the financial cost of RE will become very high and this might put pressure on educational integration (Honkaheimo, 2005).

The Netherlands

Schools in The Netherlands are supported financially by the government but two thirds of all schools have a Christian identity (Fijn van Draat, 2005). They are either Protestant, Catholic, mixed (Protestant and Catholic), Ecumenical or Reformed Protestant (Fijn van Draat, 2005). All schools have a 'board of parents' even though parents do not really influence schools' policies (Fijn van Draat, 2005).

RE is a compulsory subject in all Christian schools and the teaching mainly includes knowledge of the Bible, Jewish tradition, ethics, church history, non-Christian religions, issues/questions about human life, philosophical questions, faith communities and the relation between faith and science (Fijn van Draat, 2005). The Catholic RE program is mainly focused on questions of life, experience and common religious answers, whereas the Protestant RE program is focused on Bible studies and Christian

tradition (Fijn van Draat, 2005). The program of RE is structured by the school itself and the government has no right to influence it (Fijn van Draat, 2005).

In all school types there is the Basic Education stage (ages 12-15 years), which includes fifteen compulsory subjects, and electronic learning has become an integral part of some of these subjects (Fijn van Draat, 2005). In all Christian schools, RE was added as the 16th compulsory subject and it is taught once or twice a week; and in this way, it has gained the same importance and status as the other compulsory subjects (Fijn van Draat, 2005).

The Secondary Education stage (ages 15-18) includes self–learning, self-instruction, a common program with Dutch, English, Mathematics and general Science (50% of the teaching hours), technical or medical or social or cultural subjects (30% of the teaching hours) and Free Space (20% of the teaching hours) (Fijn van Draat, 2005). Since 2005, RE has become a part of the 20% of the Free Space but it has no examination value. RE is not taught in the state and non-confessional schools because pupils have many other subjects to study (Fijn van Draat, 2005). It is possible, however, that RE will soon become a part of a 'combination mark' with social science and general science (Fijn van Draat, 2005).

United Kingdom

The study of RE in England and Wales has undergone important changes (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.254). Firstly, between the late 1960s and the late 1990s, the study of religion in state funded schools was influenced by secularizing processes, by the rise of Religious Studies in universities and by pluralization due to migration (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.254). Secondly, from the late 1990s to the present, and particularly in the post 9/11 period, the study of RE has been influenced by debate around the role of religion in the public sphere, by the increase of global Islam, the Internet, New Labor's community cohesion agenda and the coalition government's 'inadvertent' marginalization of RE (Arweck and Jackson, 2012, p.254).

RE is a compulsory subject and it is taught to pupils from the age of five to eighteen in all schools in England. However, it is not taught to all pupils from ages sixteen to eighteen (Hopkins, 2006).

In England there is no national curriculum for RE; instead, RE is determined in many different ways according to the type of school (Hopkins, 2006). Firstly, the RE curriculum for state schools is determined by a Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE) (Hopkins, 2006). Each Local Education Authority (LEA) has its own SACRE

(Hopkins, 2006). The curriculum which is structured by the SACRE is then compulsory for all state schools in the Local Education Authority (LEA). However, a SACRE can adapt and apply the curriculum from another LEA (Hopkins, 2006). Secondly, for faith schools the curriculum is mainly determined by the specific religious community or group: Christian, Muslim, Jewish and others (Hopkins, 2006). The development of faith schools in England, most of them Christian (Anglican and Roman Catholic), causes some controversy in the English multi-faith society, because faith schools usually separate and isolate pupils from the rest of society (Hopkins, 2006). Finally, independent schools have the right to choose any of the RE curriculums which are available from the SACREs (Hopkins, 2006).

However, there are some legal requirements for the teaching of RE. According to these requirements, pupils up to the age of 14 should be taught about all six major world religions, and about ethics, philosophy and morals (Hopkins, 2006). Under the Education Act 1996, "British schools must provide religious education for all pupils, although parents may choose to withdraw their children" (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p.10). "The agreed syllabus should reflect the fact that the main religious tradition in Britain is Christianity, while taking into account the other principal religions" (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p.10). In other words, Britain does not have a national syllabus for RE, but a non-statutory national framework (NCFRE) and this framework stipulates that:

> "Religious education develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other worldviews. It enhances pupils' awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religions on individuals, families, communities and cultures. Religious education encourages pupils to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions, while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning [...] Pupils develop their sense of identity and belonging preparing them for life as citizens in a plural society and global community. It enables pupils to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. It promotes discernment and enables pupils to combat prejudice".
> (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p.9)

In addition, this non-statutory national framework (2004, p.34), demonstrates two attainment targets for RE: 'Learning about religions' and 'learning from religion'. The former target, concerns to develop the knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, teachings, practises, lifestyles and ways of expressing meaning, whereas the latter one is intended to develop the skill of asking and responding to questions of identity, experience,

meaning, purpose, values and commitments (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p.34).

The non-statutory framework for RE in Britain seeks to promote the necessary values and attitudes for citizenship in a society by helping children to develop their knowledge and understanding about the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p. 15).

French model

The French Constitution separates completely and strictly the church from the state and therefore, confessional RE is not allowed to be taught in state funded schools (Kodelja, 1999, p.157). The strict separation of church and state is due to historical reasons; the French Revolution was against despotism and religion and mainly against the Catholic Church. The separation of state and religion was legally established in 1905 (Schreiner, 2005, p.7).

Since 2002, the subjects of 'citizenship' and 'history of the church' were introduced in the sixth grade of the primary school, as well as at the lower secondary education stage (aged 11 years) and in higher secondary education (aged 16 years). The courses of 'citizenship' and 'history of the church' are included in the subjects of history or philosophy so they are not taught by RE teachers (Locqueville, 2006).

In November 2002, Xavier Darcos, the minister of Education of France read a message from the President of the Republic, regarding RE in schools:

> "Strengthen the knowledge of the religions, improve the teaching of the religious fact in all the matters concerned, to the college and to the college, following these events in the history, in arts, in the culture of each one, all that will consolidate the spirit of tolerance among our young fellow-citizens by giving them the means of respecting itself better ones the others".

<div align="right">(Locqueville, 2006)</div>

During an educational conference of the European Institute of Sciences of the Religions, it was decided that it is essential for children to be taught about the three basic monotheistic religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Locqueville, 2006). But this immediately raised some methodological questions-problems as to how this could be done; how could they teach about the three basic monotheistic religions? How should they define the words 'myth' and 'religion'? How should they explain the 'sects'? How should they define the word 'sacred' or the word 'transcendence'? (Locqueville, 2006). The participants in the conference, including the Association of the Mayors of France,

have agreed on one major task: "the apprenticeship of tolerance and secularity involve the fight against fundamental ignorance and in particular against religious illiteracy" (Locqueville, 2006).

Finally, private schools in France, which are primarily Catholic schools, still have to follow the aims of the French national curriculum because their teachers are paid by the government (Locqueville, 2006). However, dioceses permitted the employment of 'assistants in pastorale' in these Catholic schools, and these assistants cooperate with the head of establishment. For instance, if a school has to develop a project, in order to do so it has to follow a program and a plan, so the role of the 'assistant in pastorale' is to approve the application of the project. The 'assistant in pastorale' has to liaise with the teachers and some parents in order to achieve this (Locqueville, 2006).

Conclusions and Remarks

To sum up, the first part of this chapter has presented the subject of RE within the national curriculum of Cyprus. RE in Cyprus is included in the humanities subjects, and in the curriculum it is stated that the aim of humanities subjects (RE, History, Geography, Citizenship and Environmental studies) is to explore and study the religious, historical, cultural, political, economic, environmental and social life of Cyprus and other countries (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.119). At the same time, the aim of RE in Cyprus is to teach children about the Orthodox Church, the main world religions and the religious phenomenon (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013). For the teaching of RE in the primary schools there are six textbooks that are written by committees appointed by the government and they are distributed to every public school for free. These textbooks include teaching topics such as: 'I am friends with everybody', 'Love means to share with others', 'Christmas', 'Easter', 'Beyond the religious differences', 'Beyond the cultural differences', 'A big family: The Church', 'Our father: God', 'Our brother: Jesus', 'Our mother: Virgin Mary', 'The baptism of Jesus', 'Our brothers: The Saints', 'God always is helping us: The parable of the Merciful Father', 'My neighbors: Turkish-Cypriot, Latins, Maronites and Armenians', 'My neighbors: A foreigner moves in my neighborhood', 'Guidelines for authentic life: The Ten Commandments', 'Equality between men and women', 'The Protestants', 'The Jewish', 'The Muslims', 'The truth: The Symbol of the Christian Orthodox belief'. It seems that even though there has been an Education Reform, the RE syllabus has not changed much regarding its philosophical orientation. It has remained mainly confessional with only a few additions of multicultural topics. There is a shift from a completely confessional

approach to a less confessional one and to some extent, to a more phenomenological and multicultural approach.

The second part of the chapter has presented the approaches to RE in Europe and how it is taught in some European countries. Teaching RE in Europe varies from country to country; in some of them is a compulsory subject or optional, confessional or non-confessional. Some others focus on education into religion, or education about religion or learning from religion.

So how can all these RE approaches in Europe influence the teaching of RE in Cyprus? How might the advantages of those models offer some useful solutions for the teaching of RE in Cyprus? It might be appropriate for RE in Cyprus to adopt a model of RE which combines a variety of approaches and not just one. A combination of approaches would offer more flexibility to the teachers to adjust their teaching according to the specific topic. Therefore, whether a lesson will be confessional or non-confessional or multicultural, would depend on the teaching topic. This does not mean that following one approach automatically means that another approach is rejected; RE lessons should combine a variety of approaches, but these should always take into consideration what is appropriate for Cypriot culture, tradition and mentality. It is important that Cyprus should consider seriously the examples of other European countries and adopt some useful teaching topics and techniques of how RE is taught in those countries.

RE in Cyprus has always been confessional, focusing mainly on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity, which is the religion of the majority. However, over the last few years there has been some effort made to change the orientation of this subject by changing it into more multicultural. There are now a few multicultural lessons, but the majority of them are confessional and relate to Orthodox Christianity. The different types of RE taught across Europe could provide some ideas and guidelines as to how RE should be taught in a multicultural country; but every country is unique and has its own requirements. Therefore, Cyprus needs to apply a RE model that is suitable for its own society and culture. The study of other European RE syllabuses could also provide some guidelines about the teaching of RE which would enrich and guide the development of the RE syllabus in Cyprus. Furthermore, the fact that most EU member countries (for instance United Kingdom, Germany, France) are larger in population, more multicultural and more industrially and technologically developed than Cyprus, makes it more likely that their educational syllabuses to include a variety of aims, techniques, approaches and teaching material that encourage multicultural education (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p.9; Schreiner, 2003; Locqueville, 2006). Therefore, some European RE

syllabuses might offer significant recommendations to Cyprus' educational system in order to develop a more multicultural RE.

More specifically, some of the EU countries mentioned earlier, have some similarities with Cyprus. For instance, the case of Hungary, where RE is confessional and there is a great influence from the Church (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006). Same situation applies in the case of Slovenia, where the Catholic Church is objecting to the non-confessional RE and wishes to establish a confessional one by focusing only on Catholicism and not in any other religion (Kodelja, 1999, p.156). In addition, the examples of other European countries, such as the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland provide some ideas regarding the integration of RE and Citizenship Education and the promotion of understanding towards the different national, regional, religious and ethnic identities (Nelson, 2004; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p.15). Another important example, which it can be very useful for Cyprus' case, is that one of Northern Ireland, which is also a divided society like Cyprus. As it was mentioned earlier, the Syllabus of Northern Ireland includes a course called 'Education for Mutual Understanding' (EMU) (Nelson, 2004). This course is cross-curricular and it aims to deal with social and cultural issues such as religious and cultural diversity, interdependence, the resolution of conflict and social relationships (Nelson, 2004). This course takes into consideration the local and international contexts and the EMU activities are very important for RE, so religious educators integrate these activities into their own subject (RE) (Nelson, 2004). The EMU course can be appropriate for Cyprus as well, where there is also a divided society, same as in Northern Ireland. By introducing the EMU course in Cyprus' Syllabus, it will encourage the resolution of conflict and improvement of the social relationships between the two conflicted communities; Turkish and Greek Cypriot. Finally, some other countries, such as Hungary and Finland, have pointed out the necessity for better RE teachers' training (Szabóné Mátrai, 2006; Honkaheimo, 2005). This is also applies for Cyprus as well, where RE in the primary school is taught mostly by non-specialized teachers. Therefore, primary school teachers' training regarding the teaching of RE should be developed and improved.

Alberts (2010, p.283) suggests "a European framework for integrative RE", where RE will be integrative and obligatory. Its aim should not be to provide pupils with faith or spirituality, because that would mean promoting a particular religious tradition and prioritizing it over other religious views. Alberts (2010, p.284) goes on to argue that RE should be secular and non-religious and it should be aiming to provide pupils with "broad and balanced information as well as with critical reflection" on the study of

religions and worldviews (Alberts, 2010, p.285). RE needs to develop pupils' critical consciousness and to enable them to make up their own minds about the various religious phenomena and worldviews; and these phenomena should not just be taught to them using content produced by specific lobbies with certain agendas (Alberts, 2010, p.285).

CHAPTER II
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and research design applied in this thesis. This research project seeks to investigate the research questions detailed in the Introduction chapter in the context of teaching Religious Education in Cyprus and to understand the way in which RE curriculum is constructed in the primary school. The chapter explains in detail the overall research purpose, problem and the research questions of this thesis; and it describes the qualitative and quantitative methods used for the research, as well as the research sample. The chapter further presents the research questionnaires and protocols used for this research: introductory, diagnostic, evaluative and final questionnaires; and the pupils', teachers' and religious educators' interview protocols. The purposes of the interviews, the type of interviews used, the reasoning for choosing interviews as a research method and the criteria for developing the research questions are also explained. In addition, the rationale, aims and teaching topics of the Religious Education booklet, which was developed for this research, are presented in this chapter. The methods used to analyze the data derived from the interviews and questionnaires are also described. Finally, this chapter points out the difficulties and obstacles which were encountered when conducting the research and analyzing the research data.

Research problem and questions

Overall Research Purpose

To assess the implications of changes in Cypriot society (since 1960, and especially since 2000) for the provision of Religious Education in Greek-Cypriot primary schools, and to identify ways of addressing the challenges posed by these changes, especially in response to the increasingly multicultural character of the island. At the same time, it aims to provide some suggestions as to how RE can be reformed along the lines of multiculturalism in order to promote the reconciliation of Cyprus[7].

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[7] The reconciliation of Cyprus, it is the vision of Cypriots after the 1974 war and the division of Cyprus into two parts, North (Turkish) and South (Greek) and the conflicts between the Greek and Turkish communities.

The study of the Religious Education Syllabus of Cyprus has been of a great interest to me because, as a primary education teacher, the teaching of RE has always been my fascination and I always choose to teach it in the different age groups of the primary school. Particularly, I am interested in how RE can respond to the increasingly multicultural character of Cyprus and how it can promote the smooth integration of immigrants within Cypriot society and the peaceful coexistence of the different religious and ethnic groups of Cyprus.

Also, it is worth carrying out research on the RE Syllabus of Cyprus because it is an important but relatively neglected area in qualitative research and in educational literature in general. While the topic of Religious Education in Cyprus has received increasing attention over recent years (see, for example Kontovourki et al, 2013; Latif, 2014; Philippou, 2012; Papastefanou, 2005) the study of RE within the educational syllabus is still largely neglected.

Setting the Research Problem

In spite of recent changes to the curriculum, Religious Education in Cyprus remains dominated by the confessional approach of the Greek Orthodox Church and reflects the island's history of occupation, colonization, and partition, and the need to promote national unity amongst the historic Christian and Muslim populations, with imperatives for nation-building superseding concerns with the island's historic cultural diversity. However, a series of changes[8], such as the growing number of immigrants, Cyprus' entrance in the EU, the different ethnic and religious groups of Cyprus and the 1974 war, present challenges to this model. RE needs to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of the island, and therefore the development of a more multicultural and multi-religious RE is necessary in order to promote the smooth integration of immigrants within Cypriot society and the peaceful coexistence of the different religious and ethnic groups of Cyprus (Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins). Particularly after the migrant crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe, RE needs to be adjusted to the new situation. According to "The Telegraph" (22 January 2016)

> "The migrant crisis has seen people scrambling to reach the EU after fleeing war-torn countries such as Iraq, Syria and Libya. The UN says refugee and migrant arrivals in the EU surpassed one million in 2015 but thousands also died on journeys across the sea to a perceived better life. In the latter part of 2015, migrants also increasingly used road and rail

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[8] These changes were mentioned previously, in detail, in the Introduction chapter, p. 18-21.

transport to access the EU. (…) People fleeing war and misery in the East and elsewhere are still arriving from Turkey in flimsy boats in their thousands every day, despite the dangers and the harsh winter weather. The International Organization for Migration estimates that some 31,000 migrants have reached Greece by sea so far in 2016, hoping to start new lives in Germany, Sweden and elsewhere in the European Union".

("The Telegraph", 22 January 2016)

But how can a confessional RE serve a multicultural society? How can a confessional RE serve the vision of reconciliation and reunification of the island of Cyprus and the peaceful coexistence of Greek and Turkish Cypriots? In order to answer to this main research problem, some secondary research questions needed to be investigated first. Drawing on my experience and observations as a teacher in Greek-Cypriot primary schools for the last twelve years, a few issues have influenced the formatting of the research questions.

Possibly the most important issue was that religion has always played an important role within Greek-Cypriot society. Throughout the centuries so many conquerors passed through Cyprus, so people relied on religion in order to preserve their own tradition, ethics and language, and religion seemed to be the best way to achieve this. More recently, and specifically after 1960, the first president of the new Republic of Cyprus was Archbishop Makarios (for about 17 years) and he was not only the religious leader but the political leader as well. Therefore, this history has given a distinctive character to the relationship between religion, politics and national identity in Cyprus.

Political theology in Orthodoxy tends to configure church-state relations differently to Western churches and for this reason, multicultural policies have only ever developed endogenously in societies with historic Western Christian majorities (mostly Protestant), such as in the United Kingdom and United States, and never really taken root anywhere with an Orthodox majority, such as in Greece or Cyprus. Christian Orthodox societies tend to be more ethno-religious; i.e. having strong ethnic identity and unifying by common religion, language and geographical origin, and having a long shared history, culture and tradition. Durante (2015, p.1) discusses ethno-religiosity within Orthodox Christianity and multiculturalism in American society, which is characterized by ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. He discusses the "unique dynamics that exist between ethnicity and religion in the Eastern Orthodox Christian churches". He argues that Eastern Orthodox Christian immigrant communities, and particularly the Greek Orthodox community, have successfully managed to integrate into the American multicultural society, while at the same time, they preserve successfully their ethno-linguistic traditions and Eastern Orthodox Christian religion (Durante, 2015, p.2). In addition, the historian

Theodore Saloutos observed the Greek Orthodox immigrant groups in the United States and comments that:

> "(…) these immigrant groups settled in certain areas in sufficient numbers to form communities, they took it upon themselves to form associations whose primary responsibility was to build churches and schools that would help ensure the perpetuation of their faith and nationality, their customs and traditions…"

<div align="right">(Saloutos, 1973, p. 397)</div>

Hence, it could be argued that multiculturalism, in a policy sense, is a post-Protestant secular construct and not a Christian Orthodox one.

In addition, while teaching in the Greek Cypriot primary schools I have realized that almost all pupils lack knowledge about other world religions because they were never taught about any other religion except Orthodox Christianity. They also lack knowledge about the existence of other religious minorities in Cyprus, such as Turkish-Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites or Latins. At the same time however, they have a lot of knowledge about their own religion because the RE syllabus is mainly focused on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity, which is taught in a confessional and theological way, without encouraging critical thinking. Consequently, they usually see people with different cultural, religious, social and economic background in a more skeptical and doubtful way. In addition, most pupils' views about controversial issues, such life after death or euthanasia, are related again to Orthodox Christian views about these matters.

Another issue, is that the RE syllabus includes teaching topics that pupils find boring and irrelevant to them. It is probable that pupils find RE boring because the teaching topics lack any connection to their own lives; they encourage rote learning by repetition and are based on traditional story-telling with limited interactivity; and finally, the teaching of these topics sounds like preaching about what is right and what is wrong. The syllabus should include teaching topics that pupils find interesting according to their ages and relevant to their everyday experiences, such as topics about alcohol, smoking, drug addiction, life after death, different religious traditions, and controversial issues about the relationship between science and religion. In this way, pupils' knowledge on different topics will be enriched as well. They will no longer be taught only about Orthodox Christianity, but also about other interesting topics that they never had the opportunity to be taught before. Drawing on my experience as a teacher and also from this study, primary school pupils prefer RE to be taught in a different way, and for this reason different teaching material, different textbooks and helpful guidelines are required in order to achieve this.

The reform of religious education in Cyprus is certainly affected by some aspects such as the influence of the Greek-Orthodox Church and the economic crisis. On the one hand, the Greek-Orthodox Church in Cyprus is concerned that the Greek-Cypriot's national and religious identity might be at great risk if they were to change confessional RE; so it prefers RE to be focused mainly on the Orthodox Christianity doctrine instead of on more multicultural topics. On the other hand, the serious economic crisis certainly affects the progress of educational reform since a reform requires financial support for developing a new syllabus and for issuing new teaching books. At the same time however, the economic crisis tends to produce nationalist reactions against any religious and cultural diversity, so the threat to social cohesion is heightened. For instance, the rising of the far-right political party in Greece, "Golden Dawn", is certainly related to the serious economic recession of the country. The rising of the far-right ideology in Greece is discussed in more detail in the introductory chapter.

The Research Questions

This thesis will be focused on twenty-one research questions:

Table 1: The research questions

1)	How can RE in Cyprus contribute to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and still divided society and how can it contribute to the reconciliation of Cyprus?
2)	Is the development of multicultural RE appropriate for the case of Cyprus?
3)	What is the role of religion within Cypriot society throughout its history and what is the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church and Archbishop of Cyprus on the development of the RE syllabus?
4)	How is RE taught in other European countries?
5)	What are the different types-rationales of RE?
6)	What is the relationship between RE and Citizenship education?
7)	What are the pupils' knowledge and attitudes towards the different religious traditions?
8)	What are the pupils' knowledge and attitudes towards the different religious minorities (Turkish, Armenians, Maronites and Latins) of Cyprus?
9)	What are the pupils' attitudes towards people with different cultural, religious, social or economic backgrounds?
10)	What are the pupils' views about different spiritual issues (i.e. creation of the universe, life after death)?

11) What are the pupils' attitudes towards Orthodox Christianity?

12) Do primary school pupils find RE an interesting subject?

13) Which topics do pupils find most interesting and which topics do they find uninteresting?

14) What would pupils like to be taught about during RE lessons?

15) Are the pupils willing for a change in RE teaching?

16) What necessary changes should be made to RE in Cyprus in order to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?

17) Are the educators in Cyprus willing for a change in RE teaching?

18) What are the obstacles that teachers face in order to promote a more critical religious education?

19) How do the different religious minorities (Turkish, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) of Cyprus teach the RE subject?

20) What is the impact of the RE booklet on pupils' knowledge and attitudes?

21) What has really changed between the previous and the new RE syllabus?

As noted above, the primary research question of this thesis is "How RE in Cyprus can contribute to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and still divided society and how can it contribute to the reconciliation of Cyprus?". This research question will be investigated by developing, piloting and teaching a RE booklet and after teaching the booklet, it is aimed to discover its (the booklet's) impact on pupils' knowledge and attitudes. A necessary step, however, before developing the booklet, was to study through literature review the main debates around multicultural RE, and to examine whether the development of multicultural RE is appropriate for the case of Cyprus.

Some secondary research questions, which were necessary in order to answer the primary question, are to explore, through literature review, the role of religion within Cypriot society throughout its history and the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church and Archbishop of Cyprus on the development of the RE syllabus. Over the centuries, the Christian Orthodox Church of Cyprus has played an instrumental role within Greek-Cypriot society as it has been involved in all social, political, educational and economic issues of Cyprus. Particularly during the long periods of foreign domination of the island,

the Church helped the population of the island to maintain their Greek language, their Christian Orthodox religion, and Greek culture, ethics, civilization and history.

Another aim was to explore, through the study of a range of approaches (pedagogies and national systems), RE development across Europe during the last 30 years and to investigate how RE is taught in other European countries. In addition, it will focus on the different types of RE (confessional, implicit, phenomenological, spiritual, post-modern, contextual and critical religious education) and will suggest how can they be used for the improvement of RE in Cyprus. Literature review is also focused on the relationship between RE and Citizenship education, and on identifying the differences and tensions between the two disciplines.

Through interviews and questionnaires with pupils, the thesis aimed to investigate pupils' knowledge and attitudes towards the different religious traditions, towards the different religious minorities (Turkish, Armenians, Maronites and Latins) of Cyprus, their attitudes towards people with different cultural, religious, social or economic backgrounds, their views about different spiritual issues (i.e. creation of the universe, life after death) and their attitudes towards Orthodox Christianity. It also aimed to discover if primary school pupils find RE an interesting subject, which topics they find most interesting and which topics they do not find interesting, as well as what they would like to be taught about during RE lessons, whether they would like to be taught about anything else, such as world religions, and if they are willing for a change in RE teaching.

The interviews with the teachers and religious educators aimed to reveal which would be the most necessary changes to make to RE teaching in Cyprus in order to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and if the educators are willing for a change in RE teaching. The statutory requirement that schools should encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was first included in the United Kingdom Education Reform Act 1988 (OFSTED, 2004, p.6). In a paper issued by OFSTED in 2004 it was demonstrated how important, and how interrelated, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of pupils' development are (OFSTED, 2004, p.8):

> "Today, the belief of legislators and others in the importance of encouraging pupils' SMSC[9] development remains strong. Whether talking about the family, teenage pregnancy, the misuse of drugs, ethics in business or politics, football hooliganism, homophobia, the promotion of good race relations, the consequences of social disadvantage, a failure to vote at elections, or the host of other issues which raise spiritual, moral,

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[9] SMSC= Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural

social and cultural issues, the debate very quickly turns to schools and the role they can play".

<div align="right">(OFSTED, 2004, pp.6f)</div>

The UK experience in social and multicultural issues is valuable, and so it was useful to include some of the above aspects in the Cypriot educational context as well. In particular, the statutory requirement that schools should encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely beneficial, mainly because Cyprus is a European country and that it would assist more its integration into Europe. Chapter I studies in depth how RE is taught across Europe and the relevance of the European experience to the Cypriot context.

Furthermore, through the interviews I aimed to identify the obstacles that teachers face in order to promote a more critical religious education and their difficulties in assessing RE and promoting assessment for learning. In addition, through the interviews with educators from the different religious minorities (Turkish, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) of Cyprus, I sought to identify the approach of those communities towards the RE subject.

Finally, the study and comparison of the previous and the new RE Syllabus aimed to detect what has really changed between the previous and the new RE syllabus.

Research Hypotheses

Before conducting the research some hypotheses were stated for every research question. Hypotheses are part of scientific research process and they provide some proposed explanation and informed guesswork regarding what the research results might yield. Hypotheses are a starting point for further investigation during the research. Below, the research questions are presented again alongside some hypotheses.

In the first research question, "How can RE in Cyprus contribute to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and still divided society and how can it contribute to the reconciliation of Cyprus?", the hypothesis is that the teaching of world religions can meet the needs of a diverse society and also, the teaching about the Cyprus' religious minorities could contribute to the reconciliation of the island.

For the second research question, "Is the development of multicultural RE appropriate for the case of Cyprus?", the answer is affirmative because Cyprus is a multicultural and multi-religious society and therefore, the development of a more multicultural RE is necessary.

The third research question was "What is the role of religion within Cypriot society throughout its history and what is the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Archbishop of Cyprus on the development of the RE syllabus?". The hypothesis for this question is that religion has always played an important role within Greek-Cypriot society and the Archbishop of Cyprus plays an instrumental role in the development of the RE syllabus.

The hypothesis for the question "How is RE taught in other European countries?" is that RE in most other European countries is not taught in a confessional way but in a more phenomenological and critical way.

The fifth research question focusses on the different types/rationales of RE; confessional, phenomenological, critical, implicit, post-modern and spiritual RE, which will be studied and analyzed in depth in another chapter.

The sixth question is "What is the relationship between RE and Citizenship education?" and the hypothesis for this question is that citizenship and religious education can be integrated effectively in the teaching process.

The hypothesis for the question "What are the pupils' knowledge and attitudes towards the different religious traditions?", is that pupils lack knowledge about other world religions because they were never taught about any other religion apart from Orthodox Christianity.

In the question, "What are the pupils' knowledge and attitudes towards the different religious minorities (Turkish, Armenians, Maronites and Latins) of Cyprus?", the hypothesis is that pupils lack knowledge about the existence of the other religious minorities in Cyprus. Most of them have only heard about Turkish-Cypriots.

For the next research question "What are the pupils' attitudes towards people with different cultural, religious, social or economic backgrounds?", the hypothesis is that pupils see people with different cultural, religious, social and economic background in a more skeptical and doubtful way.

Another research question was "What are the pupils' views about different spiritual issues (i.e. creation of the universe, life after death)?". The hypothesis for this, is that pupils' views about controversial issues are related to Orthodox Christianity's views about these matters. For instance, about life after death they might believe that people either go to paradise or hell when they die. Or about the controversial issue of euthanasia, most of them will disagree because Christianity does not agree with it because only God has the right to take a life.

The hypothesis for the research question "What are the pupils' attitudes towards Orthodox Christianity?", is that pupils will have a lot of knowledge about Orthodox Christianity because the approach to RE teaching is confessional so they are taught in a great depth about this specific religion.

"Do primary school pupils find RE an interesting subject?", was an additional research question. Probably, the majority of the pupils find RE an interesting school subject.

In the question "What topics do pupils find most interesting and what topics they do not find interesting?", the hypothesis is that primary school pupils find interesting only the topics that they are appropriate for their age group. For example, topics such as drugs, alcohol, and smoking will be interesting for them. On the contrary, teaching topics related to Theology pupils find boring and not really interesting.

For the question "What would pupils like to be taught about during RE lessons?", the hypothesis is that pupils prefer to be taught about topics relevant to their everyday experiences and their ages or new topics that they have never been taught before. For instance, topics such as alcohol, smoking, drug addictions, different religious traditions, controversial issues or about the relationship between science and religion.

The next research question was "Are the pupils willing for a change in RE teaching?". For this question the answer is affirmative, that pupils are willing for a change in RE teaching. They are willing to be taught different things during RE lessons because they find it boring to be taught about Orthodox Christianity all the time.

"What necessary changes should be made in RE in Cyprus in order to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?", was another research question. In order to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the RE syllabus should include teaching topics that pupils find interesting according to their ages and relevant to their everyday experiences. Topics such as alcohol, smoking, drug addictions, different religious traditions, controversial issues, or about the relationship between science and religion. It requires the development of a more critical and multicultural RE than a confessional one.

The hypothesis for the question "Are the educators in Cyprus willing for a change in RE teaching?", is that educators are willing for a change in RE teaching, but they need different teaching material, different textbooks and helpful guidelines.

Moreover, in the question "What are the obstacles that teachers face in order to promote a more critical RE?", possibly teachers face difficulties because they do not have the appropriate teaching materials and because of the economic crisis it is hard to publish

new ones. In addition, they face obstacles regarding what they can teach in the classroom because of the Greek-Orthodox Church's influence and also because of some people's refusal to change the confessional RE into a more multicultural and critical one.

"How do the different religious minorities (Turkish, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) of Cyprus teach RE?". The Maronite and the Latin communities of Cyprus teach RE in a confessional way focusing on Catholicism; and Armenians do so too, focusing on the Armenian Apostolic Christianity. On the contrary, the Turkish Cypriot community does not teach RE in a confessional way because of Kemalism's[10] influence regarding religion, so RE is taught more in a form of ethical education.

The hypothesis for the question "What's the impact of the RE booklet on pupils' knowledge and attitudes?", is that pupils' knowledge on different topics will be enriched. They will no longer be taught only about Orthodox Christianity but also about other interesting topics that they would never had the opportunity to be taught before.

The last question was "What has really changed between the previous and the new RE syllabus?". The answer to this question will be negative; not too many changes have been made in the new RE syllabus.

Research Design and Stages

As mentioned previously, the main purpose of this thesis is to investigate how RE in Cyprus can contribute to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and still divided society and how it can be reformed, along the lines of multiculturalism, in order to promote the reconciliation of the island. In order to examine this topic and obtain valid

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[10] The term Kemalism here refers to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's (a reformer and the first president of the Turkish Republic) ideas and principles about the state (Tunçay, 2019). These principles were: 'republicanism, statism (in economic policy), populism, laicism, nationalism, and reformism' (Tunçay, 2019). Based on these six principles, Ataturk was aiming to a 'political despotism in order to break down the social despotism prevalent among the traditionally minded Turkish-Muslim population' (Tunçay, 2019). The principles of populism and laicism were inspired by the French Revolution of 1789 (Tunçay, 2019). On the one hand, populism did not imply democracy but an opposition to status privileges and monarchy (Tunçay, 2019). On the other hand, the principle of laicism, was aiming the full secularization of Turkey '(abolition of the caliphate, removal of the article in the constitution making Islam the official religion of the state, and almost all the modernizing reforms that departed from Islamic practice)' (Tunçay, 2019). Even though the official formulation of Ataturk was to separate the wordly from the devine and to exclude religion from politics, in reality, Ataturk's laicism 'became an instrument for control and supervision of Islam by the state' (Tunçay, 2019). At the same time, Ataturk's policy failed to replace the 'religious social bonds with a generally accepted civic ideology' and this 'led to cleavage between the ruling westernized elite and the ruled traditional masses' (Tunçay, 2019).

and objective research results, an appropriate investigative method or set of methods needs to be chosen and a detailed research design should be followed.

The first step was the Literature Review. The literature review was mainly based on books, articles and online sources, pertaining to the different approaches to RE, the relationship between Citizenship and Religious Education, the assessment of RE and RE in Cyprus and in Europe.

During the second step, a detailed thesis' outline was developed. As mentioned above, this PhD thesis was developed through five chapters: "Religious Education in Cyprus and within the European Context", "Research Design and Methodology", "Relating Citizenship and Religious Education", "Findings and Analysis: Religious Education in the Greek-Cypriot Schools", "Discussion and Conclusions: Promoting Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development".

The third step was the development of the Religious Education Booklet which includes supplementary lesson plans for the sixth class of primary school. The teaching topics of the booklet are about world religions and beliefs, religious minorities-communities in Cyprus and about religious, spiritual, social, cultural, moral and health issues[11].

The fourth step was the Informed Consent Process, where the researcher was required to obtain approval for the conduct of research in primary schools. In the first instance, the Head of Department of Primary Education was contacted by letter. This letter included a participant information sheet, giving details of the nature of the research project and also participant consent forms (Lawlor, 2010, p.68). This clearly detailed what the participant was agreeing to and what the research data would be used for after the completion of the research (Lawlor, 2010, p.68).

The fifth step was the Pilot Project, where the Religious Education Booklet was piloted during an entire school year and all of the teaching topics included in the Booklet were taught to sixth-class pupils of a primary school in Cyprus.

The sixth and most important step of the research was the main Research and Fieldwork conducted for this thesis. Since the research is about religious education in Cyprus, the fieldwork had to be carried out in Cyprus' primary schools. About 150 pupils aged 11-12 years old have been participated in the research. These pupils attended in Year 6 in three different primary schools: two schools were located in two different villages,

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[11] The content of the Religious Education Booklet is presented in detail in Appendix A, p.365.

where all pupils were Greek-Cypriot and Christian Orthodox, while the pupils from the other school, located in a town, were primarily not Greek-Cypriots. All pupils, both from the villages and the town, were taught the material included in the Religious Education Booklet. It must also be mentioned that, in both areas, village and town, there were distinct political traditions. All of these three areas are well known for their political views[12]. In one of the villages the majority of the families were considered as left wing, whereas in the other village and in the town they were considered as right wing. The ones supporting left political parties tend to support more multicultural ideas, whereas the ones supporting right parties tend to support more ethno-religious ideas. Therefore, families' political views undoubtedly affect their children's views and thus it was expected to have an impact on the research results too. In addition, the reason why pupils of Year 6 were chosen to participate in this research is because pupils of this age (11-12 years old) are more mature than pupils in younger classes. Also, pupils of this age have good computer skills, which were required for the research since there are many computer assignments included in the Booklet. The reason why two different types of schools were selected (village and town) is for comparative reasons. This comparison was fruitful because it enabled the researcher to view how Greek-Cypriot/Christian Orthodox pupils reflect on the booklet's material compared to those pupils that are neither Greek-Cypriot nor Christian Orthodox. It was also enabled me to investigate how they have reflected on the booklet's topics, to identify their views regarding multiculturalism, to receive a variety of views and to explore how some topics included in the RE syllabus can be adjusted to pupils' interests, backgrounds and knowledge. Lastly, a control group participated in the research and the pupils of this group attended another school in town and were taught only from the official Religious Education textbooks. The research lasted for two school years: 2009-2010 and 2010-2011.

The Research and Fieldwork can be divided into three sub-stages: The Diagnostic Stage, the Teaching Stage and the Evaluation Stage.

Firstly, during the Diagnostic Stage, a diagnostic questionnaire was given to Year 6 (11-12-year-old) pupils. This diagnostic questionnaire[13] aimed to detect and analyze pupils' knowledge and attitudes about the aims of Religious Education, the different official ethnic and religious communities of Cyprus, the foreign people that live and work

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[12] This is based on the different election results (i.e. presidential, parliament, local councils) throughout the years.

[13] The diagnostic questionnaire can be found in 'Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.437.

in Cyprus, pupils' views about North (occupied) Cyprus, the creation of the universe, the different cultural and religious activities, the different world religions, world peace and the controversial issue of euthanasia. After completing the questionnaires, pupils' answers were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and they were presented using charts (see Appendix F, p.451).

Secondly, during the Teaching Stage pupils were taught the material included in the Religious Education Booklet. Within the Religious Education Booklet supplementary teaching material was included. The teaching topics included in the Booklet were about the different World Religions and Beliefs (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Agnosticism and Atheism), the Religious Minority Communities of Cyprus (Turkish-Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites and Latins), Scientific Issues (religion and science - issues of truth, proof and explanation), Religious Issues (origins of the universe, life after death, good and evil), Social Issues (peace and war, poverty and wealth), Cultural Issues (xenophobia and racism), Moral Issues (universal human values - racial and religious respect, justice, honesty, truth, trust, cooperation, understanding), Health Issues (global and environmental issues - animal rights and the environment), Health Education (what are the different religions beliefs and teachings about drug use, foods, drinks, leisure, relationships, gambling and suicide). The Teaching Step lasted two school years: September 2009 – June 2011. This step not only included teaching within the classroom but also included visits to many religious places, such as mosques, Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Churches as well as many other places[14].

Lastly, the Evaluation Stage is where pupils' knowledge and attitudes were assessed. The booklet's effectiveness was also assessed during this step. In order to evaluate and assess any changes to pupils' knowledge and attitudes, final questionnaires[15] were used throughout the school year after completing the teaching of every topic.

The seventh step of the research seeks to Analyze and Evaluate pupils' views and attitudes that result from the Religious Education assignments, visits, questionnaires and interviews. It compares the pupils' views across the village and city locations. At this point, the views of pupils participating in the control group were compared to those within the target groups.

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[14] The questionnaire for Visiting Religious Places can be found in 'Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.442.

[15] The Final Questionnaires can be found in 'Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.444.

The eighth and last step of the research, aimed to critically analyze the key issues emerging from the research. It critically analysed pupils' attitudes, views, and understanding and it outlined suggestions on how RE can promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These suggestions are not only inspired by the research results, but is also based on a concluding literature review. The concluding literature review is mainly based on material about intercultural education, learning about and learning from religion, and about spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The initial literature review aimed to provide the necessary academic knowledge and set the basic and initial guidelines for this research; whereas the concluding literature review aimed to provide some academic suggestions for the promotion of intercultural education and the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills.

Additionally, 3 different types of interviews were conducted: 69 interviews with primary school students attending Year 1 to Year 6 (attending in the one village school; the one metntioned above), 5 interviews with primary school teachers (from the same school) and 5 interviews with educators representing the 5 religious commmrnities of Cyprus (Greek-Cypriot, Turkish-Cypriot, Maronite, Armenian and Latin).

The fieldwork stages and research timeline are presented on Table 2 below.

Table 2: The Research Timeline

RESEARCH PHASES	RESEARCH STAGES	TIMELINE	RESEARCH ACTIONS
PHASE I	**Preparation Stage**	**January 2008- August 2008**	– Development of the Introductory, Diagnostic and Final questionnaires. – Development the RE Booklet. – Development of the interview protocols for students, teachers and educators. – Informed Consent Process and Approval for conducting the research.
PHASE II	**Pilot Stage**	**September 2008- June 2009**	
		September 2008	The Introductory and Diagnostic questionnaires were distributed to Year 6 students (pilot group).
		September 2008- June 2009	Teaching of the RE Booklet to Year 6 students (same students as above).
		January 2009	Interview protocols for students (pilot group) and teachers were piloted.

		Throughout the school year September 2008-June 2009	The final questionnaires were distributed to students (pilot group) throughout the year, after completing the teaching of every topic.
		July-August 2009	Reforming/correcting the questionnaires, interview protocols and RE Booklet, after receiving feedback from the pilot project.
PHASE III	**Research Stage Part I**	**September 2009-June 2010**	
		September 2009	The Introductory and Diagnostic questionnaires were distributed to Year 6 students attending to one village school and one town school.
		September 2009-June 2010	Teaching the RE Booklet to Year 6 students attending to one school in village and one in town (same as above).
		Throughout the school year September 2009-June 2010	The Final questionnaires were distributed to the above students throughout the year, after completing the teaching of every topic.
PHASE IV	**Research Stage Part II**	**September 2010-June 2011**	
		September 2010	The Introductory and Diagnostic questionnaires were distributed to Year 6 students attending to the second village school.
		September 2010-June 2011	Teaching of the RE Booklet to Year 6 students attending to the second village school (same students as above).
		Throughout the school year September 2010-June 2011	The Final questionnaires were distributed to the above students throughout the year, after completing the teaching of every topic.
		November-December 2010	Interviews with primary school students (Year 1-6) attending to the second village school (same school mentioned as above).

		May 2011	Interviews with teachers working in the second village school.
		June 2011	Interviews with educators representing the five religious communities of Cyprus.
	Control Group	**September 2009-June 2010**	
		September 2009	The Introductory and Diagnostic questionnaires were distributed to control group's students (Year 6, attending in a completely different school than the research groups' students).
		September 2009-June 2010	The control group's students were taught, as usual, from the official Ministry's of Education textbooks.
		May 2010	All final questionnaires were distributed to control group's students.

Research methods

It was decided, by the researcher, that this PhD research would be mainly based on qualitative research methods, using a multi-method approach which is characteristic of qualitative research (Flick, 1998).

Danemark et al (2002) in their book "Explaining Society" suggest a combination of research methods by proposing a new model: critical methodological pluralism, where the different research approaches, quantitative and qualitative, are combined and complement each other (p.176). Mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in this way would achieve more valid results. This research aimed for a methodology which would make it possible to understand and analyze the intentions, views, knowledge and experiences of Cypriot teachers and pupils. Combining different research methods gives the researcher the opportunity to consider the research questions from different perspectives in order to gain a more complete picture and to also explore the diverse factors (Lawlor, 2010, p.51) which might contribute to the constitution of RE in Cyprus. Therefore, the study of this thesis was based on mixed research methods; both quantitative and qualitative methods were used and combined. Questionnaires, personal interviews with teachers, RE educators and students, literature review and written documentation relating to the teaching of RE, including syllabuses, schemes of work and lesson plans were used and analyzed for the research. These different research methods complemented each other. For instance, the use of questionnaires as a research method provided a wider

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research sample because not all pupils volunteered to participate in an interview. At the same time, the questionnaires given before the interviews aimed to 'break the ice' between the interviewer and the pupils, so that the pupils would volunteer to participate in the interview too and they would also be more comfortable during the interview procedure. On the other hand, the interview method provided an in depth understanding of pupils' and educators' views and attitudes, because interviewees had the chance to explain their thoughts and express themselves easily. Finally, mixed research methods provide a wider variety of data and make the research more valid because the researcher can see things from different perspectives and this gives a richer picture of the study phenomenon.

More specifically, 150 introductory, diagnostic and evaluative questionnaires were answered by 10-12-year-old pupils and sixty interviews were conducted with 6-12-year-old pupils. Primary education teachers and religious educators were also interviewed. Additionally, the literature review includes the textbooks of religious education in Cyprus and the National Curriculums of Cyprus and Greece, schemes of work, lesson plans, work-sheets as well as a variety of references on Religious Education and on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Obviously, the most appropriate research method is directed by the phenomenon investigated, the research topic and the research questions. However, sometimes, the way to study and investigate a phenomenon is not clearly demonstrated. As noted by Danermark et al (2002):

> "Every social science investigation involves metatheoretical, i.e. ontological and epistemological, assumptions. Sometimes they are clearly demonstrated, sometimes they are not. The researcher may not even be aware of them. Research is directed by explicit and implicit assumptions of society as a whole and by conceptions of what we can obtain knowledge about and how such knowledge can be obtained".
>
> (Danermark et al, 2002, p.150)

On the one hand, quantitative research methods are often based on statistical, variable and mathematical analysis and on empirical observation (Danemark et al, 2002, p.175). On the other hand, qualitative research methods are more subtle and based on hermeneutic and phenomenological foundations. The hermeneutic method refers to the study of a case within its natural environment, whereas phenomenology is related both to case study and rationalistic thinking (Danemark et al, 2002, p.175).

Interview method is considered to be a qualitative research method. As mentioned above, qualitative research is the focus on particular cases and studying them within their natural environment because they (cases) get their signification within their own context.

The cases can be one or several. They can be the study of persons, biographies, institutions or communities (Danemark et al, 2002, p.158).

Case studies can be described in many different ways. Merriam (1988, p.25) distinguishes four common traits: "they are particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive" (p.25). Firstly, a case study is particularistic because it focuses on a particular phenomenon; for instance, a person or event. Secondly, it is descriptive because it describes in a great detail the phenomenon. Merriam (1988, p.25) suggests that the case study should include many and different variables, such as qualitative and quantitative, so that the researcher describes the interaction between them. Thirdly, a case study is heuristic because it enables the researcher to discover and learn about the study phenomenon. Lastly, inductive means a specific form of reasoning in which a general law or principle is inferred from particular instances that have been observed and this is one way to generate a new theory. In the current research, one case study question was included in the questionnaire and was aiming to investigate pupils' views on the controversial issue of euthanasia: "Imagine that person close to you suffers from a serious disease and soon she/he will die. She/he is really in severe pain and no medication can help. So, she/he decides that want to use euthanasia in order to put an end to her/his pain. How do you feel about that?" The pupils here were first asked whether they agree or not with this and then they were requested to discuss their answers. Therefore, from their (pupils') answers, the researcher would be able to gain a deep understanding of their views about euthanasia.

Choosing interview as a research method

Several reasons have influenced the choice of the personal interviews as one of the research methods of this thesis. Interviews are a more intimate and detailed form of research than any other method. The main reason for choosing interviews as a research method is that interviews provide an in depth understanding of pupils' views and attitudes, because pupils have the chance to explain their thoughts and to express themselves easily. Through the interview, the researcher can get the story behind the interviewee's experiences and can pursue in-depth information around the topic; and during an interview, the researcher has the opportunity to probe or ask follow up questions for more explanation and clarification.

Weston, et al (2001, p.382) points out five aspects that can influence the choice of a research method appropriate to each research: the discourse community, the research

perspective, the nature of collaborative team research, the phenomenon of the study and the preexisting conceptual frameworks.

Applying these five aspects to the present research, and starting firstly from the discourse community, the interview method appeared to be the most appropriate one for this occasion. In this research, the discourse community was the primary school children-pupils, aged six to twelve years old. Therefore, the personal interviewing method was the most appropriate for them because children find it easier to express themselves orally than in writing. Also, because younger pupils, aged six, were participating in the research it would have been very difficult for them to explain themselves in writing. Undoubtedly, in an interview it is easier to clarify and explain the question to smaller children, whereas in written questionnaires this is not possible.

Moving on to the second aspect, the research perspective; here also interviews appeared to be the most appropriate method. The perspective in the current research is to study primary school pupils' views about the subject of RE. Semi-structured, informal interviews seemed to be an effective method of investigating pupils' views and attitudes because they had the chance to express themselves better.

Thirdly, the collaborative research team can also affect the research method chosen. As noted by Weston, et al (2001) the form of collaborative team research:

> "…influences just about everything in the research process: how data is collected, how the coding system is developed, applied, and verified, and ultimately how understanding is constructed".
>
> (Weston, et al, 2001, p.383)

In the present research the aspect of the collaborative team research might not be applied in the same way that Weston et al refer to, because the research is conducted by only one person. However, even in this research, collaboration and cooperation among all people participating in this research are required in order for it to be carried out effectively. Collaboration and cooperation between the researcher and the pupils participating in the research, between the researcher and the Ministry of Education, between the researcher and Head teacher and other teachers and of course, between the researcher and parents.

The phenomenon of the study is the fourth aspect that influences the research method chosen. In this research, the phenomenon is sociological, educational and religious. Interview method and generally, qualitative research methods are more likely to be used in the study of sociological, educational and religious phenomena.

Finally, the fifth aspect is the preexisting conceptual frameworks. This aspect is essential for all researchers when developing their research design and methods. Preexisting conceptual frameworks refer to existing theories and literature that help the

researcher to frame the research proposal, the research questions, interview protocols and to structure the data collection, coding system and data analysis (Weston, et al, 2001, pp.384f). The preexisting conceptual frameworks for this research are presented in detail in literature review chapters: "RE in Cyprus and within the European context" and "Relating RE and Citizenship Education".

Type of interview used

Semi-structured, informal interviews were adopted as an appropriate research method for this thesis. In semi-structured, informal interviews there is an outline of questions and topics to be covered, but the researcher was free to vary the wording and order of the questions to some extent. Interviews were open, allowing in this way new ideas, views and issues to be brought up, in response to what the interviewees replied[16]. By using this format of interview, it was possible to explore in more depth pupils' and teachers' feelings, attitudes, ideas and values. Moreover, semi-structured, informal interviews encouraged trust and interaction with the teachers and pupils. Especially when interviewing young children, it was necessary to develop a bond with them so they would open up and give more honest and fruitful information.

Even though a structured interview might produce more 'neutral' results, because it ensures that same questions are asked of each interviewee (Kvale, 1996), it would leave little space for the interviewees to open up and express their opinions, feelings and thoughts (Lawlor, 2010, p.52). On the other hand, an unstructured interview usually produces rich expansive data which might not remain focused enough on the research purposes, because the participants have the freedom to discuss issues of particular concern (Lawlor, 2010, p.52). With unstructured interviews there is also the risk of researcher bias, with the possibility for open and indirect responses being freely interpreted by the researcher-interviewer (Cresswell, 2003).

For these reasons, the semi-structured, informal interview was adopted as more appropriate for this research, because it gives freedom to interviewees to express their thoughts; but at the same time, an interview protocol with specific questions has been used, so expansive data is less likely to be produced. Another benefit of the semi-structured interview is that the questions are stated on an interview protocol, but both interviewer and interviewee have greater freedom to probe and expand. In this context,

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[16] Pupils' interview protocol can be found in 'Appendix E: Interview Protocols', p.448 and interview transcripts can be found in 'Appendix G: Interview Transcripts', p.521.

the interview is more of a dialogue, but within the limits of the interview protocol (Fielding and Thomas, 2008). The semi-structured interview has the benefit of allowing participants to answer the questions on their own terms, whilst allowing the researcher the chance to keep the interview relatively structured (Lawlor, 2010, p.52). Finally, the use of open-ended questions ensured that the interview process was as objective as possible and that the participants did not feel forced into answering questions "in a way that might have deliberately elicited a desired response" (Lawlor, 2010, p.53). The aim was to allow the participants to answer as honestly as they could and to avoid any possible interviewer bias (Lawlor, 2010, p.53). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer plays a vital role in the guided conversation which takes place (Lawlor, 2010, p.76) so some strategies were followed in order to limit the interviewer's bias: leading questions were avoided during the interview so as to prevent the interviewee answering questions in a manner that might provoke a desired response and also, the researcher sought not to speak a lot or to be aggressive in questioning (Lawlor, 2010, p.77).

The purposes of the interviews

The main purposes of the interviews were to examine pupils' preferences and views in RE subject, to assess how their views and attitudes change as their age changes and to study their thoughts and views about world religions. Also, the purpose of interviewing RE educators, the professionals who are tasked with transmitting an understanding of RE in the classroom, was to investigate their views, perceptions, philosophies, attitudes, motivations, expectations of the RE lesson and additionally, to define the main difficulties, fears, constraints and challenges that they face in the teaching of RE and to suggest ways to promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds. The interviews with the pupils and RE teachers were considered the most effective way to enable the researcher to comprehend something of the environment in which RE is taught, from both within the school community and outside of that community (Lawlor, 2010, p.51).

Stages of the interviews

The interview procedure followed eight stages, following basically Kvale's (1996) seven interview stages: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, translating, analyzing, verifying and reporting. Translating was added in these seven stages because interviews were conducted in the Greek language and it was necessary to translate these into English because the thesis is being examined in English. Thematizing was setting

"the why" and "the what" of the investigation, which is actually the purpose of the research and the research problem. The second stage was designing the interview: setting the research questions and then developing the interview protocols. After that, came the conduction of the interviews. Interviewing is then followed by the transcribing, so that the interview material is prepared for analysis. After interviews were transcribed, they were translated from Greek to English because, as mentioned above, the interviews were conducted in Greek since children were native Greek speakers. At this point, it must be mentioned that the researcher was the one conducting the interviews, and who also transcribed and translated them from Greek to English language. Afterwards, they were analyzed in English. At this stage, the nature and methods of coding and analysis were decided. The seventh stage was verifying, to ascertain the validity of the interview findings. The final stage was reporting the findings of the study based on scientific criteria.

Interviewing young children

Since this research was also based on interviewing children, it was crucial to acknowledge some issues regarding interviewing this specific group. Morrison (2013, p.320) notes that "interviewing children is not straightforward" and therefore, he suggests ten steps for an effective and positive interview with children (Morrison, 2013, p.320). Firstly, the school climate should be characterized by a caring and positive ethos, humor and good relationships between the teachers and children and also between the parents and the school (Morrison, 2013, p.329). Secondly, the interviewers should follow different tactics in order to put children at their ease (Morrison, 2013, p.329). For instance, they should assure children that nobody else will listen to the interview recordings, that the recordings will be destroyed afterwards and that their anonymity will be protected (Morrison, 2013, p.329). Children should also be informed that the interview is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers and they can even choose not to answer a question at all (Morrison, 2013, p.329). During the interview procedure the researcher must give positive reinforcement and feedback to children's answers (Morrison, 2013, p.329). Thirdly, the interviewer should dress formally in order to send a message to children that the interview is important and so therefore what they say is important too (Morrison, 2013, p.330). At the same time, the interviews should be conducted in a polite, positive, warm manner and make the children feel important, valued and valuable (Morrison, 2013, p.330). Fourthly, the interviewer should try to use language that is appropriate for children's age and background (Morrison, 2013, p.330). Fifthly, according to Morrison

(2013, p.330f), it is important to explain, at the beginning of the interview, how the whole procedure will be carried out and also to use questioning techniques that are familiar to the children so that they will be able to understand them. Fifthly, interviewers should manage the interview time successfully and ensure they have an agenda which they need to follow (Morrison, 2013, p.331). Sixthly, it is important to consider the use of physical space while interviewing children as well as the use of non-verbal communication (Morrison, 2013, p.331). Regarding physical space, the interviewers should keep a physical distance between themselves and the children to avoid intruding into the children's personal and social space (Morrison, 2013, p.331). Regarding the non-verbal communication, researchers should maintain good eye contact with the children, use a range of physical movements and hand gestures and reinforce the volume, tone, speed, intensity and pitch of their voice (Morrison, 2013, p.332). Seventhly, care also needs to be taken with question structure, terminology and the sequencing of the interview (Morrison, 2013, p.332). For example, the first questions of the interview should be straightforward and easy to answer, whereas the later questions should be open-ended in order to give the children the chance to respond in their own way and more openly (Morrison, 2013, p.332). Eighthly, the interview situation should be concrete, as would be normal practice with an adult in an interview, so the interviewers should summarize often in order to check that they have understood the children's answers (Morrison, 2013, p.332). Ninthly, researchers must be aware that some children might hesitate to respond or even just give one-word or one-phrase answers (Morrison, 2013, p.333). Researchers need to be prepared for these situations and react accordingly (Morrison, 2013, p.333). Tenthly, Morrison (2013, p.333) suggests that it can be beneficial if the children become used to the presence of the interviewers prior the interview. For instance, if the research project lasts for some time, this means the researchers will be around the school campus distributing questionnaires, conducting other interviews, having meetings with teachers and parents (Morrison, 2013, p.333). This is beneficial because if children are used to see the researchers all the time outside the interview situation, then during the interview they might be more relaxed and comfortable with them (Morrison, 2013, p.333). All of these ten steps were taken into consideration when developing and conducting the children's interviews during the current research.

The interview protocols – research questions

Interview protocol for pupils

The interview protocol for the primary school pupils sought to comprehend their preferences, feelings and perceptions regarding RE lessons. Only three simple questions were included in the interview protocol, so that pupils did not feel tired or bored during the interviewing procedure and also to make it approachable to pupils of all ages. The average duration of the interview was about five minutes.

The first question, "Do you find Religious Education an interesting subject? Explain your answer. (a)Tell me something that you find interesting. (b)Tell me something that you don't find interesting", aimed to explore if pupils find RE an interesting subject and to explain the reason why they find it interesting or do not find it interesting. Also, it aimed to investigate what specifically they find interesting and what they do not find interesting.

The second question, "What would you like to be taught about during RE lessons? Would you like to be taught about something extra? If yes, what?", aimed to explore pupils' topic preferences on RE. What topics they would like to be taught about, what is really interesting for them according to their age? How do their preferences change as the pupils grow older? Also, the pupils could suggest any other topics they would like to be taught.

The purpose of the last question, "Would you like to be taught about other world religions? Explain your answer", was to look into pupils' views about world religions and whether they would like to be taught about other religions and not only about Orthodox Christianity. The interview protocol for pupils can be found in Appendix E, p.448.

Interview protocol for Greek-Cypriots teachers

It was also important, to interview some Greek-Cypriot primary school teachers in order to detect their views about RE subject and multicultural education, what teaching techniques they use, to investigate what difficulties they face while teaching the subject and what is their personal vision about the specific subject. All these information was a significant addition to the research's results and especially, these teachers' views to be taken into consideration for a future curriculum's and textbooks' development. Active teachers' views are always essential in order to develop the teaching aims and material of a specific school subject. Teachers are the ones who know in practice if specific teaching aims and material are applied effectively or not.

The interview protocol for the primary school teachers included five questions which sought to comprehend the motivations behind the planning of their lessons, the dominant teaching methods adopted by them, the different outside factors which might have influenced their teaching, such as government guidelines, and their feelings and perceptions regarding the teaching of RE (Lawlor, 2010, p.50). The first question aimed to discover which teaching purposes teachers consider as most important for the teaching of Religious Education in the Primary School. The second question was investigating the main difficulties and challenges that teachers face in teaching RE. The third question requested suggestions from the teachers for any changes that they thought should be made to the teaching of RE and also, if they thought that any extra teaching topics should be added to the religious education curriculum. If their answer was affirmative, then they were asked to suggest some extra teaching topics. The fourth question solicited teachers' views on multicultural education and how they considered it should be promoted through the subject of Religious Education. The last question asked the teachers if they would like to have the opportunity to teach about non-Christian religions. Teachers' interview protocol can be found in Appendix E, p.448.

Five extra interviews were also conducted with educators representing the five religious minorities of Cyprus: Greek and Turkish-Cypriot, Latin, Armenian and Maronite. These interviews sought to investigate the motivations behind the content of each community's RE syllabus, the dominant teaching methods adopted by the community's teachers, the various external factors which might have influenced their teaching (such as their religion, government or community guidelines), and their feelings and perceptions regarding the teaching of RE (Lawlor, 2010, p.50). The interview protocol used was the same for all three communities except for the Turkish-Cypriot one, as in this case, different circumstances and situations applied, mainly because the Turkish-Cypriot community is under a completely different government. Educators' interview protocol is included in Appendix E, p.449.

Interview protocol for the Greek-Cypriot, Maronite, Armenian and Latin educators

The interview protocol for the Maronite, Armenian and Latin educators included questions about the teaching of RE within the Maronite/Armenian/Latin community of Cyprus, about the RE curriculum, textbooks, the teaching purposes of RE within these three communities, the main educational problems that these communities face at the moment, about how RE can promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds and about the challenges of cultural and religious diversity

within modern Cypriot society. In addition, the interviewee was asked about the effectiveness of primary school teachers in the teaching of religious education, to highlight the main challenges and difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education in the primary schools of Cyprus, and especially about the difficulties they are facing in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds. Finally, the educators from the Maronite/Armenian/Latin were asked to identify, according to their own opinion, the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious education textbooks in use in the primary schools in Cyprus and whether they believe that revisions or updating are needed. The interview protocol for the Maronite/Armenian/Latin educators is included in detail in 'Appendix E: Interview Protocols', p.450.

Interview protocol for the Turkish-Cypriot educator

The interview protocol for the Turkish-Cypriot school inspector included eleven questions regarding the teaching of RE in the Turkish-Cypriot schools. The interviewee was requested to give his own definition of the teaching purposes of RE and to state the reason why the Turkish-Cypriot community has chosen to exclude RE from schools; and whether there is any other subject that is taught in schools in its place. He was also asked whether he was aware of RE being taught in any other form, such as the teaching of The Quran in summer schools. In addition, he was asked whether he thought that understanding between people with different cultural and religious backgrounds and the idea of peaceful coexistence between Turkish and Greek Cypriots were being promoted in Turkish-Cypriot schools; and whether he believed that it is the job of the school to help pupils understand one another's religion and culture. Moreover, he was given the scope to report the difficulties that teachers face in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds. Finally, he was requested to suggest some changes which he thought should to be made in the educational curriculum of North Cyprus and whether he thought that some extra teaching subjects, such as Religious Education, should be added in the curriculum. The interview protocol for the Turkish-Cypriot school inspector is included in detail in 'Appendix E: Interview Protocols', p.449.

Criteria for developing the interview questions

As far as the interview questions were concerned (especially those addressed to children), it was important to ensure that they were appropriate and understandable for their age group.

Initially, the interview protocol was designed in a way to ask more general questions at the beginning, in order to break the ice between the interviewer and the interviewee, and also to help create a more relaxed, friendly and comfortable environment for the participants, before moving on to the more specific questions (Lawlor, 2010, p.53). In addition, the research questions had to be related to the research purpose; they had to be appropriate for every age group and be understandable for 6-12 years old pupils; and they had to be clear and unambiguous. In addition, the questions should not be leading questions or demand knowledge and information that the pupils or educators might not possess. They should allow for flexibility and depth of response and should lend themselves to being followed up with clarification questions. For instance, asking 'Why do you believe this?', would give the interviewees the opportunity to explain their answers. During the interview procedure, the questioning should allow the interviewees' responses to be spontaneous (Lawlor, 2010, p.53) and expansive (Fielding and Thomas, 2008). Moreover, it was necessary to ensure that the questions would not demand very personal responses that the interviewee may refuse to offer; and finally, the questions should not be too difficult to code during analysis.

Piloting the interview protocol

Before conducting the interviews, it was essential to pilot the interview protocol in order to make sure that was clear, understandable and interesting for all interviewees, pupils and educators. It was important to organize the content in detail and rehearse the interviewing process before starting the formal study. Therefore, it was piloted by conducting three interviews with pupils aged six, eight and eleven so that all pupil age ranges were covered and tested. The interview with a Greek-Cypriot teacher was also piloted.

The research sample and the interview procedure

The research population consisted of primary school-aged Greek Cypriot pupils in a geographical area east of Cyprus. Given the potentially large size of the research population sampling, it was necessary to determine a smaller sample from which it would be possible to draw generalizations which could be applicable to the wider population (Miles and Hubermann, 1994) of Cyprus. The sample was opportunistic and convenient rather than random, because the researcher was teaching in the specific school. At the same time though, it could be argued that the sample was in some measure purposive

(Burgess, 2007 in Lawlor, 2010, p.65) because the different schools' research data were compared between them.

For the completion of this PhD research, 69 interviews were conducted out of the 280 pupil school population; there were about 10-14 pupils involved from each age group, from 6 to 12 years old. All of the 69 pupils were studying in the same school in a village; 40 of them were girls and 29 of them were boys, and all of them were Christian Orthodox except for one Muslim pupil. The majority of the participants were girls, largely because they volunteered to participate whereas boys were less enthusiastic.

Five Greek-Cypriot primary education teachers were also interviewed; three of them were females and two of them males, and all of them were Christian Orthodox. Four of them were class teachers, teaching all subjects in their class, without any particular interest in the teaching of RE. Only one of them was more experienced in the teaching of RE, not due having a postgraduate degree in RE, but because of teaching the subject for so many years in all the classes across the primary school, and due to having attended seminars about the teaching of RE. The choice of teachers to be interviewed was mainly determined by which teachers were willing or able to participate. None of the teachers openly refused, although some were unable to do it because of time constraints.

Five extra interviewees also participated in the research. Those were educators representing the four religious minorities of Cyprus: Greek and Turkish Cypriot, Latin, Armenian and Maronite.

One could argue that the interviews' research sample is a relatively small sample from which to draw generalizations which could be applied to the wider population (Lawlor, 2010, p.66). Nevertheless, qualitative researchers generally work with small samples of people in depth, unlike quantitative researchers (Miles and Hubermann 1994). The issue, though, is not one of numerical size but whether the in-depth study of a representative sample can yield data which can be applied to the research population (Oliver, 2008). In this research, the sample can be reasonably applied more broadly, to the wider Cyprus' population, because the research participants are drawn from both urban and rural areas, and they comprise a mix of Christians and non-Christians, Greek-Cypriots and non-Greek-Cypriots; additionally, the research covers a wide range of age groups. The sample also includes participants from the five different religious communities of Cyprus: Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Latins, Armenians and Maronites.

The following tables provide information on the research sample.

Table 3: Pupils' Research Sample (Interviews) (N=69)

AGE						GENDER		RELIGION	
7	8	9	10	11	12	Male	Female	Muslim	Christian
11	10	14	10	12	12	29	40	1	68

Table 4: Greek Cypriot Teachers' Research Sample (N=5)

GENDER		RELIGION	YEARS of EXPERIENCE				RE SPECIALIST	
Male	Female	Christian	1-5	5-10	10-20	20-30	Yes	No
2	3	5	2	1	1	1	1	4

Table 5: Educators from the Religious Communities of Cyprus (N=5)

GENDER		ORIGIN-RELIGION					YEARS of EXPERIENCE		
M	F	Turkish Muslim	Greek Orthodox	Armenian Christian	Latin Catholic	Maronite Catholic	5-10	10-20	20-30
1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2

The breakdown of the participants in the above categories was important because during the data analysis, these categories were compared between them. For instance, it was investigated how children's views about RE differ according to their age. It was also examined how teachers' views differ according to their years of teaching experience. In addition, it studied the educators', from the different communities of Cyprus, views about the teaching of RE subject.

The duration of interviews varied depending on the specific participant. A typical interview with pupils lasted an average of five minutes, whereas the ones with Greek Cypriot teachers and educators from the religious communities of Cyprus lasted about fifteen and fifty minutes, respectively. All the interviews were conducted at a time which was convenient to all interviewees and the place of the interview was dependent upon the available space (Lawlor, 2010, p.56). All the pupils' interviews took place in the special education classroom of the school, while it was empty, and one of the teachers' interviews took place in a classroom, again, while it was empty; and the remaining four teachers' interviews took place in the teachers' own homes. Interviews with the educators from the different communities took place in their offices; some of these were located in the ministry of education and the others in their schools.

Once interest had been expressed, pre-meetings were arranged with the participants (pupils, teachers, educators). The purpose of those meetings was threefold: firstly, to build up a relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants, secondly, to provide an opportunity for the research project to be explained verbally and for any questions to be answered and thirdly, to arrange dates and times for the interviews (Lawlor, 2010, p.70). When pre-meeting the participants, the aims and objectives of the research were clearly explained to them, as well as what they were consenting to, and also issues of confidentiality, data collection and storage were explained (Lawlor, 2010, p.70).

> "Sensitive topics place particular emphasis on voluntariness in participation, being mentally prepared for the interview, the scope for self-expression, confidentiality and the option to withhold information".
>
> (Gilbert, 2008, p. 157)

Bearing all of the above in mind, on the day of the actual interview, the researcher attempted to make the interviewees feel relaxed and calm by informing them that she was genuinely interested in hearing their views and opinions about the teaching of RE. The semi-structured nature of the interviews ensured that they ran like a guided conversation, allowing the interviewee to speak freely and openly, whilst remaining broadly focused on the research questions (Lofland, 1995).

All the interviews were recorded with a digital recording machine and afterwards they were copied on to a computer (Lawlor, 2010, p.56). At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were asked if they were happy for their interview to be recorded (Lawlor, 2010, p.56) and they were assured that the interview would be kept confidential and their anonymity would be protected. They were also assured that they could withdraw from the interview at any point and that the recorder would be switched off at any time they wished, or if there were any specific comments that they did not want to be recorded (Lawlor, 2010, p.56). In the event, all participants were happy for their interview to be recorded fully (Lawlor, 2010, p.56) and they were neither embarrassed nor uncomfortable (Lawlor, 2010, p.77), so none of them declined any question and therefore all interviewees have answered all questions. In addition, participants were offered the transcript of their interview on request, and offered the chance to discuss the results of the research with the researcher and were told that they would be given access to any data relating to them at any time on request (Lawlor, 2010, pp.70f).

Prior to each interview, the procedure was explained to the interviewees and it was made clear that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions; participants were told to feel free to ask for any clarification about the questions, or even to decline answering any question they were unable or unwilling to answer. During the interview

some questions were repeated or rephrased, especially those with the younger pupils, and often the interviewees were asked for further clarification or to expand more fully on some of their answers.

At the end of the interviewing procedure, "all interviews were listened to at least three times to ensure accuracy in transcription" (Lawlor, 2010, p.56) and then the interviews were typed on a Microsoft Word document. All interviews were conducted in the Greek language, except the ones with the Armenian and the Turkish educators which were conducted in the English language. For this reason, all the interviews needed to be translated from English to Greek and retyped on a Microsoft Word document in English this time[17].

Content Analysis

Brenner et al (1985) suggest a number of steps to be undertaken during a content analysis in order to ensure that the findings will be reliable and replicable. Firstly, they suggest "Briefing", which means a full understanding of the problem and its context (Brenner et al, 1985). Secondly, they suggest "Sampling" to ensure that a fair and a reasonable research sample is selected for analysis. The third step is associating the content analysis with other previous work on the same subject which has already been undertaken (Brenner et al, 1985). The next step in the research is "Hypothesis development", "Hypothesis testing" and "Immersion in the data" of the data that is to be collected. Afterwards comes "Categorizing" - coding the content to be analyzed by using codes, labels and categories. These codes, labels and categories should reflect the purpose of the research and be related to the research questions (Brenner et al, 1985). "Incubation" should follow on, which is reflecting upon the data that has been collected and developing ideas, conclusions and understandings. This should be followed by "Synthesis", which is a justification of the coding used and the identification the themes and issues which emerge from the analysis. "Culling", is the next step, which involves reconsidering the coding system and removing any codes which have not proved useful, and reinterpreting data so that it is manageable in order for it to be written up (Brenner et al, 1985). Brenner et al (1985) suggest as final steps "Interpretation" – explaining the findings, "Writing" up the findings of the research and "Rethinking" the content analysis and the methods used.

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[17] All interviews' transcripts are included in detail in 'Appendix G: Interview Transcripts', p.521.

Brenner's et al (1985) steps proved to be very useful for the content analysis of this thesis. Every single one of the above steps was undertaken during the research data analysis.

Grounded Theory methods in analyzing the interview data

The method of analysis of the interview data was mainly based on the Grounded Theory methods. The interviews were first reviewed; any repeated ideas, views, attitudes and concepts were monitored and then tagged with codes. These codes were then grouped and categories created. These categories may then become the basis and the construction of a new theory regarding the teaching of RE.

But what exactly is Grounded Theory? Grounded Theory is an inductive research method and even though some maintain that it is a qualitative method, it is not (Glaser, B. and Classic Grounded Theory official site, 2014). It is a general method that it can be used with either qualitative or quantitative data (Glaser, B. and Classic Grounded Theory official site, 2014). It is the systematic construction of a new theory from systematic research (Glaser, B. and Classic Grounded Theory official site, 2014). It is a set of different research steps that lead to the creation of conceptual categories and these categories are related to each other (Glaser, B. and Classic Grounded Theory official site, 2014).

Charmaz (2006, p.2) in her book 'Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis, states that,

> "…grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves".
>
> (Charmaz, 2006, p.2)

Charmaz (2006, p.3), explains that grounded theorists start with data which are constructed based on the different observations, interactions and materials that they gather during their research. Then, these data are studied and coded by attaching labels to segments of data that show what each segment is about (Charmaz, 2006, p.3). Coding enables, in this way, the researcher to separate, sort, synthesize and compare the data, and after numerous comparisons, data begins to take a form (Charmaz, 2006, p.3). At this point, grounded theorists write preliminary analytic notes, which are called memos, about the codes and comparisons or any other idea regarding the data (Charmaz, 2006, p.3). Through studying and comparing the data and writing memos, ideas that best interpret the data are now defined (Charmaz, 2006, p.3). However, some important questions arise and gaps in the categories occur, so the researcher needs to look for the necessary data that will answer these questions and that will also fill the gaps in the categories (Charmaz,

2006, p.3). As the grounded theorist proceeds with the data analysis, the categories coalesce and they also become more theoretical (Charmaz, 2006, p.3).

Grounded theory methods emerged from sociologists Barney. G. Glaser and Anselm. L. Strauss (1965, 1967) (in Charmaz, 2006, p.4) who defined that the basic components of grounded theory include data collection and analysis, developing analytical codes and categories, comparing data, advancing theory development during every step of data collection, writing memos, defining connections between the categories, detecting any gaps in the categories, sampling in order to construct a theory, developing an independent data analysis and finally, conducting the literature review (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987).

Charmaz (2006, p.13) explains that grounded theory practices may take different routes, depending on where the researchers want to reach and where the analysis takes them. For this reason, various research methods can be followed such as ethnographic methods, interviewing or textual analysis (Charmaz, 2006, p.13). Using various methods enables the researcher to gather rich data. Rich, detailed, focused and full data reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions and actions; rich data provides a solid material for constructing a significant analysis (Charmaz, 2006, p.14). For the completion of this thesis, semi-structured informal interviews were used. Even though there was a structured outline of questions and topics to be covered, the interviews were still open, allowing in this way new ideas, views, issues and feelings to be brought up by the participants. If the interviews were not structured, then there was always going to be the risk of receiving unfocused answers and therefore, unnecessary interview data, irrelevant to the research questions.

For this reason, Charmaz (2006, p.15) suggests that researchers should choose those methods that will help them answer their research questions, but should always bear in mind that methods are just tools and what really matters it is how researchers use these tools or methods. Charmaz (2006, p.15) argues that methods alone, however good they are, do not necessarily produce good research or analysis, but,

> "A keen eye, open mind, discerning ear, and steady hand can bring you close to what you study and are more important than developing methodological tools".
>
> (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996 in Charmaz, 2006, p.15)

But what are the steps of grounded theory? Birks and Mills (2011), in their book "Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide" point out the essential grounded theory methods (p.9). "Initial coding and categorization of the data" is the first step of grounded theory analysis (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.9). In this initial step the researcher studies the data and

identifies in them important words or groups of words and afterwards, labels them accordingly (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.9). According to Charmaz (2006, pp.42&46), grounded theory coding includes two stages: the initial coding, and focused coding. Initial coding includes studying and naming words, lines, segments and incidents, whereas focused coding includes the selection of the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate and organize large amounts of data. Throughout this process, data sets are first compared and then, data are allocated codes (Charmaz, 2006, p.42). In grounded theory, coding is the base of the analysis because it forms an analytical framework from which the analysis will be built (Charmaz, 2006, p.45).

The second step is "Concurrent data generation or collection and analysis", where the researcher collects data with an initially purposive sample (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.10). Grounded theorists either initially collect and subsequently analyze the data, or they first construct a theoretical proposition and then they collect data in order to test their hypothesis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Memo-Writing is a crucial step between the data collection and writing drafts of papers because it allows the researcher to analyze the data early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006, p.72). It is an on-going activity because memos are produced from the early stages of the research until the completion of the study (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.10). Writing constantly and plentifully enables the theorists to build their intellectual assets (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.10) because through memo-writing new ideas, thoughts, comparisons and connections arise and this makes the research material manageable (Charmaz, 2006, p.72).

Memo-writing leads directly to "theoretical sampling", saturation and sorting (Charmaz, 2006, p.96, 103). Theoretical sampling helps the researchers to review their steps or even to take a new path when they have gaps in their categories or incomplete ideas (Charmaz, 2006, p.96). During this stage, researchers seek for any statement, event or case that will illuminate their categories (Charmaz, 2006, p.103) and they can write more memos and integrate them into the theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006, p.96). As Charmaz (2006, p.96) notes, "the main purpose of the theoretical sampling is to elaborate and refine the categories constituting your theory". At this point, Charmaz (2006, p.96) also suggests charting the course with diagrams and maps, explaining in this way what has been done and what else still needs to be done.

"Constant comparative analysis" is the next step for grounded theory methods (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.11). As noted by Birks and Mills (2011, p.11), during the data analysis it is important to compare constantly incidents to incidents, incidents to codes,

codes to codes, codes to categories and finally, categories to categories. This comparative analysis continues until grounded theory is completed (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.11).

Then, "Theoretical sensitivity" follows the comparative analysis. According to Birks and Mills (2011, p.11):

> "...a researcher's level of theoretical sensitivity is deeply personal; it reflects their level of insight into both themselves and the area that they are researching. Secondly, a researcher's level of theoretical sensitivity reflects their intellectual history, the type of theory that they have read, absorbed and now use in their everyday thought".
>
> (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.11)

The next step is "Intermediate coding", which is the second stage of data analysis, after the initial coding (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.11). During intermediate coding, the researcher reconnects the data, develops individual categories by connecting sub-categories and also links categories together. (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.12). After that, "identifying a core category" follows, where the grounded theorist can choose a core category that summarizes and describes the grounded theory as a whole (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.12).

Another step of grounded theory is the "Advanced coding and theoretical integration" (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.12). Birks and Mills (2011, p.12), explain that a grounded theory provides a comprehensive explanation of a process associated with a particular phenomenon. Advanced coding includes the use of the storyline technique as a way to integrate and present grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 in Birks and Mills, 2011, p.12).

One of the final steps is "Reconstructing Theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p.123). Theorizing in grounded theory reveals that "theories serve different purposes and differ in their inclusiveness, precision, level, scope, generality and applicability" (Charmaz, 2006, p.149). This is the final product of grounded theory which explains a process associated with a phenomenon (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.12). A new theory has been generated by the researcher using the methods of grounded theory (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.12).

The grounded theory journey leads the researchers to the process of Writing the Draft where researchers pull together the pieces of their manuscripts, constructing, in this way, a persuasive argument that fits their grounded theory and scrutinizes their categories (Charmaz, 2006, p.151).

> "Through writing and rewriting drafts, you can bring out implicit arguments, provide their context, make links with extant literatures,

> critically examine your categories, present your analysis, and provide data that support your analytic arguments".

<div align="right">(Charmaz, 2006, p.154)</div>

At this point, researchers need to look carefully at their theory and consider whether the definitions of the categories are complete, if important categories were raised to concepts, how the scope and depth of the analysis were increased and whether strong theoretical links were established between the categories (Charmaz, 2006, p.155). In addition, researchers need to consider how they have increased the understanding of the studied phenomenon and what were the implications of the analysis, regarding the theoretical breadth, methods, substantive knowledge, actions and interventions (Charmaz, 2006, p.155). It is also important to consider with which theoretical, substantive or practical problems the analysis is associated and lastly, which audiences might be most interested in this theory and how the theory itself makes a new contribution to knowledge (Charmaz, 2006, p.156).

Grounded theory's journey ends with Reflecting on the Research Process (Charmaz, 2006, p.177). During this journey, the researchers have gathered data, categorized those data through coding, written memos, conducted theoretical sampling and written a draft of their theory (Charmaz, 2006, p.177). The final step, now, is to reflect on the research process: what they have learned through writing, how they evaluate their theory, and to consider where the grounded theory method leads them (Charmaz, 2006, p.177).

At this last stage, Charmaz (2006, pp.182f) points out four criteria about grounded theory studies: credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness. Credibility is looking at whether the research data and empirical observations are adequate, if there are strong links between the research data and the analysis and if the researchers provided enough evidence for their claims (Charmaz, 2006, p.182). Originality is looking at the categories' originality and how the research analysis offers a new knowledge (Charmaz, 2006, p.182). In addition, it considers whether the work is theoretically and socially significant and if the specific grounded theory challenges, further develops or enhances any current ideas, concepts or practices (Charmaz, 2006, p.182). Resonance is looking at how the new grounded theory makes sense to the research participants and if the new analysis offers them a deeper understanding about their lives (Charmaz, 2006, p.183). Lastly, usefulness examines whether the grounded theory produced a new knowledge, if it offers any guidelines or suggestions that people can use in their everyday lives and if the theory stimulates further research in other important study areas (Charmaz, 2006, p.183).

Charmaz (2006, p.185) in her book 'Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis' concludes that "grounded theory studies can contribute to a better world" and they can transform knowledge. The grounded theorists should be passionate, curious and open so that fresh experiences will arise and their ideas will emerge (Charmaz, 2006, p.185). They should study a phenomenon with enthusiasm; open themselves to the research experience and follow where it takes them (Charmaz, 2006, p.185).

Grounded theory methods were very useful for the analysis of the interview data of this research and most of the theory's steps were successfully followed during the analysis. Grounded theory's steps (coding, categorizing and comparing the data, writing memos, defining connections between the categories, theoretical sampling, reconstructing theory, writing a draft and reflecting on the research process) were all used during the analysis.

Analyzing interviews' data

When the first interviews were completely transcribed, it became evident that broad themes were emerging from the interviewees' answers (Lawlor, 2010, p.57). At this point, headed sheets were prepared according to the theme-topic, so in this way, the interview material was clearly organized and structured when subsequent data analysis took place. (Lawlor, 2010, p.57). This was an effective coding system for analyzing the interviewees' answers. Coding was very useful 'in order to break the material down into manageable "chunks"' and in this way, to avoid data overload and also, to help 'the process of data retrieval' (Miles and Hubermann, 1994). These codes are like tags or labels given to "chunks" of the material to be analyzed (Miles and Hubermann, 1994). The codes can be sentences, phrases, paragraphs or single words, and may be in the form of written language or some other medium, for example, a spoken word from audio-visual material (Lawlor, 2010, p.60). Miles and Hubermann (1994) also suggested a second level of coding, "pattern coding", which involves grouping the data into smaller units of analysis so as to enable the researcher to draw conclusions from the data and also to make analysis easier. As Lawlor (2010, p.61) explains, coding is vital when a huge amount of data needs to be analyzed; data which may derived from a number of various sources, both written and spoken.

More specifically, pupils' answers were categorized in nine different categories and 33 subcategories (see page 215 of this thesis). The first category "Orthodox Doctrine" includes the subcategories of "Drawing and coloring icons and pictures", "Jesus, Saints

and Christian prayers", "Jesus' parables and miracles", "Learning more about God", "Orthodox Churches", "Byzantine psalms", "Details about Jesus' life", "A critical approach to Orthodox Christianity – Pupils' religious doubts". The second category, "RE as a teaching subject" includes the subcategories of "RE as a relaxing subject", "RE as a theoretical and a boring subject", "RE teaching books", "Expressing thoughts and views". The third category is the "Contemporary life in Cyprus" and the subcategory of "Contemporary social issues and problems". The fourth category "Spiritual issues" and the subcategories of "Spiritual issues" and "Origins of the universe". "Health Education" was the fifth category and included the subcategories of "Environmental education" and "Health education". The sixth category was the biggest one, including the subcategories of "World religions", "Converting into another religion", "Skepticism towards other religions", "Religious symbols", "Other people's dietary habits", "Learning about different customs, ethics, religious celebrations and traditions", "Learning about other religions because of curiosity", "Learning about other religions because of personal reasons", "Learning about other religions because of social reasons", "Comparing religions". The seventh category is "Universal values and Human Personality" and includes the subcategories of "Improving human personality", "Developing love and understanding", "RE for human-universal values", "The common purpose of all religions". The eighth category was "Pupils' Religious Misconceptions" with the subcategory of "Pupils' most frequent misconceptions" and the ninth category "The Orthodox Christian Education through the eyes of a Muslim child" and the subcategory "The Orthodox Christian Education through the eyes of a Muslim child".

In the current study the coding of the interview data was undertaken by hand, by the researcher, and not by any computer software, so it was important for the codes to be easily retained in the memory and to be meaningful (Lawlor, 2010, p.63). Therefore, every code was given a name closest to the theme that it was describing (Lawlor, 2010, p.63). The process of coding the data involved breaking down the interview material into units of content and then codes were given to the material (Lawlor, 2010, p.63). These codes were usually words or small sentences (see above).

After analyzing the interview data, common themes emerged from diverse settings and this gave confidence to the researcher that generalizations could be applied to the wider population (Lawlor, 2010, p.66). For instance, common answers and themes emerged while transcribing the interviews. Many pupils supported some common ideas, such as wanting to learn more about world religions, that RE is a theoretical and boring subject, that the RE textbooks are also boring, confusing and not well structured. More

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details about the categories which emerged can be found in Chapter IV: "Findings and Analysis".

At the same time, the researcher acknowledged that, as with any qualitative research, there will always be a degree of subjectivity (Lawlor, 2010, p.66; Miles and Hubermann, 1994), but the method of content analysis described above was intended to help achieve similar results even if the data were to be coded by another hand (Lawlor, 2010, p.63).

Interviews' difficulties and obstacles

As Angelides (2001, p.429) notes, qualitative research methods, such as interviews, have always related to various practical difficulties: they require long-term engagement by the researcher, they are time consuming, researchers face difficulties in collecting their data and a great volume of data is produced which is very difficult to manage and analyze successfully. Indeed, interviews are very time consuming especially for the researcher, mainly because interviews needed to be transcribed and then translated from Greek to English and this was also costly and exhausting due to travelling implications. Afterwards, during analysis it was also difficult to develop an interview instrument for data analysis, for transcription and coding.

Translating from Greek to English presented another research problem because translating can sometimes give inaccurate or wrong explanations and different meanings. However, pupils used simple vocabulary, which made it easier for translating afterwards.

Interviewing children raises a number of issues because they are vulnerable (Angelides, 2001, p.435). Cooper (1993, p.253), suggests that it is very important that the interviewer should help the children during the interview to enable them to express their views as clearly and coherently as possible. For this purpose, techniques such as active listening, paraphrasing and reflection can be used during interviews with children. Armstrong (1995) notes that:

> "Gaining access to children's perspectives requires skill in communicating meanings embedded in children's language and behavior. It also requires an understanding of the nature of interactions between adults and children".
>
> Armstrong (1995, p.67)

The first priority for the interviewer is to encourage children to talk openly (Angelides, 2001, p.435). Thus, it is better that the interview has the style of an informal chat where the interviewer and the child can walk and talk in the playground instead of sitting down and talking to a tape-recorder. In this informal chat children will feel less stressed, anxious

and uncomfortable (Angelides, 1999). Children will be consequently feel encouraged to express their thoughts more openly and freely (Angelides, 1999). "Indeed, this is the whole point of data analysis to learn from and about the data; to learn something new about a question by listening to other people" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.4). Therefore, at no stage was any interview was cut short; the interviewer preferring instead to allow the interviewees to talk as much as they wanted and say whatever they wanted to say.

It was also necessary to acknowledge my role as a researcher and my relationship to the children, teachers and educators interviewed. Undoubtedly, by interviewing my own students, the existing teacher-student relationship might have had an impact on their answers during the interview procedure. For instance, in the question about whether they found RE an interesting subject, students might have felt nervous about saying that they did not find it interesting, even if at the beginning of the interview I had assured them that they had to be honest and not to worry that I am their teacher. They might have hesitated to tell the whole truth for fear of being shown up (Lawlor, 2010, p.76) or their answers might have been affected by the role of the interviewer as their teacher or their colleague. In a similar way, in the question about whether they would like to be taught about other world religions, again they might have worried what was the 'right' answer to this question, 'yes' or 'no'? But, again, the students were assured from the beginning of the interview that they just needed to give their own personal opinion and that there was not any right or wrong answer. Apparently, it is impossible to guarantee that these attitudes have been successfully overcome (Lawlor, 2010, p.76). However, two basic strategies were employed in an attempt to limit such attitudes; firstly, by explaining to the participants the aims of the interview in great detail and secondly, by guaranteeing confidentiality (Lawlor, 2010, p.76). In addition, the interviewer[18] conducted the interviews in a relaxed and friendly way, helping the participants to feel comfortable (Lawlor, 2010, p.76). In order to achieve this, all interviews began with some general questions which allowed for a friendly discussion and helped to break down any negative feelings that the participants might have felt (Lawlor, 2010, p.76).

Data analysis is also difficult to achieve because when analyzing data, qualitative researchers are directly confronted with their own subjectivity and the interpretive nature of what they do; they are influenced, consciously or not, by their personal, political and theoretical beliefs (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.4) and they may struggle to be impartial

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[18] Interviewer and Researcher refers to the same person.

and with their own central role in shaping the research outcome (p.5). Perhaps that is why the different computer programs have been so popular for analyzing research data because the use of technology offers a kind of scientific objectivity to what remains a fundamentally subjective, interpretative process (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.5).

> "Qualitative data analysis involves far more than collecting data and systematically ordering it, as with any qualitative research there is a degree of evaluation and interpretation, involving a degree of subjectivity".
>
> (Lawlor, 2010, p.59)

Lawlor (2010, p.74), also argues that in qualitative research is not possible to achieve complete objectivity. The purpose of the qualitative researcher is not just to describe but also to interpret, and this means subjectivity (Lawlor, 2010, p.74). Qualitative research is itself a form of social investigation which is aiming to make sense of and interpret the social reality that is being studied (Holloway, 1997). Consequently, qualitative research cannot be completely precise and objective because analysis relies on the researcher's personal interpretation (Cresswell, 2003) and the researcher is not just an impassive and objective observer of the social world, but interacts with that world in a dynamic relationship (Oliver, 2008).

However, subjectivity in qualitative research is not necessarily a problem or obstacle in analyzing the research data. As mentioned above, qualitative research is itself a form of social investigation which is aiming to make sense of and interpret the social reality that is being studied (Holloway, 1997). Therefore, some may argue that subjectivity is required in order to study and interpret the social reality. Hence, if another researcher conducts the same research, the findings will be different because they would be affected by his or her own background and their impact on the research setting (Lawlor, 2010, p.79). However, the use of mixed research methods, where every method is mutually complementary, increases the possibility of reliability and ensures that another researcher would probably produce similar results if conducting the same research (Lawlor, 2010, p.79).

Nonetheless, interviewing the pupils and teachers enabled me to understand and articulate something of the teachers' and pupils' views in a way that the quantitative data could not. The benefit of the interview is that it can be elaborative, data rich, and flexible (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 365). "It can also be stimulating for respondents, providing the potential for greater depth, allowing the researcher to ask probing questions which allow for the responses of participants to be developed in a way that might not be possible with

other methods, for example the use of a questionnaire" (Lawlor, 2010, pp.51f). For this research, both interviews and questionnaires were used, but participants during the interviews were certainly able to provide more detailed answers than in the questionnaires. For example, in the question "Do you find RE an interesting subject?", pupils had to explain in detail why they find or do not find RE an interesting subject, whereas, if this question was included in the questionnaire they could just answer "Yes or No" without explaining or justifying their answer. Another example, included in the teachers' interviews, is the question "What do you see as the main teaching purposes of RE in the Primary School?" where teachers had to state their own opinion as to what are the teaching purposes of RE, and to explain every single one of them in order to support their opinion. However, if this had been a question in the questionnaire, the teachers might have simply written down the teaching purposes of RE without explaining their answer in depth. During the interview, the researcher had the chance to ask the participants probing questions which allowed and encouraged them to further develop their answers.

The Research Questionnaires

When considering where to distribute the questionnaires, the first idea was to give them to the pupils in the school where I was working at that time. This was very convenient, mainly because I could carry out my survey while I was in the school, since I was already working there. Therefore, it was not necessary to arrange another time after school to meet the pupils, which might have been difficult, i.e. to arrange the most convenient time, place, etc.

Firstly, in September 2008 pilot questionnaires were conducted and then they were distributed to 11-year old students and in September 2009, after the pilot stage was completed, the research questionnaires were given to 11-year old pupils.

For this research three different types of questionnaires were developed: an introductory, a diagnostic and a final/evaluation questionnaire (see 'Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.436).

In total, 150 questionnaires, of each of the different types of questionnaire, were handed to primary school students. 59 questionnaires were distributed to students studying in a town school, 73 to students studying in the village schools and 18 questionnaires to the control group. The questionnaires were firstly explained to them; an explanation of terminology used and the ways of answering the questions, i.e. multiple choice, true-false, open questions etc. In this way, it was ensured that all students understood what the questions required and how they should answer. At no stage was

any student guided about what to answer but in some instances, a few students, especially the younger ones, requested further explanation or repetition of the explanation, and therefore some extra support was offered on these occasions. After completing the questionnaires, they were checked thoroughly and if children had missed any questions, they were handed back to them for completion.

At this point, it must be mentioned that 18 questionnaires were also handed to a control group of students. This group of students, who were studying in a different school than the research group and also in another town, were taught from the usual RE textbooks and not from the RE booklet. Therefore, the research group was used as a benchmark to measure how the research students perform after being taught from the RE booklet.

Introductory Questionnaires' Survey Questions

The main purpose of the introductory questionnaire was to detect pupils' attitudes and expectations of RE as a subject. This would be very useful because it is important to know what pupils expect or want to be taught during an RE lesson, so that the researcher can incorporate into the booklet the teaching topics that pupils wish to be taught. Also, by detecting pupils' attitudes at the beginning of the research, it would be possible to compare them with their attitudes at the end of the research, and see how or if these have changed after teaching the RE booklet. Therefore, four open questions were included in this questionnaire which asked pupils to write a few sentences about the definition of RE, and to write a few words that come to their mind when they hear the term RE, what they have been taught in RE lessons in previous school years and what they were expecting to be taught during that school year (see 'Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.436).

Diagnostic Questionnaires' Survey Questions

The diagnostic questionnaires aimed to diagnose the pupils' knowledge, attitudes and views regarding different religious, social, cultural, moral and spiritual issues. Again, it was important to gauge the pupils' knowledge, attitudes and views about those issues in order to plan the future RE lessons more effectively, according to their knowledge and background, and also to compare it, afterwards, with their knowledge, attitudes and views at the end of the research. The survey questions of the diagnostic questionnaire (see 'Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.437) numbered twenty-six, including different types of questions: open and closed, structured and unstructured, dichotomous questions, semantic differential and contingency questions.

The development and wording of the diagnostic questionnaire, were drawn on

surveys developed in Northern Ireland, as another case of a divided society where religion is a key marker of ethnic identity. More specifically, they were mainly drawn on the surveys of Herbert (2008) "Volunteering and Its Unintended Consequences" and "Creating Community Cohesion: Religion, Media and Multiculturalism in North Western Europe" (Herbert, 2013). Moreover, the wording of the questionnaire was also based on some other additional papers; "The Development of Intergroup Forgiveness in Northern Ireland" (McLernon et al., 2004) and "Intergroup Contact, Forgiveness, and Experience of "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland" (Hewstone et al., 2006). The development and wording of the diagnostic questionnaire were also based on the researcher's experience, as a teacher within the Greek-Cypriot schools.

Initially, the first question asked about the aims of RE and pupils were asked to choose how important some RE teaching aims are. The teaching aims were given and they had to tick on a scale "very important, important, less important, not important" for every single aim. Those aims were: "To teach pupils about Christianity", "To teach them how to become good Christians", "To teach them about the various religions and faith systems", "To teach them how to understand, respect, appreciate and help every individual despite his/her cultural, religious, social or economic background". This question is useful because it would reveal how important some RE teaching aims are to pupils, and by scaling them (from very important to not important) it would show how much priority they give to every single one of them.

The next set of questions aimed to detect and analyze pupils' knowledge, views and attitudes towards the different ethnic groups – religious communities of Cyprus: Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins. The first question was a multiple choice question asking the pupils to choose "Which are the official ethnic groups – religious communities of Cyprus?". They had to choose from five different options. The rest of the questions were again multiple choice, but this time requesting pupils' personal opinion about the five different ethnic groups of Cyprus: "What is your personal opinion about the Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites, and Latins that live in Cyprus?". Another question was asked as well: "What is your personal opinion about the foreign workers (for example from Syria, the Philippines, Pakistan, Russia, Georgia) that live and work in Cyprus?" Pupils had to choose one of the answers for each ethnic group: "They are mostly good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people", "They are mostly good people", "I have no feelings for them", "They are mostly bad people", "They are mostly bad, trustless, unhelpful and lazy people".

An additional question focused on the peaceful coexistence among people who come from different countries and profess different religions. It was a multiple choice question and pupils were requested to give their opinion as to whether these people can coexist and work together peacefully. They had to choose from five different options: "Yes, people that come from different countries and profess different religions can easily coexist and work together peacefully", "There are few obstacles for people that come from different countries and profess different religions to coexist and work together peacefully", "There are many obstacles for people that come from different countries and profess different religions to coexist and work together peacefully", "I have no opinion about this", "No, it is impossible for people that come from different countries and profess different religions to coexist and work together peacefully".

The next two questions asked the pupils how safe they feel when they are walking through their own neighbourhood and when walking through areas where another community is in the majority. Again they had to choose one out of five options: "Completely safe", "Not very safe", "Not safe", "Not safe at all". These questions aimed to investigate pupils' attitudes and feelings towards different communities.

The question "How often do you have contact with people from a different religious background to you?" was aiming to discover pupils' frequency of contact with people professing different religions to them: "Frequent, sometimes, occasional, hardly ever, never".

The following question, was similar to the previous one, "How many of your friends have a different religious/ethnic background to you?" and the next one asked whether they prefer to have a Greek-Cypriot or a Turkish-Cypriot or an English or a Maronite friend or just a good, trustful and helpful friend and it does not matter where he/she comes from. The purpose of these questions was to discover pupils' willingness to have a friend from a different religious/ethnic background.

An additional question asked whether pupils have ever visited North Cyprus ("Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus") and if their answers were affirmative, then they were requested to note down how many times they had visited: "Once, two, three, several times, often". "How do you feel about visiting North Cyprus?" was the next question and five options were given to them to choose from: "nervous or curious or cautious or

confident or pleased". The purpose of these questions was also to discover pupils' parents'[19] willingness to visit North Cyprus and also, pupils' feelings about doing so.

One of the questions investigated pupils' perceptions about the creation of the universe. It was a multiple choice question providing them with six options: "God", "a supernatural power", "the "Big Bang", "it is not sure whether the universe was created by God or by the Big Bang or by something else", "aliens", "a combination of the above. Please state: ….". This question was aimed at identifying pupils' knowledge and views about the creation of the universe and whether these views are theological or critical.

The last question of the first part of the questionnaire sought to discover whether the pupils have ever viewed or participated in different cultural or religious activities, such as visiting a mosque, viewing a Catholic, Protestant, Maronite or Armenian ceremony in a church or visiting the other side of the border (North Cyprus) or visiting a Turkish-Cypriot school. If the answer was negative, then they were requested to state whether or not they would like to view or participate in each one of the above activities. The purpose of this question was twofold; firstly, to examine pupils' experiences in participating in the above cultural/religious activities and secondly, to explore their willingness in doing these activities.

The second part of the questionnaire included mainly open questions, allowing in this way the pupils to express their opinion in more detail and also to demonstrate their knowledge, views and attitudes on different topics. Pupils were encouraged to just write down their own personal opinion and it was pointed out to them that there were no correct or wrong answers.

The first two questions, included in the second part of the questionnaire, required pupils to name five world religions and to then write down something that they know about each one of those religions. These questions were aiming to detect pupils' knowledge and misconceptions about world religions.

The third question aimed to discover whether any of the children had a Turkish-Cypriot friend. If their answer was negative, then they were asked whether they would wish to have one. Then their answer, either positive or negative, should be explained within 100 words. This question was intended to reveal pupils' attitudes and views towards the Turkish-Cypriot community.

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[19] Pupils are underage; therefore the only way to visit North Cyprus is only with their parents.

The next two questions gave them the opportunity to explain what peace and peaceful coexistence means to them and to then write a list of five actions that can make our world more peaceful. The purpose of these questions was to identify pupils' ability to suggest ways to promote peace and peaceful coexistence.

The next question aimed to explore whether the pupils were currently involved in any kind of community or voluntary work activities and if their answer was affirmative then it asked them to state what specific activity.

The last question of the questionnaire was a case study-question: "Imagine that a close person to you suffers from a serious disease and soon she/he will die. She/he is really in severe pain and no medication can help. So, she/he decides that they want to use euthanasia in order to put an end to her/his pain. How do you feel about that?" The pupils were first asked whether or not they agreed with this and then they were requested to discuss their answers in less than 100 words. This question aimed to explore pupils' understanding and views on important and controversial life issues, such as euthanasia.

Final/Evaluation Questionnaires' Survey Questions

The final/evaluation questionnaires aimed to assess and evaluate the pupils' knowledge, attitudes and views regarding the different religious, social, cultural, moral and spiritual issues, after they had been taught using the RE Booklet for one year, and also to identify how their knowledge, attitudes and views have changed. For this reason, the survey questions included in the final questionnaires were based on the different topics that pupils had been taught in the RE booklet, in order to compare what has really changed after the teaching input of the Booklet. At this point, it must be clarified, that this round of questionnaires was different from the previous one (diagnostic questionnaires). Therefore, the diagnostic questionnaire was different than the final/evaluation questionnaires (see Appendix D: Research Questionnaires, p.436). The reason why different questionnaires were used before and after the RE Booklet input, is because the children would have found it boring and not interesting at all to fill in the same questionnaires. Also, there was a possibility, their answers would have been affected, up to some point, if the questionnaires were same before and after. However, these final questionnaires were investigating students' knowledge and thinking about issues that were included within the RE Booklet. Additionally, many questions that were included within the final questionnaires, were similar to questions included within the diagnostic questionnaire, but written in a different way; using different wording.

More specifically, nine different final questionnaires were given to children. The first one included general questions about the teaching of RE during the current year and aimed to detect whether pupils found the teaching of the RE booklet helpful and interesting, which world religion impressed them most, and if they would like to be taught something extra:

Table 6: Final questionnaire 1

1) What was the most important thing that you were taught during RE lessons this year?
2) Which one of the world religions impressed you the most? Why?
3) Did you find RE subject interesting during this year?
4) Was the RE textbook helpful and interesting?
5) What other topics would you like to be taught during RE lessons?

The second questionnaire was targeted at identifying pupils' knowledge and attitudes regarding the different world religions:

Table 7: Final questionnaire 2

1) Which religions do you know?
2) Which religion impressed you the most?
3) Do you believe that every religion is teaching us something?
4) Do you believe that is a privilege the fact that there are so many different religions in the world?

Another questionnaire was focused on pupils' knowledge and attitudes regarding the different religious communities of Cyprus:

Table 8: Final questionnaire 3

1) Which are the religious communities of Cyprus?
2) Do you believe that the religious communities of Cyprus can coexist together peacefully?
3) Apart from the Greek-Cypriots, what other religious communities do you like the most?
4) Which religious community do you like the least?

One of the questionnaires was about health education and it aimed to detect pupils' knowledge and views about the different environmental and social problems:

Table 9: Final questionnaire 4

1) List a few environmental problems.
2) List a few ways of protecting the environment.
3) List a few social problems that seriously affect human health (for instance smoking).
4) How can we prevent all the above social problems?

An additional questionnaire included questions about social issues and it was targeted at discovering pupils' views about peace, war, poverty and racism. This questionnaire also aimed to discover whether pupils are able to provide suggestions about how to prevent racism, poverty and to identify the advantages of peace and disadvantages of war:

Table 10: Final questionnaire 5

1) What are the advantages of peace? 2) What are the disadvantages of war? 3) How can we help the poor and ill children? 4) How can we prevent racism?

Another questionnaire was about religion and science, and its purpose was to investigate pupils' views on the creation of the universe, about life after death and about their belief in God. This questionnaire included the following questions:

Table 11: Final questionnaire 6

1) What do you believe about the creation of the universe? 2) Do you believe there is life after death? 3) When someone is seriously ill, in whom should we place the most hope: God, doctors or both?

The seventh questionnaire was about religious issues and it was aimed at exploring pupil's knowledge and ability to indicate actions that might improve the world and actions that might make it worse:

Table 12: Final questionnaire 7

1) List a few actions that can improve our world. 2) List a few actions that make our world worse.

The eighth questionnaire was about moral issues and specifically, it was targeted at discovering pupils' views regarding which universal values they consider to be the most important.

Table 13: Final questionnaire 8

1) Which of these do you consider to be the most important universal values?

The last set of questionnaires was about visiting religious places and the pupils answered these questionnaires soon after they had visited a mosque, a Catholic and an Evangelical church. These questions were intended to examine their attitudes towards the different cultures and religions. The following questions were included:

Table 14: Final questionnaire 9

1) Express your feelings after visiting the mosque, the Catholic and the Evangelical church. 2) What did you like the most within the mosque, the Catholic and the Evangelical church? 3) What are the similarities and differences between the Orthodox Church and the mosque, the Catholic and the Evangelical church? 4) Would you like to visit the mosque, the Catholic and the Evangelical church again?

The final questionnaires can be found in 'Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.444.

Analyzing the questionnaires

Questionnaires were analyzed using the computer software program Microsoft Excel and the results were presented within the thesis in the form of charts. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires provided a useful means of complementing the qualitative data. Although this research is primarily based on the results of the qualitative interviews, I have found the quantitative data a useful means of gathering information about pupils' knowledge, views and attitudes and evaluating what they have learnt.

Religious Education Booklet

The empirical part of the thesis relies upon fieldwork at primary schools. The fieldwork lasted two school years, from September 2009 to June 2011, and it was based on the teaching of a Religious Education Booklet developed especially for this PhD research. The RE Booklet includes teaching aims, schemes of work and lesson plans. Before the formal conduction of the research, the RE booklet was piloted for one school year (2008-2009) and after the pilot stage, some of the research questions and booklet assignments were reformed and reworded.

The RE Booklet was developed by the researcher for the requirements of this PhD fieldwork and it was taught by the researcher to Year 6 primary school students. The researcher at the time of the fieldwork was working as a school teacher in public primary schools, employed by the Ministry of Education of Cyprus. For this reason, the fieldwork was carried out within the schools that the researcher was working at that time, because it was convenient and practical in that way. It is allowed, by the Ministry of Education, for teachers to perform a PhD research while working, as long as they get the permission and consent for doing it. Therefore, while performing this PhD fieldwork, the researcher was working as a teacher, teaching, among others, the students-participants of this research.

From an early stage, the purpose and timeline of the fieldwork, alongside with the RE Booklet, were send to Ministry of Education of Cyprus (at the Department of Primary Education), to head teachers, school inspector and parents' committees of the schools that were going to participate, for approval. There was a specific process in order to seek permission for carrying out a research within a school. Firstly, the researcher sent a letter to Head of Primary Education at the Ministry of Education, to school inspector, head teachers and to parents' committees of the participating schools. This letter was

explaining, in detail, the topic of the research, timeline and the process that was going to be followed. The letter was also explaining about the ethical considerations; matters of anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and storage of the research data. More specifically, it was clarifying what measurements were taken in order to ensure participants' safety, integrity, anonymity and confidentiality. It was also explaining how the research data were going to be analyzed and stored. Alongside with researcher's letter, the RE Booklet was sent and a confirmation letter by the University where the researcher was studying at that time (The Open University), confirming the necessity and reason of the research. After the two letters and the RE Booklet were sent to Head of Primary Education at the Ministry of Education, to school inspector, head teachers and parents' committees, it was a two month waiting period for approving or not. In the meantime, the Ministry of Education asked for few more clarifications regarding the research process. After the research was approved, the Ministry of Education issued one letter for confirming the approval for conducting the specific research. This confirmation letter, alongside with an informed consent form were given to all participants (head teachers, teachers, parents and students) in order to sign it.

After all participants signed the informed consent form, the pilot stage began and afterwards, the main fieldwork took place where the RE booklet was taught to students. The RE Booklet was taught alongside with the official RE textbooks. That means, that the students were taught from the material included within their official RE textbooks, but at the same time, they were taught from the RE Booklet as well. At this point, it must be mentioned that, the Ministry of Education permits all teachers to except 20% of the official teaching material for all school subjects and to teach something supplementary that they consider interesting or useful for students. Consequently, by using this 20% exemption, the researcher was teaching the supplementary material included within the RE Booklet.

The Booklet's Philosophy and Aims

The booklet[20] offered supplementary material for teaching religious education and it was based on two aspects: the religious one and the social one. The reason for focusing on these two aspects is because the main purpose of the thesis is the development of interreligious and intercultural dialogue between pupils. The most important aims of the booklet are presented in detail below.

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[20] The Religious Education Booklet can be found in Appendix A, p.365.

First was the informational aim where pupils should be informed about the different religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions and they should be taught about the basic aspects of each one of those religions: their way of worshipping, places of worship, holy objects, prophets, important people, pilgrimages, holy places, religious art and music, ceremonies, symbols and religious celebrations. In addition, they should be informed and have knowledge of the basic aspects of each religion so they are then able to understand, appreciate and respect them. By learning from and about different religions, children learn to be tolerant towards other people whose religion differs from their own. In other words, children become able to suspend their social and religious prejudices. As noted by Davies (1999, p.76), learning about other cultures and religions prepares children for adult life. "Harmonious relationships between different religious and ethnic groups are more likely if world religions have been taught in an open and respectful manner" (Davies, 1999, p.76). "Children have the right to know about the beliefs and practices of others as well as their own" (Cole and Evans-Lowndes, 1991, p.51). In other words, learning about other religious traditions will help children to understand their own religious beliefs better (Cole and Evans-Lowndes, 1991, p.51).

Second, the comparative aim, where pupils should be enabled to compare objectively the different religious traditions and spot the similarities and differences between them; and, more specifically, focusing on the comparison of other religions with Christianity. This comparison does not aim to prove that Christianity is better than other religions, but to indicate that there are many similarities between the different world religions. The comparison also seeks to develop a dialogue between the different world religions (an interreligious dialogue). Pupils should realize that there is always another version of religious truth and understanding, different to their own, and they should be taught to recognize and respect this different version of religious truth and understanding.

As mentioned above, the booklet aims to find common bonds between the different religions and to bridge the gaps between them.

One example regarding the comparison of religions is evident in the Islamic religion; that Allah Himself revealed to Mohammed everything that is written in the Koran. In the same way, according to the Christian religion, God Himself revealed to John everything that is written in the 'Apocalypse'. Obviously, this is a shared concept of revelation, where both religions share same concept that God Himself has revealed the truth to two mortal people (Mohammed and John), and this truth is written down into two holy books (The Bible and The Koran).

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Another example of comparing religions can be identified on the issue of 'life after death'. Almost all religions support the idea that life and the human soul do not die after biological death. On the contrary, the religions 'promise' life after biological death; they promise a supernatural life. Some religions support the idea of the paradise or hell; while others support the idea of reincarnation.

The third example is evident in the decoration of temples. For instance, Orthodox churches are decorated with icons that depict Jesus and Saints. On the contrary, in Islamic tradition it is prohibited to adorn mosques with icons or any other pictures. However, mosques have their own unique decorations (i.e. carpets, arabesques).

Thirdly, the critical aim is to help pupils to develop their critical thinking. Pupils were mainly taught RE in a confessional way, where the main purpose was the Christian Orthodox catechesis. But the RE booklet includes different tasks that help pupils to judge, question and doubt. Pupils should not have to take everything for granted by just automatically accepting something that somebody else has told them.

Fourthly, the behavioral-attitudinal aim, where pupils improve their behavior and attitudes towards other people who profess different religions or come from a different culture. This can be achieved with case studies. Through the case studies children can think critically about a problem and they can put themselves in somebody else's place. For instance, an example of a case study could be about euthanasia: "What will you do if a relative of yours wants to use euthanasia in order to put an end to his/her pain?".

Finally, there is the research aim where pupils develop their research skills to help them discover knowledge by themselves. Through the booklet's activities pupils are requested to search on the Internet, on different websites, read books, magazines, encyclopedias, newspapers, religious books, visit places of worship and think of different case studies.

The philosophy of the booklet is based on the assessment method of a portfolio. A portfolio is a modern method of educational assessment and it involves the collection of pupils' work that 'tells a story' about their efforts, progress and achievement in a specific subject (Arter and Spandel, 1992, p.36). In particular, Arter and Spandel offered the following definition for a portfolio:

> "…a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s). The collection must include student participation in selection of portfolio content; the guidelines of selection; the criteria for judging merit; and evidence of student self-reflection".
>
> (Arter and Spandel, 1992, p.36)

The use of the portfolio method enables pupils to gain important cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, such as monitoring, organizing, planning, reflecting, managing and self-evaluation (Klenowski, 2002, pp.4f). Finally, it should be mentioned that this assessment method serves all the purposes of assessment: summative, evaluative, formative (Klenowski, 2002, pp.10f).

For instance, pupils can be requested to create a personal portfolio about world religions and therefore, they must collect material about this topic and try to analyze it. For this purpose, they can use information technology, such as the World Wide Web, and all the material collected can be kept in a portfolio. Pupils can also keep a diary in order to write down their thoughts about the religious education lessons. So, by the end of the year, each pupil will have his/her own religious education portfolio. In this way, the educator can easily assess the work that is done during the school year. Obviously, the portfolio method develops pupils' cognitive and metacognitive skills, such as organizing, planning, reflecting, managing and self-evaluation (Klenowski, 2002, pp.4f).

Teaching topics included within the religious education booklet

The teaching topics included within the religious education booklet are divided into eight categories:

Table 15: The teaching topics of the religious education booklet

1) Teaching about world religions and beliefs
2) Meeting the religious minorities – communities of Cyprus
3) Teaching about religious issues
4) Teaching about spiritual issues
5) Teaching about social issues
6) Teaching about cultural issues
7) Teaching about moral issues
8) Teaching about health issues

Most of the teaching topics and activities which are presented below are inspired by the non-statutory national framework for religious education U.K. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004).

The first category, "Teaching about world religions and beliefs", included the teaching of eight different world religions and beliefs: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Agnosticism and Atheism. While teaching about these world religions and beliefs, children also studied the different countries related to each religion. For instance, China for Buddhism, The Philippines, Russia, Romania and Bulgaria for Christianity, India for Hinduism, Syria for Islam, Israel for Judaism and Sri Lanka for

Sikhism. The specific countries were chosen because many pupils who attend Cypriot schools come from these countries and therefore other children in the classroom could encounter, in this way, their culture. The second category, "Meeting the religious minorities - communities of Cyprus" included studying about the Turkish-Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites and Latins. "Teaching about scientific issues" was the third category; this focused on the relationship between religion and science, issues of truth, proof and explanation. An additional category was the "Teaching about religious issues", which looked specifically at the origins of the universe, life after death and about good and evil. The fifth category was the "Teaching about social issues" such as peace and war, poverty and wealth; and the sixth category was the "Teaching about cultural issues", focusing on xenophobia and racism. The last two categories were the "Teaching about moral issues", focusing on universal human values, such as racial and religious respect, justice, honesty, truth, trust, cooperation, understanding; and the "Teaching about health issues", focusing on global and environmental issues, such as animal rights, environment, health education, drug use, food, drink, leisure, relationship, gambling, suicide. All of the above teaching topics were included within the religious education booklet, and aimed to promote pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and moral development.

Activities included within the religious education booklet

Some general activities included within the religious education booklet involve visiting places of worship (i.e. churches, mosques), interviewing people -listening and responding to people from local faith communities, studying a religious community with a significant local presence (i.e. the Muslim community of Cyprus; the Turkish-Cypriots). Pupils can also use their senses and have times of a quiet reflection; and expressive arts from different cultures should be used: art and design, music, dance and drama. Additionally, pupils should share with others their personal beliefs, ideas, values, feelings and experiences, and use ICT in order to research the different religions and beliefs; they can also use other forms of technology, for instance videoconferencing, email, CD-ROMS, digital cameras. Also, through alternative learning methods, such as role plays, children can show love and concern for others; and through the debating method, they can debate on a specific topic using arguments to support their opinion (i.e. a controversial issue). The study of few basic points from some Sacred Writings (Holy Books) is another way of discovering information about other religions. Finally, teachers and students can use the school's website in order to upload their works. Teachers are able to upload in the website all the necessary material and instructions in order to help pupils do their

assignments, while the pupils can upload their assignments or any questions or suggestions about the course. For instance, if children have an assignment on Islam, the teacher can upload onto the website some useful web pages or links on Islam. This will help pupils to find useful material, and when pupils finish their assignments they can then upload them on the website.

Piloting the religious education booklet

Before piloting the booklet, the pilot group of the children was interviewed; firstly, in order to discover the level of pupils' knowledge regarding the teaching topics and secondly, in order to ascertain the booklet's impact on pupils' attitudes during the school year. At the end of the pilot school year, the same children were interviewed again in order to discover the booklet's impact on pupils' attitudes and knowledge. During the piloting activities, digital photos were taken and all pupils had their personal portfolio where they kept their assignments.

Evaluating the thesis' validity

Throughout the planning and conduction of the research, the methodological approaches were checked in order to ensure the validity of the thesis, which needed to meet some basic criteria in order to be original, accurate, professional, reliable and objective – and as far as possible, current, well organized and structured. Thus, it was very important to ensure, throughout all stages, the originality of the research; and more specifically, to make certain that the research topic is original, new, genuine, has never been studied before and will therefore enrich the scientific field of Education with new knowledge and findings. Also, the accuracy of the research was checked; whether the methodological approaches were accurate, reliable and if the literature review was sufficient. At the same time, authority was ensured, for instance, ensuring that the references included in the thesis were written by qualified and knowledgeable authors, whether the author has written other papers on the subject or on other subjects, how reliable the references are, particularly online references. The thesis' objectivity was also ensured up to a point, to check that the information and research results were presented objectively, with a minimum of bias; and also, that the thesis' currency was checked, i.e. if the content of the literature review was up-to-date. The thesis' coverage was another important aspect, and therefore, the topics included in the thesis were checked, and the depth in which those topics were explored and analyzed was considered. Organization and structure was another issue; whether the text of the thesis follows the basic rules of grammar, spelling

and literary composition, and if there is a clear and obvious organization. In addition, the thesis' presentation was checked to ensure that the information fully presented, that all the technical terms were explained, and that the presentation of the thesis was comparable with other similar sources. Moreover, the thesis' professionalism needed to be considered; whether the thesis was based on an official writing standard, if the sources were cited in the form of bibliography, and that the sources of equations were also cited correctly. Finally, with regard to the research's completeness; the origin and history of the thesis were clarified; and consideration was given as to whether there are any plans to continue and further develop the research.

The thesis' ethical considerations

In any research project, the researcher has a primary responsibility towards the participants of the research, regarding their safety and integrity (Lawlor, 2010, p.69).

To ensure the safety and integrity of the participants and the participating institutions involved in this research project, consideration was given to important ethical issues, such as informed consent from the participants, respect for their privacy, safeguarding the confidentiality of the research data, a duty of care not to harm the participants and their protection from any kind of deceit or lying (Lawlor, 2010, p.69). Regarding the interview procedure, the participants' safety, confidentiality and confidence were ensured by explaining to them (participants) how the data was to be analyzed and stored, and they were assured that that they would not be expected to reveal anything which would cause them any kind of distress or anxiety (Lawlor, 2010, p.72).

Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants

Safeguarding the anonymity of all the participants (pupils, teachers, educators) and of the schools that took part in the research was crucially important (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). The participants were assured that they could comment and express their views freely without any fear that they or the school in which they study or work could be identified (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). However, although it is impossible to guarantee that a school or an individual could never be identified, measures were taken to eliminate this possibility (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). Therefore, nowhere in the final thesis are the names of the participants or schools mentioned (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). The schools, pupils, teachers and educators are identified by the designation of a number, and any reference to the name of school or teacher in taped recordings has not been reproduced in the transcripts or in the final thesis (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). Even though descriptions of the type of school are portrayed, these

are very general and could relate to a large number of other schools with a similar demography, characteristics and pupil population (Lawlor, 2010, p.71).

Storage of the research data

All interviews with pupils, teachers and educators were initially recorded on a digital voice recorder and were then copied to a computer and subsequently all the data on the voice recorder was deleted (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). The research data on the computer was password protected, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998), and the password was known only to the researcher (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). Any written data from the interviews was kept in a locked cupboard to which only the researcher has access (Lawlor, 2010, p.71). Regarding the questionnaires' data, this was analyzed using the computer software program Microsoft Excel and again, the questionnaires' data on the computer was password protected. The hardcopies of the questionnaires, which were all anonymous, were also kept in a locked cupboard. In accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) the data will be retained only for as long as is needed for this research purposes or for a period of five years, whichever is the shortest (Lawlor, 2010, p.71).

Combining my three different roles: as a RE teacher, as a member of the syllabus committee and as a PhD researcher

Combining my three different roles, as a RE primary teacher, as a member of the RE syllabus committee and as a PhD researcher, was very fruitful and beneficial in many ways because all of my roles were focused on the teaching of RE.

Being a PhD researcher gives me the opportunity to read various academic papers about the teaching of RE and this provides me with valuable ideas in developing my RE lessons. It helps me in setting my RE teaching aims and also in developing contemporary and effective techniques in the teaching of RE in the primary school. Additionally, the fact that I conducted interviews with students of all different ages helped me to understand what is boring and what is interesting for children, thus providing me with ideas about interesting RE topics. Being a PhD researcher also gave me the chance to read about the different approaches-rationales of RE and this helped me to clarify as a teacher what is my own rationale for teaching RE in the primary school. The option of what approach-rationale should be followed in the teaching of RE depends on so many factors, such as society, pupils' religious background, political situations, economical aspects and so on. A combination of the different approaches to RE might be the best option for a teacher. Therefore, whether the teaching of RE will be confessional or

phenomenological or spiritual or critical depends on the factors mentioned above, and on the specific teaching topic. Finally, my knowledge as a PhD researcher helped me as a member of the committee for developing the RE syllabus and especially when setting the new teaching aims.

Being a teacher and teaching RE is the primary reason for me starting a PhD on Religious Education and for setting the aims of my thesis. In my role as a teacher, so many questions were raised about the aims and method of teaching RE in Cyprus. I have therefore created a vision of how RE should be taught in the primary schools and this vision is actually the reason why I embarked upon my PhD research. Teaching in the schools also supports me in conducting my PhD research in the schools, making it easier for me to hand out the research questionnaires, to conduct the interviews with the pupils, to pilot and then to teach the lessons included in the religious education booklet.

Furthermore, being a member of the committee was also beneficial because I became involved in the actual process of developing the syllabus and this gave me the opportunity to observe what factors influence the development of the syllabus. Undoubtedly, when doing a PhD research on an educational topic it is crucially important to take into consideration all the factors influencing the reformation of an educational system.

Finally, combining all my three roles was beneficial when viewing, observing, assessing and evaluating the different aspects. As a PhD researcher I could observe things from "inside" and I was involved directly in the specific process. I was a teacher teaching RE and also participating in the committees for developing the Syllabus, and this was of crucial benefit for my PhD research.

Problems in combining my three different roles

On the other hand, some problems and complications were encountered when combining my above different roles. The main problem was lack of time. It was very difficult to catch up with the demands of all of my three roles. Working as a full time teacher in a primary school already requires a lot of extra time for lesson preparation and reviewing my pupils' assignments. Teaching is incredibly challenging and requires lots of extra time before and after school hours! Working for the Syllabus committees was also very challenging because the work was done in our free time and we did not have any dedicated time or extra office hours. Therefore, teachers working on the committees for developing the new syllabus had to work at home and spent many hours writing up teaching aims and developing lesson plans. Finally, the demands of being a PhD student and trying to write

up a PhD thesis were also considerable. Completing a PhD is very challenging and demanding on its own, and is therefore very difficult to combine concurrently with other responsibilities.

In conclusion, despite the various problems and complications arising from combining my three different roles as a RE primary teacher, as a member of the RE syllabus committee and as a PhD researcher it was incredibly fruitful and beneficial, and it considerably enriched my knowledge of the study of Religious Education.

Being an insider in a qualitative research

As it was mentioned above, while I was conducting my PhD research I was combining three different roles: a RE teacher, a member of the syllabus committee and a PhD researcher, becoming, in this way an "insider" researcher. Being an insider researcher, had allowed me to observe things from "inside" and I was involved directly in the research process. However, as relevant literature indicates, this can raised some dilemmas.

The issue of insider and outsider researcher has received increasing exploration by social scientists, mainly because they often find themselves studying one group that they are not members of it (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.57). To begin with it, it is important to provide a definition for 'insider' and 'outsider' researchers. On the one hand, insider researchers are themselves members in the group they study (Adler & Adler, 1994 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017), sharing the same characteristics, role and experience with the research participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55). On the other hand, the outsider researchers study a group of people that themselves do not belong in there (Breen, 2007 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017).

As some authors (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Saidin & Yaacob, 2017) emphasize being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' researcher has some strengths and challenges.

Looking at the strengths of insider researchers, Saidin & Yaacob (2017, p.849), highlight that insider researchers have a deeper understanding about their research and the phenomena being studied. They usually choose a topic which they are familiar with and would benefit more from it (Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). Therefore, the insider researchers are more likely to 'have a passion about the topic they been working on' and they 'commit themselves into the research despite all the obstacles' (Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). Bonner and Tolhurst (2002 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850), identified three advantages regarding the insider researchers. Firstly, the insider researchers are able to understand better the study topic; secondly, they are 'not disrupt the flow of social interaction; and finally, they are able to extract valid data from the research participants

because they (insider researchers) are in a good relationship with them (participants) (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). At the same time, insider researchers are familiar with the cultural and political structure of the organization they study and this save them from precious research time (Smyth & Holian, 2008 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). Another benefit for insider researchers, is that of acceptance of the researcher by the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58). The fact that the insider researchers are members of the group under study, this creates automatically a level of trust and openness between the researcher and the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58). This is a good starting point for the researchers because it gives them 'access into groups that might otherwise be closed to "outsiders"' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58). In this way, participants are more likely to share their experiences with the researcher because there is a notion of understanding and shared distinctiveness (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58). At the same time, insider researchers provide a level of safety and comfort for the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58).

Saidin & Yaacob (2017, p.849) also highlight some challenges as well. More specifically, they note that insider researchers might be lead to a loss of their objectivity and become biased (Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.849). According to Simmel (1950 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850), researchers can only be objective if they are outsiders. However, Merton (1972 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850), argues that outsiders take up a research that is not linked to their 'topic area, culture, group and status' so they are not able to understand sufficiently the topic they are working on and therefore, they find it hard to justify their research findings. Regarding the insider researchers, there is also a possibility to reveal sensitive information in their research just because they usually have easy access to information and sometimes they might overlook the confidentiality of this sensitive information (Smyth & Holian, 2008 in Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). At the same time, insiders might not be as alert, as outsiders, and they may consider some issues in their research as not important; they might be blindsided exactly because they believe that they have a good knowledge of the study phenomenon (Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). Another issue that Kanuha (2000, p.444) emphasized, is that insider researchers might not be very objective, reflexive and authentic because they know too much and they are very close to project, so they may be too similar to the studied group. Asselin (2003 in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58) also notes that the dual role (being a member of one group and a researcher of the same group) of insider researchers can result in role confusion when the researchers respond 'to the participants or analyze the data from a perspective other than that of researcher'. However, Asselin (2003 in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58)

acknowledged that role confusion might occur for any researcher, insider or outsider, but there is a higher risk in the case of insider researchers where they are familiar with the study topic or participants.

All things consider, being either insider or an outsider researcher has both strengths and challenges (Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). In any qualitative research, there will always be a degree of subjectivity (Lawlor, 2010, p.66; Miles and Hubermann, 1994), even if the researcher tries hard to remain neutral. Asselin (2003 in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55) suggested that insider researchers should gather their data with their "eyes open" but assuming that they know nothing about the phenomenon being studied. Asselin (2003 in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55) goes on to argue that even though the insider researchers might be a part of the culture under study, they still might not understand the subculture. In addition to Asselin (2003), Rose (1985, p.77) claimed:

> "There is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases. And if you do not appreciate the force of what you're leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you're doing"   (Asselin, 2003, p. 77)

Dwyer & Buckle (2009, p.60) in their article "The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research", are supporting that there is a space between insider and outsider in the qualitative research. According to them, by being a member of a group does not mean complete sameness with that group (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.60). In the same way, by not being a member of a group, does not mean complete difference with that group (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.60). And this is the meaning of the space between insider and outsider researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.60). In addition to the above, Fay (1996, p.241), stated that 'there is no self-understanding without other-understanding' and this means that 'noting the ways in which we are different from others requires that we also note the ways in which we are similar' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.60).

However, many problems of being either "insider" or "outsider" can be overcome if the research ethics are taken into consideration when carrying out a scientific research (Saidin & Yaacob, 2017, p.850). In this specific PhD research, it was acknowledged from an early stage, my triple role; teacher, researcher and syllabus' reformer. Therefore, all the necessary precautions were taken in order to ensure the research's ethics and validity. The research had to meet some basic criteria which were necessary for ensuring its validity. More specifically, and as it was also mentioned earlier in this thesis, a valid research should be original, accurate, professional, reliable and objective, current, well

organized and structured. The present research was original; the specific topic has never been studied before and thus, it enriched the scientific field of Education with new knowledge and findings. Also, all the methodological approaches used were reliable and the literature review was current, up-to-date, based on qualified and knowledgeable authors. In addition, it was ensured the thesis' organization, structure and professionalism; it followed the basic rules of grammar, spelling and literary composition, there was a clear and obvious organization and based on an official writing standard where all the sources were cited in the form of bibliography correctly. Finally, the last and very important aspect that contributes to research's validity is the objectivity.

In ensuring this research's objectivity was challenging, mainly because I was an "insider" researcher. For this reason, it was necessary firstly to acknowledge my role as a researcher and my relationship to the children, teachers and educators interviewed. Undoubtedly, by interviewing my own students, the existing teacher-student relationship might have had an impact on their answers during the interview procedure. Thus, two basic strategies were employed in an attempt to limit such attitudes; firstly, by explaining to the participants the aims of the interview in great detail and secondly, by guaranteeing confidentiality (Lawlor, 2010, p.76). In addition, the interviews were conducted in a relaxed and friendly way, helping the participants to feel comfortable (Lawlor, 2010, p.76). In order to achieve this, all interviews began with some general questions which allowed for a friendly discussion and helped to break down any negative feelings that the participants might have felt (Lawlor, 2010, p.76). Also, at the beginning of the interview I had assured them that they had to be honest and not to worry that I am their teacher. They were assured from the beginning of the interview that they just needed to give their own personal opinion and that there was not any right or wrong answer. Apart from the above, during the research, a control group was appointed in order to compare the results between the research and control groups and in this way, to ensure that the findings were valid. Indeed, after comparing the research's and control's group results it revealed some important differences between them and strengthen the validity of the research's results.

Summary

This research is an attempt to assess the implications of changes in the Greek-Cypriot society for the provision of Religious Education in Greek-Cypriot primary schools, and to identify ways of addressing the challenges posed by these changes, and especially to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of the island and to thus promote the reconciliation of the island. It is an attempt to reveal a piece of new knowledge, which

could be added to a larger body of empirical research. This thesis is based on mixed research methods: interviews, questionnaires, assessment tests, teaching booklet, textbooks, national syllabuses and literature review. The research thesis is mainly based on the teaching of a RE booklet to primary education students and on interviews and questionnaires investigating educators' and students' knowledge, preferences, views, expectations and attitudes towards RE. The next chapter, 'Relating Citizenship and RE', will discuss the various philosophical approaches to RE and how these approaches influence the development of educational curricula. The chapter will also consider the relationship between citizenship and RE and will offer a detailed discussion of the benefits of integrating RE and Citizenship education.

CHAPTER III
RELATING CITIZENSHIP AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Introduction

This chapter considers the relation between citizenship and RE. At first, it defines the terms 'education', 'religion', 'religious education' and 'theology' and then it discusses the various philosophical approaches to religious education: confessional, phenomenological critical, implicit, post-modern and spiritual RE. An evaluation is presented as to how these approaches influence the development of educational curricula and, specifically, the RE curricula. The chapter further examines the historical background of citizenship education and subsequently moves on to define 'citizenship education' and the different approaches to it. It then moves on to reveal the role and importance of citizenship education within the European context. The aims of citizenship education, as they are included in the national curriculum of Cyprus and the citizenship education textbooks, will also be considered. Finally, this chapter focuses on the difficulties in assessing RE and citizenship education, and the benefits of integrating RE and citizenship education are also discussed thoroughly.

It was significant to present the relationship between Citizenship and Religious Education because the combination of these two disciplines can be beneficial for the multicultural Cypriot society and for encouraging the reconciliation of the island as well. RE and Citizenship Education share common teaching aims and values, such as tolerance, respect, equality, diversity and mutual understanding. Especially for the case of Cyprus, RE and citizenship education should consider how the different historical and political issues of conflict affect the right balance between religious and citizenship influences (Papastephanou, 2002). The combination of these two teaching disciplines can improve Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities' relationships but a systematic effort needs to be made regarding this issue. For instance, this can be achieved with a systematic teaching of the religious communities of Cyprus and more interactions with them (religious communities). In addition, integrated education can also play an instrumental role in promoting the interactions between all Cypriot communities. Zembylas and Bekerman (2013) have studied the role of integrated education in conflicted societies. "Integrated school" is an alternative educational model where students who are normally educated apart from each other are, in this model of teaching, educated together (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013, p.403). Integrated schools can contribute to the healing of the wounds

of conflicted societies by encouraging peace, reconciliation and integration (Bekerman, 2004, 2005; McGlynn et al, 2004; McGlynn, 2007; Ben-Nun, 2013). For instance, as Zembylas and Bekerman (2013, p.405) note, "many integrated schools avoid addressing divisive issues such as religion and politics; as it is pointed out, this avoidance reinforces the psychological barriers which sustain division and group differences" (Donnelly, 2004; Hughes & Donnelly, 2007; McGlynn & London, 2011). Empirical evidence from some countries has shown that integrated education has many advantages. For instance, in the USA it has been indicated that integrated education has many positive results on students such as good school performance, cross-racial friendships, acceptance of cultural differences and reduced racial fear and prejudices (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013, p.405). In another example, in Northern Ireland, research has shown that integrated schools have positive effects on identity, out-group attitudes and forgiveness; things that are valuable in conflict societies (McGlynn et al, 2004 in Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013, p.405). Additionally, to the above, Ministry of Education should organize some activities between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities in order to encourage positive attitudes between them.

Defining 'education'

The term 'education' is extremely complex and it is very difficult to define. It can be understood to mean many different things. As Gutek (2004, p.3) notes, 'education' may refer to the process of teaching students how to read, write and compute, or teaching them how to become economically productive and good citizens, or even enabling students to appreciate art, music, literature and drama. 'Education' can also refer to teaching students the necessary skills required by industry and business or to the process of teaching students how to become critical thinkers and problem solvers (Gutek, 2004, p.3). Finally, education might refer to the process of providing people with the appropriate knowledge, skills, competence and qualities (Gutek, 2004, p.3).

However, the above superficial definitions of 'education' do not explain successfully the deeper purposes of education. For example, the above definitions note that education provides students with the appropriate knowledge, skills, competence and qualities, but they (the definitions) fail to explain successfully what kind of knowledge, skills, competence or qualities (Gutek, 2004, p.3). Thus, Gutek (2004, p.3) argues that a deeper study of the meaning of 'education' can be provided through the 'Philosophy of Education'.

In order to understand better the philosophy of education it is necessary to explain philosophy's four major subdivisions: metaphysics, epistemology, axiology and logic (Gutek, 2004, pp.3f). Metaphysics is the study of what is real and what really exists and it is also deals with essence and what is it essential to existence. Epistemology mainly deals with knowledge: How can we gain knowledge? How can we be aware of what we know? Is knowledge based on our sensory experience? Is it empirical? Is knowledge based on our reasoning? Can we gain knowledge through God? (Gutek, 2004, pp.3f). Axiology is related to values, ethics, morals and aesthetics, for instance, what is morally right or wrong? What is beautiful? (Gutek, 2004, pp.3f). Finally, logic deals with our reasoning (Gutek, 2004, pp.3f). All these four subdivisions of philosophy are part of, and connected to, Religious Education; for instance, metaphysics deals with the existence of God and supernatural powers, epistemology aims to gain knowledge about God, axiology is about the morals and values of one religion and logic considers the reasoning behind different religious issues. Therefore, all subdivisions of philosophy are essential when teaching RE and they are connected to each other. It is necessary to focus RE teaching on them in order to achieve the successful and comprehensive understanding in students regarding any religious topic. In other words, students will be able to study a religious topic from different angles; metaphysical, epistemological, axiological and logical, and gain, in this way, a more scientific knowledge.

On the other hand, Paulo Freire gives his own definition of education; for him, education is politics, because education is the place where individuals and society are constructed (Shor, 1993, p.28). Education is a social action which can either empower or domesticate individuals; it should be based on mutual dialogue between teachers and students and it is something that pupils do by themselves and not something that is done for them (Shor, 1993, p.28). As was mentioned above, 'education' for Freire is a political activity which means that all forms of education are political. For Freire, politics exist within the teacher–student relationship and can be either democratic or authoritarian (Shor, 1993, p.27).

In my opinion, education is a process between an educator and a learner and it is a process that takes place not only at school, but in every daily activity. Because of this, the educators are the school teachers, the parents and the friends of the learner, but above all, the main educator is the society in which the person lives. Education is a process that never ends; it has no limits and for that reason, the learner is either a child or an adult. The aims of education vary; firstly, education enriches the individual's knowledge about nature, the world and the universe. Secondly, it provides a depth of understanding which

should go well beyond the memorization of information and facts. Thirdly, education provides people with the skill to doubt, to judge and to investigate their own ideas, beliefs and values, in order to discover a new and authentic knowledge. In other words, the educational process develops the critical thought, autonomy and the rationality of the human beings. Finally, the intention of education is to teach not only knowledge, but also attitudes, and therefore educators must identify the diversity of the learners, especially in multicultural and multi-faith societies. They must encourage them to be tolerant, liberal and open-minded to other people's viewpoints.

As mentioned above, education is a process that takes place not only at school, but in everyday activity. As Hughes and Greenhough (2003, p.179) note, children participate in two different learning environments: school and the home learning environment. Thus, Coffield (2000) distinguishes between formal and informal learning, where school embodies formal, and home embodies informal, learning. On the one hand, school embodies formal learning because a prescribed curriculum is followed; there are trained educators, specific lessons and regular assessment (Tizard and Hughes, 1984). On the other hand, home embodies the informal learning because this learning derives from the everyday spontaneous interactions between the family members (Tizard and Hughes, 1984).

Schools are probably the most important 'vehicles' of education and Gundara (1997, pp.23f) pointed out four aspects regarding the important role of schools. Firstly, school should be a secure place for children, where they feel accepted by everybody and not defenseless, humiliated, rejected or oppressed (Gundara, 1997, pp.23f). Secondly, schools should be connected with children's real lives and must take into consideration children's family lives and social context (Gundara, 1997, pp.23f). Thirdly, schools must be run on ethical principles and people (teachers and pupils) that are working in the schools should work according to these ethical principles; and fourthly, schools should provide all pupils equal opportunities in order to achieve maximum academic success (Gundara, 1997, pp.23f).

Defining 'religion'

When trying to formulate a definition for 'religion', has proven to be an extremely difficult task (Harrison, 2006, p.1). Religion has many features and expressions, such as belief, practice, spirituality, inner feelings, attitudes, existential orientations, so it is difficult to define what counts as religion. For instance, a definition of religion suggested by James Martineau: 'religion is the belief in an ever living God' (Alston, 1967, p.143),

seems problematic. Even though, Martineau's definition explains what is religion, in terms of belief, it fails to recognize other important features of religion, such as the importance of religious emotions, the importance of faith and the key role of traditional practices (Harrison, 2006, p.2). As noted by Austin (2019), many definitions for 'religion' face two problems:

> 'They are either too narrow and exclude many belief systems which most agree are religious, or they are too vague and ambiguous, suggesting that just about anything and everything is a religion. Because it's so easy to fall into one problem in the effort to avoid the other, debates about the nature of religion will probably never cease'.
>
> (Austin, 2019)

According to Austin (2019), a good example of a narrow definition is the attempt to define 'religion' as the 'belief in God'. This definition is narrow because is excluding polytheistic and atheistic religions while including theists who have not got any religious belief system (Austin, 2019). On the other side, an example of a vague definition is the attempt to define 'religion' as a 'worldview' (Austin, 2019). Nevertheless, not every worldview is qualified as a religion.

> Another definition of 'religion' given by Émile Durkheim:
>
> "religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them".
>
> (É. Durkheim, 1965 [1912], p.62)

Durkheim's explanation of religion is more than a definition; it is predominantly a sociological theory. He claims that religion is not primarily a belief in supernatural powers but is mainly a social product, a result of the collective life of human beings. It is a set of moral values and fundamentals on which individuals base their lives (Durkheim, 1912). For Durkheim (1912), human beings are religious just because they are members of a specific community, thus, neither individuals nor communities can exist without any religious and moral restrictions.

Wittgenstein, (1953, pp.31-32) in his book 'Philosophical Investigations,' points out that things named by the same word do not necessarily have any features common to them all, but rather show "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing". Wittgenstein (1953, pp.31-32) uses the idea of the word "games" as an example to explain this:

> "…I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? - Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" – but look and see whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at

them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: Don't think, but look! – Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear" (p.31).

"…And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way" (p.32).

In the same way, attempting to define "religion" is also difficult because there are so many world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and so on. There is nothing which is common to all; there are only similarities and multifarious relationships. There is a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. For these reasons, it is difficult to formulate a definition of "religion" that applies completely to all world religions.

Later thinkers, who inspired by Wittgenstein's approach, have claimed that one reason why religion is very difficult to be defined might be because it (religion) is a concept that does not refer to things possessing a single defining characteristic (Harrison, 2006, p.12). On the contrary, 'religion' is a complex concept used to refer to things sharing a number of features and characteristics and therefore exhibiting a number of 'family resemblances' (what Wittgenstein (1953) mentioned above) not all of which need be present (Harrison, 2006, p.12). For example, in the case of Theravada Buddhism and Christianity; even though both of them worship a holy founder, Theravada Buddhists, unlike Christians, do not believe in a God (Harrison, 2006, p.12). Thus, these two religions exhibit a 'family resemblance' as well as an important difference (Harrison, 2006, p.12).

After struggling to achieve an appropriate definition for 'religion', Hick advises us to abandon the search for a definition of religion and instead recognize that religions have 'family resemblances' that allow us to identify them as falling under the concept 'religion' (Harrison, 2006, p.13). According to Harrison (2006, p.20), the approach of 'family resemblances' 'allows us to be sensitive to the diversity of religious belief and practice commonly found even within the "same" tradition, while simultaneously providing a framework for appreciating such diversity as part of richly textured and

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continuously evolving traditions'. Harrison (2006, p.20) goes on to argue that in a multi-cultural world is necessary a 'theoretical approach to the study of religions that is not from the outset prejudicial to any religion' and the 'family resemblance' approach seems to be the most appropriate for this occasion.

Distinguishing 'theology' from 'religious education'

Before moving on to the importance of religious education, it is significant to distinguish the term 'theology' from the term 'religious education', because much confusion has arisen about the meaning and the relationship of these two terms.

To begin with, Amor (2001) suggests that theology is mainly related to catechism. Thus, it aims to study a specific religion, the nature of God and the main principles of the specific religious belief. This can be confirmed by checking the etymology of 'theology'. The word 'theology' derives from the Greek word 'theologia' (θεολογία). The word 'theologia' originates from the two Greek words 'Theos' (Θεός) and 'logos' (λόγος) (theologia = Theos + logos), where 'Theos' means 'God' and 'logos' means 'speech'. So, 'theology' is the speech of God or the speech for God.

On the other hand, according to Amor (2001), religious education is an educational tool which aims to provide knowledge, attitudes and values shared by all religious groups in a comprehensive way, in order to enable individuals to understand that they are members of the same community. Religious education also aims to help individuals to develop their personal identity 'in harmony with identities different from their own' (Amor, 2001).

However, in the case of Cyprus, RE is very much like theology and catechism, since it aims to teach children about a specific religion -and that is Orthodox Christianity-the nature of God and the main principles of this specific religion. Therefore, Amor's definition about RE does not apply to the case of Cyprus because it is confessional and mostly based on Orthodox Christianity. Amor's definition applies to a more critical, multicultural and phenomenological model of RE which aims to provide children with the knowledge, attitudes and values shared by all religious groups and enable them to coexist harmonically with cultures different than their own (Amor, 2001).

The educational goals of RE

RE is a humanity subject and as such, it should aim to develop various parts of children's personality. For instance, it should aim to develop them spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. In the website for education of the Isle of Wight, the multipurpose of RE is

outlined in detail (Isle of Wight Council, 2002); the basic goal of RE is to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Spiritual development can be achieved through helping pupils to consider the purpose and meaning of life and the values of human society, to appreciate nature and the Arts and to experience awe, wonder and stillness (Isle of Wight Council, 2002). Moral development can be achieved through the teaching of moral values and ethical teaching (Isle of Wight Council, 2002). Social development can be achieved through the development of their own identity and sense of belonging in a society in order to become citizens in a multicultural society (Isle of Wight Council, 2002). Finally, cultural development can be achieved through the promotion of pupils' knowledge and understanding about the various belief systems. Additionally, pupils should be taught about the practices and values, not only of their own culture, but of other cultures as well (Isle of Wight Council, 2002). Apparently, the development of the various parts (spiritual, moral, social, and cultural) of children's personality is significant in order to become responsible and active future citizens in a multicultural society.

Tradition and RE

All governments follow either a specific approach or a combination of different approaches when it comes to developing their educational curricula. These approaches are influenced by many social, economic, geographical and religious factors. These factors play a particularly important role in the development of educational curricula for humanities subjects (such as RE, History, Citizenship, Geography).

Undoubtedly, developing a RE curriculum is a very difficult and complex educational challenge. One of the factors that can also affect RE is the tradition of a country. Hill (2007, p.27), points out the importance of tradition; he identifies and examines three approaches to tradition. Firstly, the structural-functional-institutionalized approach to tradition; secondly, a Weberian approach, which is related to charismatic breakthroughs; and thirdly, an innovative approach which can be found in 'Asian values' (Hill, 2007, p.27). These three different approaches to tradition are presented in more detail below.

The structural-functional-institutionalized approach to tradition is related to functionalist sociology. In particular, Levy (1968, p.27), a functionalist sociologist, argued that tradition looks like an institution, which can be more or less traditional. Levy (1968, p.27), also pointed out that traditions, like institutions, do not change their functional operations, even if these operations are eufunctional or dysfunctional, and thus traditions

are perpetuated even if they are eufunctional or dysfunctional (Levy, 1968, p.27). Consequently, if a RE curriculum is based on an institutionalized approach to tradition, then it is perpetuated with its eufunctional or dysfunctional operations without any regard to change.

The Weberian approach to tradition is related to charismatic breakthroughs (Hill, 2007, p.27). Specifically, Weber (1947 [1922], p.363) illustrated the idea that charismatic breakthroughs can lead to a "revolution by tradition": "In traditionally stereotyped periods, charisma is the greatest revolutionary force" (Weber, 1947 [1922], p.363). Obviously, the Weberian approach to tradition is related to revolutionary ideas and, contradictory to the previous institutionalized approach, the functional operations of a tradition can be changed through revolution. Thus, an educational curriculum which follows the Weberian approach to tradition is not traditional or conservative and can be easily changed.

Finally, the third approach to tradition is an innovative approach which is related to "Asian values" and in particular to Confucian values (Hill, 2007, p.33). Asian values originate from Singapore during the late 1970s (Hill and Lian, 1995: Chapter 8). Despite the fact that Confucianism was not an official religion, but rather a "secular ethical system", it was finally included in the Religious Knowledge Curriculum of Singapore for those pupils that were not very religious (Kuo in Hill and Lian, 1995, p.200). The inclusion of Confucianism in the curriculum aimed to "to give young Singaporeans a cultural ballast against the less desirable aspects of Western culture" (Hill and Lian, 1995, p.200). However, the teaching of Confucianism was focused only on providing pupils with knowledge about Confucian values and not on worship or prayer (Hill, 2007, p.36). Specifically, Confucianism opposed Western culture and lifestyle and it also opposed individualism. The principles of a Confucian society are based on cooperation, understanding, friendship and trust between people in a society. Old and young, orphans and widows, lonely and disabled; all must receive care, help and understanding (Hill and Lian, 1995, p.204). However, the Confucian education program has failed to live up to its expectations, firstly because the majority of the pupils chose Buddhist studies rather than Confucianism, and secondly because the Confucian program caused some allegations of chauvinism among non-Chinese groups (Hill, 2007, p.37).

Philosophical approaches to Religious Education

There is no one definition of RE but rather many different approaches. In this section, the six philosophical approaches to RE will be presented in detail; confessional, phenomenological, critical, implicit, post-modern and spiritual RE.

Confessional religious education

According to Wright (1993, p.15), in confessional RE, children "are reinforced by a daily act of collective worship". "By teaching Christianity in a nurturing environment, the central values of the faith would become embedded in the hearts and minds" of the children (Wright, 1993, p.15). Cooling (1994, p.153) also notes, that confessional RE is "a faith-based approach, usually described as nurture, which seeks to further the religious goal of promoting faith".

Confessional RE encourages the study of the Bible and Biblical texts, such as the study of the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount (Wright, 1993, p.15). As pointed out by Hughes (2000, p.39), "the main beliefs are about God, the origin of the created world, human nature and the way people can relate God and each other, and human destiny". These will provide to children "a morally uplifting framework on which they could ground their life" (Wright, 1993, p.15). This model of RE is "supported and nurtured by a daily act of Christian worship in schools" (Wright, 1993, p.15).

The syllabus of confessional RE usually emphasizes the "beliefs, the history and the practices" of a specific faith community (Hughes, 2000, p.39). Hughes (2000, p.39), explains that one of the aims in the syllabus is to encourage "some kind of faith commitment" and therefore, RE teachers are expected to promote and develop the beliefs of a specific religion (Hughes, 2000, p.39).

Confessional RE, however, was submitted to some critiques regarding its educational practices. On the one hand, confessional RE can provide a secure and friendly environment for the majority of children to discuss their faith and participate in the collective worship related to their faith. It also preserves and develops their cultural, historical and religious heritage, because children are taught about the ethics and traditions of their religion.

On the other hand, however, confessional RE may lead to the development of social and religious prejudices among children because they are taught only about the ethics and traditions of their own religion. Thus, children do not have any knowledge about other religions, so is difficult for them to understand and respect the religious beliefs of other people.

Confessional RE aims to teach children only about one religion and it puts aside other religious traditions. Confessional RE textbooks are mainly focused on the teachings of one specific religion and they usually present this religion as the only religion that can provide the truth about God. Confessional RE does not take seriously into consideration the existence of cultural and religious plurality since it implies that the claims of a specific

religion are without doubt true, and that the pupils' role is to adopt them without thinking critically about them.

RE that is based on the confessional model teaches that only one religion can provide the truth about God and because of this, religious indoctrination may ensue. The negative consequences of religious indoctrination are "the lack of awareness of alternative religious beliefs and the absence of freedom" (Hughes, 2000, p.40). As Hughes (2000, p.40) notes, the "goal of indoctrination is to close the mind" and it seeks to impose values and beliefs on children (Hughes, 2000, p.40). It does not give any opportunity for children "to consider alternative points of view" or provide them "with the possibility of freely given assent" (Hughes, 2000, p.40). Hughes (2000, p.40), goes on to argue that indoctrination neither wants to risk pupils coming to alternative conclusions or to concern itself about the issue of individual consent. "It rather seeks conformity and resists divergence" (Hughes, 2000, p.40). Indeed, confessional religious education can be considered as indoctrination, because it seeks to impose on pupils only the beliefs of one religion and it does not give any opportunity to children to doubt or to consider alternative religious beliefs. It seems that confessional religious education does not encourage either critical thinking or freedom of thought, and for these reasons, it fails to respond to religious plurality.

Apparently, RE in Cyprus is based on confessional RE because is aiming to teach mainly about Orthodox Christianity, which is the religion professed by the majority. It seeks to introduce children to the beliefs and practices of Orthodox Christianity and for this reason, the textbooks are focused on the Bible (Old and New Testament) and the basic principles of Orthodox Christianity. Confessional RE in Cyprus is also supported by a daily worship at schools, such as daily morning pray in the classroom and occasionally (about 5 times in a school year) by worship at the local church.

Phenomenological religious education

In order to understand better the meaning of phenomenological RE, it is necessary to first explain what phenomenology of religion is. The term "phenomenology of religion" was coined by Professor Chantepie de la Saussaye in 1887. Chantepie was aiming to describe and analyze some common religious phenomena that can be found across a number of religious traditions, such as sacrifice, prayer and worship (Barnes, 2001, p.2).

Likewise, the phenomenological model of RE is a liberal form of religious education that "grew up in the 1970s and was consolidated in the 1980s" (Wright, 1993, pp.17f). The phenomenological approach to RE was developed during the late 1960s and

early 1970s, after the questioning of confessional and neo-confessional models of religious education (Barnes, 2001, p.1). More specifically, according to Philip Barnes (2001, p.1), the origins of phenomenological RE can be found in an official British report that was published in 1985 by Lord Swann. This report was titled "Education for all: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups" (Swann, 1985).

In Swann's report the role of religion within the British schools was analyzed and discussed, and it came down in favor of a non-dogmatic, nondenominational, phenomenological approach to RE (Barnes, 2001, p.1). As noted by Swann (1985, p.518), the phenomenological approach to RE would enable all pupils, regardless their religious backgrounds, to understand and appreciate the meaning of religious belief, the religious dimension of human experience and the variety of faiths within contemporary British society.

According to Wright (1993, pp.17f), phenomenological RE was developed in order to respond to the demands of the modern secular and pluralistic British society. Alongside Christianity, a variety of other religions, such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism also existed (Wright, 1993, p.17). Thus, phenomenological religious education aimed "to bring about an understanding of the variety of belief systems, rather than commitment to one" (Wright, 1993, p.17). The purpose of this model was "to develop a harmonious multicultural society in which different traditions are understood and respected" (Wright, 1993, p.18). Phenomenological RE "concerned to pass on the liberal values of freedom and tolerance in a multi-faith context" (Wright, 1998, p.65) and it also concerned itself with "the outward cultural phenomena of the various religious traditions" (Wright, 1993, p.18).

The phenomenological model requires the teacher and the children to be objective in the study of a topic (Grimmit, 1973 in Brandom, 2000, p.98). According to Brandom (2000, p.99), phenomenological RE "requires neutrality from both the teacher and the student". This model points out the universality of truth: that "all religions are equal and should be examined objectively" (Brandom, 2000, p.99). Hulmes (1979, p.46) also suggests that RE should be descriptive and neutral, so it must not give special prominence to any one religion (Hulmes, 1979, p.46). As noted by Grimmit (1973 in Brandom, 2000, p.98), phenomenological RE provides students with the capacity to "understand and think about religion" and it encourages them to suspend "their own judgment in order to appreciate the issues from the believer's point of view". This enables pupils to "identify distinguishing characteristics of the faith, how it is celebrated and how it is unique to the

worshipping community" (Grimmit, 1973 in Brandom, 2000, p.98), and in this way, the children 'learn about' religion (Grimmit, 1973 in Brandom, 2000, p.98). Phenomenological religious education has to do "with describing and empathizing with religious culture" (Brandom, 2000, p.99). As noted by Heimbrock (2001, p.96), the phenomenological approach to religion shows "where and how religion is living, present and exists in concrete local shape, including public debates and controversial tensions".

In addition, phenomenological RE teaches children about the diversity of religious traditions. The diversity of religion is one of the most important features of society, and it would be advantageous if every individual knows and understands the guiding principles and spiritual values of religions other than his or her own (Report of the Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction, 1960 in Hansen, 1983, p.19). Thus, "prejudice and bigotry will give way to tolerance and sympathetic appreciation of the religious life of our fellow citizens" (Report of the Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction, 1960 in Hansen, 1983, p.19).

Obviously, RE in Cyprus is far from being a phenomenological one because is neither non-dogmatic nor nondenominational. On the contrary, it is dogmatic since is focusing mainly on the religion of the majority. It is not aiming to enable all students, despite their own religion to understand and appreciate the meaning of religious belief, the religious dimension of human experience and the variety of faiths around the world (Swann, 1985, p.518). However, during the recent reform of the RE Syllabus is being an effort to approach the teaching of religion in a phenomenological way, but this happens very occasionally when teaching about some of the world religions or the religious communities/minorities of Cyprus.

Critical religious education

Gutek (2004, p.309) notes that the word 'critical' refers to an inquisitive and analytical investigation of the social and educational conditions in schools. This investigation aims to bring about the necessary social and educational changes that will produce "equity, fairness and justice". This investigation also seeks to create equal conditions for the subordinate social classes and marginalized groups in order to be empowered and determine their own futures (Gutek, 2004, pp.309f).

Critical theorists support the idea that the higher classes control all the social, political, economic and educational institutions and they aim to maintain and reproduce the disadvantaged and subordinate social classes (Gutek, 2004, p.310). In other words, dominant and higher classes aim "to reproduce the status quo that ensures their

dominance" (Gutek, 2004, p.310). However, critical theorists also believe that disadvantaged classes should be enabled to resist this domination and determine their own futures (Gutek, 2004, p.310).

Regarding education, critical theorists focus their interest and investigation on topics such as: analyzing authorities' motives in controlling schools, educational resource allocation, schools' policies and leadership, schools' goals and expectations, curriculum design, the relationship between school curricula and race, ethnicity, language, class and gender, the power of teachers over the educational process, students' groups, the assessment and measurement of students' academic achievement (Gutek, 2004, p.311).

Paulo Freire is one of the most important theorists in the field of critical theory of education. His work is mainly focused on 'the pedagogy of the oppressed', 'liberation pedagogy' and on 'humanistic education' (McLaren and Leonard, 1993; Giroux and Macedo, 1985; Gutek, 2004). According to him:

> "To be a good liberating educator, you need above all to have faith in human beings. You need to love. You must be convinced that the fundamental effort of education is to help with the liberation of people, never their domestication. You must be convinced that when people reflect on their domination they begin a first step in changing their relationship to the world".
>
> <div align="right">(Freire, 1971, p.62)</div>

Freire's critical pedagogy is mainly focused on three aspects: justice, critical knowledge and social change (Shor, 1993, p.25). He rejects the traditional way of learning, where the teachers transfer facts and skills to students and students merely memorize a package of skills and information. Students should not be passive and anti-intellectual. Instead of this, Freire suggests that pupils should think critically about specific subject matter, about doctrines, learning processes and their society (Shor, 1993, p.25). Students should be curious and active learners about knowledge and about the world (Shor, 1993, p.26).

Another theorist, Young (1989, p.121) claims that the critical theory of education includes the idea of 'reflexive participation', where pupils set their own conditions for their own learning. Pupils participate spontaneously in their own learning and they are not merely passive learners, but active learners. Young (1989, p.121) goes on to argue that for this critical theory, the production of a systematic and an organized learning environment is crucial to the educational effectiveness of a school. However, the production of a systematic and an organized learning environment has nothing to do with 'teacher control', where the teacher produces on her/his own rules and enforces them. On the contrary, in the critical model of education, both teachers and pupils produce and reproduce these rules through discourse (Young, 1989, p.121). Some classroom research

noted that teachers' attempts to control pupils have negative results on pupils' cognitive learning. Furthermore, the same classroom research revealed that children's involvement in classroom organization and practices have positive results on their cognitive learning (Young, 1989, p.122). Critical schooling is also characterized by flexibility and it seeks to help pupils to become responsible for their personal beliefs and to help them be authentic and fair within their relationships with other people (Young, 1989, p.122). The development of critical dialogue is also one of the potential aspects of critical theory of education. According to Freire, the key for an effective critical dialogue between students and teachers is the 'problem-posing' (Shor, 1993, p.26). Teachers encourage their students to ask their own questions and through this technique ('problem-posing'), students learn how to question answers rather than answer questions. In this way, students are searching for their own knowledge (Shor, 1993, p.26).

In addition, Shor (1993, p.27) argues that teachers who base their teaching on critical pedagogy should be democratic teachers, and this means they should not teach in an authoritarian way. Within the traditional educational system, pupils are taught to conform, to accept inequality and the status quo and to obey authority (Shor, 1993, p.28), whereas the Freirean critical education system encourages students to question and be critical towards the existing system (Shor, 1993, p.28).

In his focus on critical RE, Brandom (2000, p.102) stated that it aims to investigate the true nature of reality and that it recognizes that people are able to make sense of this reality. Critical RE concerns itself with religious truth (Brandom, 2000, p.102) and it approaches the question of religious truth with an open horizon (Wright, 2003, p.286). According to Brandom (2000, p.102), critical RE develops pupils' ability to 'discuss, debate and question' and in this way, they are able to understand better. It provides children with the skill 'to make informed decisions on religious issues' and to "recognize differences and similarities between themselves and others" (Brandom, 2000, p.103).

Moreover, critical RE encourages critical thinking, and according to Hull (2004, p.12), "if the religious instruction is open to criticism, questioning and discussion, then instruction would indeed be a partner of education. However, if religious instruction is dogmatic, then we may have religious indoctrination" (Hull, 2004, p.12).

As mentioned above, the development of critical dialogue-discussion is one of the potential aspects of critical theory of education. However, some problems can occur in practice. As Young (1989, p.123) claims, it is difficult to hold a rational discussion-dialogue between one teacher and thirty pupils, mainly because a class might contain pupils that are developmentally separated by three or more years.

Again here, RE in Cyprus is far from being critical because it does not encourage students' critical thinking. It does not approach the teaching of religion with an open horizon and RE lessons are not open to criticism and critical analysis by the students. However, it is depending on the RE teachers how they will teach one topic. Even though one topic might be confessional in nature, RE teachers can definitely approach it in a more critical way by encouraging discussion, debate and question in the classroom. For instance, if teaching about Jesus' parable Good Samaritan, which is a confessional topic, it can still be approached in a more critical way by requesting from students to transfer the meaning of this parable in nowadays and by giving examples of how people can become 'Good Samaritans' in a contemporary society.

Implicit religious education

The study of implicit RE has its origins back in 1968 (Centre for the Study of Implicit Religion and Contemporary Spirituality (CSIRCS), 2008). Implicit RE is interested in how religion and spirituality are given expression outside the framework of Christian churches and world religions (Bangor University, 2008). Implicit religion is also focuses on 'believing without belonging', so it can be identified in every part of people's everyday lives (Bangor University, 2008).

The educational movement of implicit RE influenced many RE syllabuses during the 1970s. For instance, the Local Educational Authority of Hampshire (Hampshire, 1978) argued that in order to understand religious ideas, pupils must first appreciate and understand their own selves, relationships and responses to world; they must become spiritual at their own level.

Some theorists have criticized implicit RE; for instance Bigger (2003, p.15), has argued that the main problem of implicit RE is that is considered to be religious. Bigger (2003, p.15) concedes that implicit education was certainly a good type of education, regarding understanding in general. However, he believes that spiritual and RE teaching should have been separated within the school curriculum (Bigger, 2003, p.17). Bigger (2003, p.17) claims that spirituality is not based or dependent on a belief in a specific God; spirituality is independent from any religious belief and it has to do with "thinking, skills, personal reflection and well-being". That is why spirituality can and should be applied to all cultures and curricula. Bigger (2003, p.17) goes on to argue that world religions provide some spiritual starting points, but that life experiences can certainly provide more.

RE in Cyprus it cannot be considered as implicit because it does not focusing on 'believing without belonging'. On the contrary, it teaches students to believe in Orthodox Christianity and encourage them to belong in the Christian Orthodox community as well, by attending the local church often, by practicing the holy sacraments (i.e. confession, Holy Communion) and by worshipping daily. For RE in Cyprus is not enough just to believe in Orthodox Christianity, but is significant to practice it often as well.

Post-modern religious education

In order to define the term 'postmodern', it is necessary first to explain the words post and modern. Firstly, post, as noted by Gutek (2004, p.121) is a prefix which means after or later and thus, postmodern means the historical period which follows the modern period of history. Modernity, on the other hand, focused mainly on human reason and scientific method and it was believed that human reason could discover all the truths about the function of the universe, nature and society. It was also believed that by using the scientific method and empirical senses people could discover the truth about everything. Finally, modernity focused on the scientific and natural laws and it was believed that those laws could give people the necessary guidelines that would improve and develop their life and society in general (Gutek, 2004, p.122).

According to Gutek (2004, p.123) postmodernism rejects any metaphysical philosophy which claims that there are 'universal and eternal truths and values' and it also rejects the idea that there is only one method to approach rationality. Postmodernists claim that human knowledge cannot lead to the objective truth, because for them, human knowledge is nothing but a social construction developed by the dominant classes (Gutek, 2004, p.139). These dominant social classes aim to legitimize and promote their own positions and privileges. In the same way, schools support dominant classes' positions and privileges and aim to indoctrinate pupils within the social constructions of the dominant groups (Gutek, 2004, p.139). Dominant groups control schools' policies and as a result of this, other subordinate groups are marginalized. For all these reasons, postmodernists suggest that teachers should stop being 'agents of the dominant groups', and should instead encourage the plurality of voices and specifically, the subordinate groups' voices. In this way, teachers can contribute to a critical change regarding education and society (Gutek, 2004, p.139).

The postmodern theory of education has many critics, especially idealists, realists and thomists (Gutek, 2004, p.136). According to these critics, postmodern philosophers reject metaphysics because they seek to replace "universal truth and values

with cultural and situational relativism" (Gutek, 2004, p.136). Idealists, realists and thomists also accuse postmodernism of being very repetitive as a theory and for being incoherent and unspecific (Gutek, 2004, p.136). Another criticism is that postmodernism seems to be 'nostalgic' about the collapse of Marxism and Leninism and that some aspects of the post modernistic theory are influenced by Marxism (Gutek, 2004, pp.136f).

Postmodernism has also been criticized by metaphysically based philosophies. According to them, postmodernism politicizes education by focusing on social differences such as race, class and gender (Gutek, 2004, p.137). For this reason, it fails to understand the common and universal aspects of human life and society. Metaphysically based philosophies argue that it is very important to understand the common and universal aspects of human life and society, in order to 'generalize about human freedom and human rights' (Gutek, 2004, p.137).

Regarding RE in Cyprus, is not related in any way to the philosophical approach of postmodernism exactly because postmodernism rejects any metaphysical philosophy. RE in Cyprus is based on a metaphysical philosophy, and that is Orthodox Christianity; since all religions are based on metaphysical philosophies. In addition, postmodernism rejects the promotion of the dominant groups and the marginalization of the subordinate groups (Gutek, 2004, p.139). Instead of this, it suggests that teachers should encourage and promote the plurality of voices and especially, to enhance the subordinate groups (Gutek, 2004, p.139). In the case of Cyprus though, this is not happening because RE promotes the dominant groups and marginalizes the subordinate groups by teaching mainly the religion of the dominant majority and by setting aside all other religions and cultures.

Spiritual religious education

As noted by Bigger (2003, p.13), regardless of religion, spirituality is related with the "inner dimensions of personal experience and awareness". Spirituality does not mean to promote any specific religious value; according to Bigger (2003, p.15), spirituality does not mean 'promoting Christian values'.

Hay (1998) in his book "Why should we care about children's spirituality?" suggests that spirituality is related to morality and he indicates that schools and teachers have an important role to play in order to help pupils to become spiritually aware. As noted by Eisenberg (2008), spiritual awareness is not inherent in children, so it must be taught to them; otherwise this dimension will remain dormant for their whole life. Conversely, spiritual experience is inherent in children, so they start school with an inborn and

unconscious spirituality (Eisenberg, 2008). In other words, children are not 'tabula rasa' regarding their spiritual experience. Before they start school, every child has her/his own spiritual experiences and perceptions. Eisenberg (2008) noted that "children are spiritual seekers" and the role of the teacher is to help them express their spirituality. They just need to be taught the way, tools and 'language' to express their spiritual experiences.

Eisenberg (2008) suggests some guidelines that teachers can use in order to help pupils to develop their spirituality. For instance, teachers should express care, gratitude and hospitality towards their pupils, and they should encourage conversation of these topics within the classroom (Eisenberg, 2008). In addition, an everyday spiritual world should be created in the classroom and this can be achieved with symbols, rituals and objects (Eisenberg, 2008). Finally, children do not like preaching or lecturing approaches and therefore, it would be more fruitful if teachers tell them stories rather than lecturing them (Eisenberg, 2008). Stories are more understandable to children, and pupils should be given the opportunity to retell the story in their own words; to discover the meaning of it and to find their own place in the story by relating the story to their own lives (Eisenberg, 2008). At the same time, teachers must encourage pupils' searching and encourage them to express their doubts, questions and challenges (Eisenberg, 2008).

RE in Cyprus it can be considered spiritual up to some point because it helps students to become spiritually aware and encourage them to express their spiritual experiences. However, all these are related exclusively to Orthodox Christianity's spirituality; RE in Cyprus aims to develop children's spirituality through the teaching of Orthodox Christianity. Though, according to Bigger (2003, p.15), spirituality does not mean to promote neither any specific religious value nor Christian values. In addition, spiritual RE does not encourage preaching or lecturing during the lesson. Instead, it encourages the narration of stories and gives children the opportunity to connect the story with their own experiences and express their doubts, questions and challenges (Eisenberg, 2008). Comparing the above with RE in Cyprus, it is obvious that RE in the Greek-Cypriot schools it does mostly preach and lecture during the RE lesson. Nevertheless, the new RE textbooks include some narration of stories and activities that encourage children to express their own questions and thoughts, but again, mostly regarding Orthodox Christianity.

Overall, the most appropriate philosophical approach to RE to be followed depends on different aspects, such as on the social and religious context of the specific community. That means, if the specific society is secular, modern, industrially developed, multicultural or conservative. For instance, if the society is secular and industrially

developed, then the phenomenological or implicit approach to RE might be more appropriate for the occasion. If the society is more conservative, then the confessional and spiritual approach might be more appropriate. Also, it depends on the teaching topic; some topics are more likely to be taught, in a confessional way, some others in a phenomenological, postmodern, implicit, critical or spiritual way. For this reason, it is significant that every teacher should choose the most appropriate approach to use for every occasion. However, one thing is very important; that all teaching topics should be taught based on the critical approach to RE because it is vital to encourage students' critical thinking. The promotion and development of students' critical thinking is an important part of the educational process and it should not be detached from any teaching. Nevertheless, in the case of Cyprus, RE follows mostly the confessional approach and less the critical one and for this reason, it focuses mostly on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity. At the same time though, RE in Cyprus also includes some aspects from the other philosophical approaches, such as from spiritual RE because it aims to help students to become spiritually aware and encourage them to express their spiritual experiences regarding Orthodox Christianity. On the contrary, RE in Cyprus cannot be consider neither, critical, phenomenological, implicit nor postmodern.

Defining citizenship education

Citizenship education relates

> "...to school education for young people, which seeks to ensure that they become active and responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live. While its aims and content may be highly diversified, three key themes are of particular interest. Citizenship education is normally meant to guide pupils towards (a) political literacy, (b) critical thinking and the development of certain attitudes and values and (c) active participation".
> <div align="right">(Council of Europe, 2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.10)</div>

Another definition of citizenship education is given by Deakin Crick et al (2005, p.8):

> "Citizenship education is understood as all of those planned experiences that school-based educators construct for their students in order to fulfill the different aims and purposes of citizenship education. These may be formal or informal, explicit or implicit, extra-curricular, cross-curricular or within particular curriculum strands. Citizenship education also includes the provision for pastoral and personal development of students and thus relates to both pedagogy and school ethos and culture".
> <div align="right">(Deakin Crick et al, 2005, p.8)</div>

Citizenship education should also be viewed

> "…as a form of personal enquiry that enables people freely to make collective decisions about how they should live together, given that human interests are contested and defy judgment by universal standards".
>
> (McNiff's, 2004, p.1)

Apart from the above definitions of 'citizenship', the Council of Europe, 2003 has given some additional definitions of the terms 'citizen' and 'responsible citizenship'. The term 'citizen' refers to the person who coexists in a society. The harmonious coexistence between citizens 'relates to the concept of a community embracing all contexts: local, regional, national and international – in which individuals live' (Council of Europe, 2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.9). The term 'responsible citizenship', is related to citizens' awareness and knowledge of their rights and duties. It is also related to civic values, such as democracy, human rights, equality, participation, partnership, social cohesion, solidarity, tolerance of diversity and social justice (Council of Europe, 2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.9). According to the Council of Europe (2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.10), citizenship education develops pupils' political literacy, critical thinking and certain attitudes and values, and encourages their active participation.

The development of 'political literacy' involves teaching about human rights, social, political and civic institutions, harmonious coexistence, social problems, national constitutions and about citizens' rights and responsibilities. Political literacy is also related to people's appreciation of their cultural and historical heritage and with the recognition of the cultural and linguistic diversity within society (Council of Europe, 2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.10).

The development of critical thinking and certain attitudes and values, has to do with acquiring the necessary skills to participate in public life, and achieving mutual respect and understanding. It also has to do with the development of pupils' sense of social and moral responsibility and their self-confidence. In addition, citizenship education aims to enable pupils to resolve their conflicts peacefully, to contribute to a safe environment and to fight racism and xenophobia (Council of Europe, 2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.10).

Pupils' active participation may be achieved by enabling them to become involved in the community at different levels: school, local, national and international. This can be promoted by giving pupils practical experience of democracy within the school community, by "developing their capacity to engage with each other" and by encouraging them to "develop project initiatives in conjunction with other organizations" (for example, community associations, public bodies and international organizations). (Council of Europe, 2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.10).

Approaches to citizenship education

There are four different approaches to citizenship education offered in schools. It may be offered either as a separate 'stand-alone' compulsory subject, or as an optional subject, or it can be integrated into one or more other subjects, such as history or geography, or as a cross-curricular subject (Eurydice, 2005, p.17). In this way, the principles of citizenship education can be presented in all subjects of the curriculum.

Kerr (1999, p.12f) provides a further framework for analysing approaches to citizenship education. In particular, he distinguishes between three possible approaches: education about citizenship, education through citizenship and education for citizenship (Kerr, 1999, p.12f). Education about citizenship refers to the development of knowledge and understanding of national history. It also refers to the structures and processes of the government and political life of a country. Education through citizenship is related to a more active approach, because it requires pupils' active participation in school and community life. Education for citizenship includes the two other approaches (education about citizenship and education through citizenship), but also aims to equip pupils with "skills, attitudes and values which enable them to take an active and responsible role in adult life" (Kerr, 1999, p.12f).

"Education about citizenship" is the easiest to deliver to pupils (McLaughlin 1992, p.238), because it is only related to civic education and the teaching of knowledge. In other words, "education about citizenship" is a passive model of civic education (Kymlicka, 1999, p.88) and educational theorists and policy-makers tend to reject it in favour of other models that promote an active form of citizenship:

> "...citizenship education is not simply a matter of knowledge of political institutions and constitutional institutions. It is also a matter of how we think about and behave towards others, particularly those who differ from us in their race, religion, class and so on".
>
> (Kymlicka 1999: 88)

Apart from the above approaches, citizenship education can be promoted in different ways, such as: project work on topical issues, participation in class and school councils, school newspapers and magazines, pupils' clubs and societies, formal award schemes, debates, games, discussions, role plays, visitors and speakers from outside, rules written by pupils, community links and visits and playground projects and healthy schools programs (Institute for Citizenship, 2005, p.1).

Citizenship education within the European context

Due to the enlargement of the European Union, the concept of citizenship is very important (Eurydice, 2005, p.7). During the last few years, Europe has grown bigger and closer, so it is very important for young people to be taught how to become responsible and good citizens within the democratic European society (Eurydice, 2005, p.7). They have to learn what it means to be a citizen and be informed about their rights and duties within the society (Eurydice, 2005, p.7).

Schools have an important role to play in educating people about good citizenship because they are one of the main institutions for pupils' socialization (Eurydice, 2005, p.15). Thus, it is very important to review how 'responsible citizenship' is being promoted by the educational system of each country (Eurydice, 2005, p.15).

Citizenship education is very important for European countries, especially after the European Union enlargement. New countries that had joined the European Union, among them Cyprus, need to find common social bonds in order to communicate and cooperate effectively. European citizens need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities within the European Union. For instance, young people must be informed about their rights to study in any country of the European Union and to pay fewer fees than previously. All European citizens have the right to travel throughout the European Union without a visa. However, it is also very important for European citizens to be aware of their responsibilities. For instance, they have to be tolerant towards other people.

Print and Smith (2002, p.103), have distinguished between central and eastern European countries and western European countries. Whilst central and eastern European countries have been interested in educating students with "new (democratic) values, conventions and behaviours for living in a democracy" (Print and Smith 2002, p.103), western European countries have been facing problems "based on a mix of new demographics, growing prosperity and voter apathy" (Print and Smith 2002, p.103). Citizenship education is central to the idea of a modern, integrated and diverse Europe (Print and Smith 2002, p.103).

Citizenship education was introduced in the United Kingdom's National Curriculum in August 2002 and teachers could then be trained in citizenship education by higher educational institutions (Deakin Crick, 2005, p.56). More specifically, in the United Kingdom the idea of citizenship involves "enjoying rights and exercising responsibilities in various types of community". Citizenship is also related to political participation, making informed choices and decisions, and about taking action, both individually and as part of the community (Eurydice, 2005, p.14).

In the German Land of North Rhine-Westphalia, the aim of citizenship education is to teach young people about the spirit of humanity, democracy, freedom, tolerance, respect and the preservation of the natural environment. Young people should also be enabled to serve their community, family, profession and state effectively (Eurydice, 2005, p.15).

In Finland, the purpose of citizenship education is to help pupils to become humanitarian human beings, and to be ethical, responsible and harmonious members of their society. Furthermore, pupils should learn how to respect life, nature, human rights and the social and natural environment (Eurydice, 2005, p.15). As in Finland, other Nordic countries such as Estonia, Iceland and Norway, consider 'responsible citizenship' to embrace a respect for nature.

In some countries, a link is established between education and religion and/or Christianity in particular (Eurydice, 2005, p.15). For instance, in Iceland educational methods should be based on tolerance, Christian ethics and democratic cooperation (Eurydice, 2005, p.15). Another example is Norway, where education aims to give children a Christian and moral upbringing, to expand their knowledge and understanding of Christian and humanist basic values, to teach them about their national cultural heritage and about democratic ideas, and to develop a scientific way of thinking and working (Eurydice, 2005, p.15).

Citizenship education is also crucially important for the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe (Eurydice, 2005, p.16). All Eastern European countries, for example the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia, emphasize the importance of "strengthening their potential for integration and social cohesion" (Eurydice, 2005, p.16).

More specifically, in the Czech Republic, citizenship education focuses on the importance of social cohesion, democracy, partnership and cooperation in European and international societies (Eurydice, 2005, p.16). The Constitution also emphasizes important values such dignity, freedom, equity, human rights and respect for the natural, cultural, material and spiritual heritage (Eurydice, 2005, p.14). In Latvia, education seeks to promote a democratic and socially integrated society (Eurydice, 2005, p.16). Lithuania's educational system aims to help individuals to understand the contemporary world, to acquire cultural and social skills, to become independent, active and responsible citizens and to be able to learn how to build their own life together with that of their community (Eurydice, 2005, p.16). Finally, education in Slovakia focuses on democracy, school autonomy, pupil's and family's rights, accountability, respect for non-native

citizens and the position of human beings within international society (Eurydice, 2005, p.16).

Citizenship education encourages pupils' active participation in society (Council of Europe, 2003 in Eurydice, 2005, p.10). In almost all European countries, schools seek to involve children in the activities of society (Eurydice, 2005, pp.35f). Schools' active participation in society may include various activities such as: pupils' exchanges with schools from other countries, pen pal correspondence, visiting neighboring institutions or community groups (police, fire brigade, museums, national authorities, religious institutions, homes for children with special needs, elderly people), and voluntary work (Eurydice, 2005, pp.35f).

The aims of citizenship education in the national curriculum of Cyprus

Citizenship education in Cyprus is considered to be a humanities subject. More specifically, in the National Curriculum of Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.141) the main purpose of Citizenship education is to:

> "Help pupils to become free, responsible and democratic citizens. Citizenship education should, also, enable them to carry out their duties as citizens, to claim their political rights and to put into practice the democratic principles in their everyday life".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.141)

In addition, the national curriculum of Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.141), demonstrates a variety of aims for citizenship education. Firstly, pupils should be enabled to understand and appreciate the importance of social and state principles and to realize that these social and state principles are very important not only to Cypriot citizens, but to European citizens as well. Children should also subscribe to the basic principles of their own community and understand the impact of these principles on their everyday lives. Moreover, they have to learn how to assume their responsibilities and to claim their rights; but at the same time, they must also respect majority decisions and minority rights. In addition, children have to respect the value and importance of state and national symbols and to respect public and private property. Citizenship education encourages pupils to become involved in matters of school and public interest and show public spirit. Furthermore, pupils are taught how the Republic of Cyprus works and about the values and principles of Cypriot society and they learn how they can put them into practice in their everyday life. Pupils have to develop the appropriate attitudes and abilities as European citizens and to become responsible citizens who are able to cooperate effectively with other people within their community. Pupils have to be taught

how to respect the personality, nationality and human rights of other people. Finally, they must be informed about the invasion in Cyprus by the Turkish troops in 1974 and about the violation of Cypriot human rights by the Turkish troops. Pupils are then encouraged to 'struggle' for the restoration of their rights, freedom and justice (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.141).

The textbooks and the teaching topics of citizenship education

Citizenship education textbooks are written by committees appointed by the government of Cyprus. They are printed at the expense of the Ministry of Education and Culture and they are distributed to every pupil in every public school of Cyprus free of charge. Teachers do not teach exclusively from these textbooks because they often integrate citizenship education within other subjects, such as Literature, Religious Education, Geography and others; in other words, they teach citizenship education across the curriculum.

Specifically, there are only two textbooks for the teaching of citizenship education in primary school, because it is only taught in fifth and sixth year classes. The textbooks for both year groups are called 'How to become a good citizen'.

Some of the teaching topics included in the fifth year textbook are (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2006, p.3): 'My life in the school', 'I have the right to receive an education, 'My school', 'My classroom', 'Organization of school life', 'The social association of the school', 'The role of parents', 'Association within the school', 'My life in the family', 'Family institutions through the centuries', 'Family institution and human rights', 'Social, economic and religious status of the Cypriot family', 'My life within the community', 'Community's functions', 'The management of the community', 'Love towards the community', 'The relations of my community with other communities', 'Public spirit', 'Economic life of the community', 'Cultural life of the community'.

Some of the teaching topics included in the sixth year textbook are (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2000, p.3): 'My life in the state', 'Citizens' rights and freedoms', 'Freedom of speech', 'Entitlement to social insurance', 'Children's rights', 'Public property', 'National budget', 'Natural resources', 'Our environment', 'The pollution of the environment', 'The Republic of Cyprus', 'The Constitution', 'The President of the Republic of Cyprus', 'The legislative power', 'The executive power', 'The judicial power', 'State symbols (our flag)', 'National symbols (our national anthem)', 'Greek emigrants', 'The coup of 1974', 'The Turkish invasion', 'War refugees

and missing people', 'Cyprus' relations with Greece', 'The relation of the Republic of Cyprus with other countries', 'The European Union', 'United Nations', 'The Commonwealth'.

All things considered, Citizenship Education in Cyprus is a passive model of civic education that it is mainly based on the approach of 'education about citizenship' and not in 'education for citizenship'. It is primarily aiming to teach students about the structures and processes of the government and political life of Cyprus. It does not encourage students' active participation in their school and community. Neither equips them with the necessary skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to become active and responsible adult citizens.

Assessment of religious and citizenship education

Humanities subjects, such as geography, history, citizenship and religious education involve a mixture of knowledge, understanding, concepts, principles, skills, attitudes and values (Wragg, 1997, p.45). For instance, they involve the skills of reading, identifying and analyzing documents, attitudes and values (Wragg, 1997, p.45). Hence, an effective assessment practice should involve a "carefully balanced combination" of many assessment techniques, such as "observation, questioning, discussion and marking" (Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 1991, p.13). RE itself, however, differs further from other humanities subjects; it extends beyond general humanities education because primarily, it intends to format and develop individuals' character and views.

Teaching and assessing RE in primary school has many implications, because it seems to be one of the most complex subjects in the curriculum. As noted by Wilson (1994, p.29), in most subjects, such as linguistics and science, the teaching aims are entirely clear; there is a clear definition of the subject and the criteria of success are also clear. With RE and citizenship education the teaching aims are not clear at all (Wilson, 1994, p.29) mainly because these two subjects' aims are more behavioral and less cognitive. For this reason, it is more difficult to set and assess teaching aims that are targeting children's behavior and attitudes. On the contrary, it is easier to set and assess aims that targeting their knowledge, simply because it is easier to measure them afterwards. In that case, it is an easier and a more straightforward procedure because children are taught about one topic and then the teacher assess whether and up to which point children 'captured'/possessed this new knowledge. Therefore, not only are the teaching aims of RE unclear, but the assessment criteria are also unclear. In the same way, it is extremely difficult to assess citizenship education because the success criteria are not

clear. One significant aspect of RE and Citizenship education is preparing individuals to function as citizens and to promote attitudes of tolerance within a multicultural society. RE is aiming mainly to form children's attitudes rather than enrich their knowledge and for this reason, the teachers must continuously and frequently track pupils' attitudes and behavior.

Indeed, the assessment of pupils' attainment in citizenship education is both a difficult and a very complex task (Eurydice, 2005, p.60). Whereas assessing knowledge and theoretical issues related to citizenship education can be easy to do, evaluating 'non-theoretical' aims, such as pupils' behavior, the adoption of positive civic attitudes and values and active social participation, is much more challenging (Eurydice, 2005, p.60). At the same time, it is very difficult to evaluate schools' effectiveness in providing citizenship education and it is particularly difficult to identify methods of evaluating citizenship education objectively (Eurydice, 2005, p.60). In fact, several countries argue that it is not straightforward to set up general guidelines for assessing citizenship education objectively (Eurydice, 2005, p.60).

Even though citizenship education can promote individuals' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, it "remains a relatively low priority in educational systems around the world" (Hébert and Sears, 2005, p.4). It seems that in most educational systems, there are no examinations in citizenship education and therefore, citizenship education receives less attention than subjects which are formally examined (Hébert and Sears, 2005, p.4).

In the same way, RE also remains a low priority for educational systems, especially for primary education where it is not examined. More specifically, a study which was conducted in Cyprus (Krasia, 2005, p.56), revealed that teachers believe that little attention is given to RE and that governmental educational authorities attribute low importance to it as a specific subject. The Ministry of Education of Cyprus, school inspectors, educators, parents and pupils do not seem to consider RE as an important subject within the curriculum (Krasia, 2005, p.56). For this reason, the educational authorities do pay minimal attention to the effective teaching and assessment of RE. They focus instead on the teaching and assessment of other subjects which are considered to be more important, such as Greek Language, Mathematics and Science (Krasia, 2005, p.56).

Relating citizenship and religious education

Citizenship education is connected with various subjects of the curriculum; for example, it is linked with history, geography, economics, politics, languages, environmental studies and RE (Jackson and Steele, 2004, p.1).

Religious and citizenship education are both considered to be humanities subjects; they have common teaching aims and they can be integrated and combined successfully. Some of these common teaching aims include the promotion of important social values such as tolerance, respect equality, diversity and mutual understanding.

Citizenship education can enrich RE and enable it to be more intercultural and more critical. Particularly, in Cyprus, where RE is confessional, the integration of religious and citizenship education can lead to positive results. In other words, teachers can integrate-combine the RE values (religious, spiritual and moral) with citizenship education values (social, cultural and political). By integrating religious and citizenship education means that teachers to include in their RE lessons citizenship values and vice versa, Citizenship Education lessons to include religious values. Integrating of RE and Citizenship Education does not mean to create a new joint course consisting by Religious and Citizenship Education. The courses of RE and Citizenship Education should still be taught independently but at the same time, to include each other's values and principles in each other's teaching. In this way, students who are exempted from the RE course, for personal religious reasons, will not miss out Citizenship Education course as well.

In addition, Deakin Crick's (2002) case study revealed that by introducing shared values into teaching across the curriculum, lessons become more useful and meaningful (Deakin Crick, 2005, p.63). The teachers that participated in the case study "reported that integrating spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into their own subject, teaching was more meaningful and useful than addressing it in a separate part of the timetable" (Deakin Crick, 2005, p.63).

The case study also revealed that teaching lessons where values were brought to the foreground encouraged the development of pupils' creative and critical thinking skills. They offered pupils the opportunity to speak about their own experiences and thus pupils could find more meaning in their learning (Deakin Crick, 2002 in Deakin Crick et al, 2004, p.25).

The integration of religious and citizenship education can be very fruitful for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The combination of both of these subjects can enable individuals to effectively confront racism, xenophobia and religious,

social and national inequality. At the same time, pupils can be taught about democracy, social justice, global responsibility and respect for human rights.

It is very important to integrate RE and Citizenship Education because Cypriots appear to have an issue dealing with people who profess a different religion to them, or who have a different ethnic or cultural background. An article which was published on the 12th of November 2007 by the Cypriot newspaper "O Phileleftheros" (2007), revealed the results of a European social research study. The purpose of this research was to compare the political, religious and sociological attitudes of 25 European countries, and it was conducted in Cyprus by the Center of Research of the European University Cyprus from October to December 2006 (O Phileleftheros, 2007). The research sample was taken from 1485 households in Cyprus and the participation was the highest in Europe (90%) (O Phileleftheros, 2007). The most important findings about Cypriots' attitudes are presented below (O Phileleftheros, 2007).

Firstly, a high proportion of the research population proved to have racist and xenophobic attitudes towards foreign people. Also, the overall research findings revealed a high level of intolerance and adherence to traditional ideas; they believed that immigrants, political refugees and foreign workers who arrive to Cyprus in order to work cause many economic problems. Thus, they (Cypriots) do not treat them (foreigners) very well (O Phileleftheros, 2007).

Regarding their everyday habits, one in three Cypriots watch television more than three hours daily; they spend most of their free time watching soap operas. They prefer watching television to reading a newspaper, since 46% of them do not read a newspaper. In the article, Cypriots were characterized as being "passive observers of other people's lives rather than leaders in their own lives". Cypriots are at the bottom of the European list regarding their creative actions but at the top of the list regarding their passivity (O Phileleftheros, 2007).

In addition, the majority of Cypriots (80%) are very optimistic for their future. This makes them the most optimistic Europeans, because they believe that Cypriot society has no crime and is a very safe place to live. At the same time, however, the research revealed that the Cypriot society lacks social cohesion (O Phileleftheros, 2007).

As mentioned above, the overall research findings revealed high level of traditional attitudes among Cypriots. For instance, the 66.7% of Cypriots disapprove of women having children outside of marriage and only the 38.4% of them agree with the idea that homosexuals (men and women) should be allowed to live their lives as they want. Compared with other European countries, Denmark (88.1%), Sweden (86.4%) and

Norway (80.8%), Cyprus is left again at the bottom of the list in their citizens' ideas and attitudes towards homosexuals' rights (O Phileleftheros, 2007).

As regards their political activities and ideas, a high proportion of the research sample does not trust politicians, political parties or other people; and therefore, does not wish to participate in political or social events (O Phileleftheros, 2007). Finally, Cypriots would appear to be the second most religious Europeans, since the majority of them go to church frequently and the pray daily (O Phileleftheros, 2007).

These research findings are clearly not encouraging. The research results revealed that a large proportion of the respondents is very religious, but in a peculiar way. On the one hand, they claim to be very religious and pray on a daily basis, but on the other hand, they do not apply in their everyday life even the most basic principles of Christianity, such as love towards other people, tolerance or understanding. They appear to have xenophobic, intolerant and racist attitudes.

These results are also confirmed by World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2014). Between 2010-2014, World Values Survey has revealed that a high percentage (51.1%) of the Cypriots consider religion as a very important aspect of their lives (Inglehart et al., 2014). At the same time though, only 5,5% of them are active members in a charitable/humanitarian organization and 36% of them consider unselfishness as an important child quality (Inglehart et al., 2014). However, this inconsistency between claiming of being religious and everyday actions and principles, seems to be a larger socio-anthropological phenomenon that applies to other countries as well. For instance, in Romania, where a high percentage (50,5%) considers religion as very important, again only 1,8% of them are active members of a charitable/humanitarian organization and 12,6% of them consider unselfishness as an important child quality (Inglehart et al., 2014). The same applies to some other countries, apart from Cyprus and Romania. For instance, in Lebanon where they consider religion as very important (52,9%), only 8,6% are active members in a charitable/humanitarian organization and 28.7% consider unselfishness as an important child quality (Inglehart et al., 2014). Apparently, by claiming that religion is an important part of people's life does not necessarily mean that they apply in their everyday life the basic principles of their religion; for instance, unselfishness, philanthropy and charity.

Cypriots' views and attitudes towards religion and politics might be due to the fact that Cypriot society is small in population and that therefore the majority of Cypriots seem to have more traditional ideas than other Europeans. The European survey revealed that Cypriots consider religion to be an important aspect of their culture and their religious

beliefs seem to affect even their political activities. However, the small population of Cyprus is not the only reason why some Cypriots have traditional ideas and racist attitudes; the study of Cypriot history can provide some answers and further possible reasons. As mentioned in a previous chapter of this thesis, through the centuries Cyprus has been invaded by many conquerors, such as Ottomans, Arabs, British, Latins, Crusaders and others. Those conquerors practiced different religions, traditions and cultures than those of the Cypriots. For this reason, Greek-Cypriots were always trying to "prove" that they were Greek and that they had nothing to do with Turks or Middle Eastern civilizations. They were always trying to "prove" that they had common language, religion, tradition and history with the Greeks. Thus, the entrenched defensive, racist and nationalistic attitudes of the Cypriots can be rationalized up to a point. Over the centuries, Cypriots were trying to preserve, protect and defend their national identity, and so seem to have developed defensive attitudes towards anything and everyone that posed a threat to their national identity.

In the past, Cyprus has always been geographically and historically in the midst of many other civilizations: Western European, Eastern European, African and Middle Eastern civilizations. Many of these civilizations had conquered Cyprus over the centuries: the French, Italians, British, Arabs and others. Without doubt, all of them had some effect on Cypriot culture and left behind them some aspects of their own cultures. Nowadays, Cyprus is experiencing large scale immigration from the former Soviet Union, Sri Lanka, Iran, Pakistan, Kurdistan and other countries for economic reasons; and these immigrants profess different cultures and religions to those of Cypriots. In addition, many Cypriots live in other countries, for various reasons, including study, employment or emigration. Another reason behind Cypriots' entrenched attitudes could be that the Cypriot population comprises five different cultural and religious groups: Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites and Latins. Each one of these groups has its own religion, culture, history, language and tradition. And furthermore in recent years, a growing number of pupils from different countries have been enrolled in the Cypriot primary education system. Finally, since the 1st of May 2004, Cyprus has been a member of the European Union; as a result of this, many European citizens, particularly from countries with high unemployment, have arrived in Cyprus in order to find employment.

Moreover, relating citizenship education and RE can be very fruitful in promoting intercultural education. This was particularly true after the events of 11 September 2001 in the United States and their global consequences, when the Council of Europe

encouraged the development of intercultural education and religious dialogue (Jackson and Steele, 2004).

One basic aspect of teaching citizenship and religious education is dialogue, and especially "intercultural dialogue". The year 2008 was proclaimed by the European Parliament and Council as the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue". The term "intercultural dialogue" refers to the fact that within any society the various cultural groups have to coexist, cooperate, respect and understand each other mutually. Dialogue and discussion play a pivotal role in the development of pupils' thinking, understanding, tolerance and respect (Russell, 2002 in Deakin Crick et al, 2004, p.26), and therefore teachers should give children the opportunity to speak about their personal real-life experiences and to voice their own opinions.

In addition, the findings of Deakin Crick et al research (2005, p.3) indicated that citizenship education can be applied to most subjects of the curriculum, and that it can have a fruitful impact on students' learning and achievement (Deakin Crick et al, 2005, pp.3f). More specifically, citizenship education improves student's learning, achievement and communication skills and also develops pupils' cognitive, meta-cognitive, intellectual and scientific skills (Deakin Crick et al, 2005, pp.3f). Deakin Crick et al (2005, pp.3f), further emphasized the importance of discussion and dialogue in the classroom. Through discussion and dialogue pupils can share their ideas and experiences with others. In this way, a cooperative learning environment can be created, "leading to an atmosphere of trust and safety, that enhances teacher/student relationships, where teachers let go of control and listen to student voice" (Deakin Crick et al, 2005, p.3). As a result of all these, pupils' self-confidence, self-concept and self-reliance are increased (Deakin Crick et al, 2005, p.4).

As discussed earlier, citizenship education should guide pupils towards political literacy, critical thinking and active participation (Eurydice, 2005, p.10). However, citizenship education in Cyprus seems to focus primarily on political literacy and less on the development of critical thinking and the encouragement of active participation. Even though the main purpose of citizenship education in Cyprus is to "help pupils to become free, responsible, democratic citizens and enable them to carry out their duties as citizens, to claim their political rights and to put into practice the democratic principles in their everyday life" (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.141), the teaching topics included in the textbooks focus mainly on pupils' political literacy. The teaching topics fail to develop pupils' critical thinking, and nor do they develop certain values that could encourage mutual respect, understanding, or social and moral responsibility. In

addition, citizenship education in Cyprus does not develop the skills that could enable pupils to challenge racism and xenophobia.

McLaughlin (1992 in Jackson and Steele, 2004) used the term "maximal interpretation of citizenship", which refers to citizenship education that encourages investigation, interpretation, questioning and challenging (Jackson and Steele, 2004). Conversely, "minimal interpretation of citizenship", refers to citizenship education which is narrow and exclusive (Jackson and Steele, 2004). This form of citizenship education is often referred to as 'civics education' and it focuses only on knowledge, allowing little opportunity for pupils to question or challenge (Jackson and Steele, 2004).

In the same way, RE in Cyprus seems to focus mainly on the theological aspects and knowledge of Orthodox Christianity, and less on the development of pupils' critical thinking. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the main purpose of RE in Cyprus, for many years, has been to help pupils "to realize that they are members of the Christian Orthodox Church, to learn the fundamental truths of Christianity and to experience a loving relationship with God" (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128). It is clear that the aims of the Cypriot Curriculum for RE seek to promote Orthodox values and attitudes, as well as the continuation of the Orthodox faith. At the same time, the RE textbooks present Orthodox Christianity as being the only religion that can provide the truth about God. Even the title of RE in the curriculum was, for many years, "Christian Orthodox Education"; which shows that its main attainment target was to promote exclusively the teachings of Orthodox Christianity. The aims of RE in the Cypriot national curriculum ignore the existence of cultural and religious plurality in Cyprus, because they take it for granted that all pupils belong to the Orthodox Church. They also imply that the claims of the Christian Orthodox religion are without doubt true and that the pupils' role is to adopt them without thinking critically about them. For this reason, RE in Cyprus fails to develop pupils' critical thinking.

Confessional RE in Cyprus may encourage the development of social and religious prejudices among children because they are taught only about the ethics and traditions of Orthodox Christianity. Thus, children do not have any knowledge about other religions, so it is therefore difficult for them to understand and respect the religious beliefs of other people. For this reason, social integration cannot be developed within Cypriot society, since confessional RE encourages neither critical thinking nor freedom of thought.

As noted by Jackson and Steele (2004), conservative confessional RE presents a "minimal interpretation of citizenship", which does not promote intercultural education.

However, liberal approaches to RE within confessional contexts can promote "a maximal interpretation of citizenship" which is concerned with issues of plurality and globalization (Jackson and Steele, 2004). A project conducted by the Council of Europe, on "Intercultural education and the challenge of religious diversity and dialogue", revealed that non-confessional RE seems to be more compatible with the 'maximal' form of citizenship education than confessional approaches (Jackson and Steele, 2004). It is, therefore, evident that non-confessional RE promotes the form of citizenship that encourages investigation, interpretation, questioning and challenge.

Apart from these issues, citizenship education should not only focus on theoretical knowledge but also on skills, practice and experience. It should prepare young people for active contribution to their society and help them to become proactive and responsible citizens (Eurydice, 2005, p.27). In the same way, RE teachers should not only focus on theoretical knowledge, but also on skills, practice, experience, emotions and critical thinking.

For all of the above reasons the integration of citizenship education and RE is significant because it can promote the idea of intercultural dialogue. Intercultural dialogue will enable young people of different nationalities and beliefs to live and cooperate peacefully with each other and to develop a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. Of course, this does not mean that they have to abolish their own religion or culture. On the contrary, they have to protect and develop their own cultural and religious traditions. Pupils should encounter each other's culture, language, religion and traditions in order to understand each other better. At the same time, teachers should give foreign pupils the opportunity to present their own culture, as this is the actual meaning of intercultural dialogue; to learn about each other's culture in order to understand each other better. Intercultural dialogue also means that different cultural groups can coexist, cooperate, understand and respect each other mutually. In this way, citizens will become able to fight three important social obstacles: xenophobia, racism and stereotypes.

By combining Religious and Citizenship Education, as cross-curricular subjects; by including each other's values and principles in each other's teaching, both of these school courses will become more effective. However, both RE and Citizenship Education have important weakness; for instance, they neither promote students' critical thinking nor multicultural education. Therefore, primarily, it is necessary both of these courses to be reformed towards a more multicultural approach that will aim students' critical thinking. Both of the courses need to change in order to be more effective within a contemporary society and to equip students with the necessary skills for being responsible

and active future citizens that respect the variety of religions and cultures within a multicultural society. By joining the two courses, Citizenship Education can fill some gaps of RE and vice versa. For instance, RE in Cyprus lacks of citizenship and universal values, therefore, Citizenship Education can fill this gap. On the other side, Citizenship Education lacks of some important religious values, such as love towards other people, forgiveness, acceptance, tolerance, and therefore, RE can fill this gap of Citizenship Education.

Summary

Many international organizations have sought to encourage the idea of citizenship education as a school subject. The development of citizenship education on a global scale became necessary for many reasons, such as cultural and religious pluralism, immigration, terrorist attacks and wars. The concept of citizenship is very important for the European countries, especially after the European Union enlargement; new countries that had joined the European Union, among them Cyprus, need to find common social bonds in order to communicate and cooperate effectively. Citizenship education aims to develop pupils' political literacy, critical thinking and values, and to encourage their active social and political participation. However, in Cyprus, citizenship education's teaching topics mainly focus on political literacy and they put aside critical thinking and active participation. By integrating citizenship education and RE, pupils' critical thinking will be encouraged. Critical thinking can be encouraged by the presence of one topic in other's course. For instance, during a RE lesson to include a citizenship topic and likewise, in a citizenship lesson to include a religious education topic. In this way, critical thinking will be encouraged more effectively. Religious and citizenship education can either be integrated into other subjects (such as Linguistics, History, Geography, Environmental studies, Art, Music, Theatre), or they can be taught as cross-curricular subjects. The integration of citizenship education and RE can also promote the idea of intercultural dialogue and in this way, pupils will experience each other's cultures in order to understand each other better. Intercultural dialogue also ensures that different cultural groups learn to coexist, cooperate, understand and respect each other mutually. However, one obstacle that religious and citizenship education must confront is effective assessment; it seems that is difficult to assess progress in these two humanities subjects because they mainly aim to develop social attitudes and values, which are extremely difficult to assess effectively and objectively. The next chapter: "Findings and Analysis:

Religious Education in the Greek-Cypriot schools", reveals the feelings, experiences and contradictions contained within the interviews and questionnaires.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS:
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
IN THE GREEK-CYPRIOT SCHOOLS

"I would like to know, how do we know for sure that Jesus' story (about being the son of God) is really true? Are Jesus' miracles true? Did he do those miracles for sure? Did he really say those parables? What did he really mean by telling parables? Did all those happen for sure? Who wrote Jesus' stories? How do we know that they are telling the truth? In what language were they written? If they were written in an ancient language, how can we understand them nowadays? How do we know that those scriptures were translated correctly?"

The above quote is from an interview with a nine-year-old primary school student who seems to have so many questions and doubts; he is suspicious and so skeptical towards the Christian doctrine. And all of these are from a nine-year-old child. This research reveals that most of the participants have similar questions and doubts, not only regarding the Christian doctrine but the way Religious Education is taught as a subject too.

The current chapter presents and analyses the findings of this PhD research regarding teachers', educators' and students' knowledge, views and attitudes towards the subject of Religious Education. More specifically, it examines primary school students' preliminary views and expectations about RE and also the diagnostic research on their knowledge and attitudes. The chapter further presents students' interviews about RE and it evaluates their knowledge and attitudes as revealed in the final research questionnaires. Primary school teachers' views about RE are also described here. Finally, this chapter analyses, in detail, the views about RE of educators from the four religious minority-communities of Cyprus; Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins.

Pupils' preliminary views and expectations about RE subject
(Before teaching the RE Booklet)

In order to investigate pupils' preliminary views and expectations about RE, introductory questionnaires were used. The introductory questionnaires included four questions: "What is RE?", "What words do you think when you hear the term RE?", "What have you been taught during RE lessons all these school years?" and "What do you expect to be taught this year?".

To begin with, the majority of the pupils, those studying both in schools located in a town and in a village, believe that RE is mainly about learning their own religion, Jesus, Saints, Christianity, Church, how to help other people and how to become good Christians ('Appendix F: Findings and Analysis', Tables 1&2, p.452). The analysis of the questionnaires also reveals that children, in both the town and the village locations, relate RE to Christian words such as Jesus, church, saints, apostles, love, religion, Christianity, Virgin Mary and Christmas ('Appendix F: Findings and Analysis', Tables, Tables 3&4, pp.452f). Students seemed to have been taught so far, during their RE lessons, mainly about the meaning of love, Jesus, Saints and about the twelve Apostles ('Appendix F: Findings and Analysis', Tables 5&6, p.453) and they were expecting to be taught, that school year, more about Jesus, saints, miracles and the twelve Apostles ('Appendix F: Findings and Analysis', Tables 7&8, p.454). Children's views in the introductory questionnaires were expected to be broadly similar, since during all of these years in school they were being taught mainly about the principles of Orthodox Christianity. For this reason, all their knowledge, RE vocabulary and expectations were focused on Orthodox Christianity and this reveals that the RE Syllabus and textbooks prioritize the promotion of Orthodox Christianity. As was also mentioned in a previous chapter of this thesis, "Religious Education in Cyprus", RE was mainly focused on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity. In the previous Educational Curriculum of Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128), the subject of RE entitled 'Christian Orthodox Education' and its main purpose was that:

> "Pupils have to realize that they are members of the Christian Orthodox Church, to learn the fundamental truths of Christianity and to experience a loving relationship with God".
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996, p.128)

Since the Educational Reform, the purpose of the current RE syllabus is that:

> "The pupils to be taught about the Orthodox Church, the main world religions and the religious phenomenon".
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2013)

It is apparent, from the above extracts, that the RE Syllabus in Cyprus was prioritizing, and continues to prioritize, the promotion of Orthodox Christianity. The children that have participated in this this PhD research, were only taught from the previous RE Syllabus and textbooks; all the previous school years were taught exclusively the 'Christian Orthodox Education'. Only the year when this research was conducted they were taught the lessons included within the RE Booklet but apart from this, the rest of

their RE schooling was based exclusively on the previous RE syllabus and this seems (as this research's results indicate) that had an impact on their knowledge and views.

The diagnostic research on pupils' knowledge and attitudes
(Before teaching the RE Booklet)

The second step of this research was to diagnose pupils' knowledge and attitudes on various RE topics, and for this reason, diagnostic questionnaires were used ('Appendix D: Research Questionnaires', p.437).

The first set of questions were diagnosing pupils' views regarding the aims of RE. The vast majority of them, in both the town and in the village locations, believe that it is very important for RE to teach them about Christianity ('Appendix F: Findings and Analysis', Tables 9&10, pp.454f) and how to become good Christians (Tables 11&12, p.455). Regarding the teaching of the various other religions and faith systems, pupils' answers in the town and the village locations seem to differ, as most of the pupils in the town believe that it is important for RE to teach pupils about the various religions and faith systems, whereas most of the pupils in the village believe that this is less important (Tables 13&14, p.456). At the same time, most of them support the idea that is very important for RE to teach pupils how to understand, respect, appreciate and help every individual irrespective of his/her cultural, religious, social or economic background (Tables 15&16, pp.456f). Likewise, the majority of them believe that it is very important for RE to teach pupils how to respect and protect the natural environment (Tables 17&18, p.457). Again here, students' views were as expected, since RE is focused on Orthodox Christianity; most of them believe that it is very important for RE to teach them about Christianity and how to become good Christians. RE in Cyprus is confessional, since it provides a denominational teaching of Greek Orthodoxy, which is the prevailing religion of the island (Papastephanou 2005, Zembylas 2015). The aim of confessional RE is 'religious socialization that is teaching in religion' (Willaime, 2007 in Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.4). At the same time, the Greek Orthodox Church, alongside RE, have a dual political function within the Cypriot educational system (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.4). Firstly, to socialize students in the culture and practices of the confessional Greek Orthodox community and secondly, to socialize them in 'the exclusive narratives of a particular ethno-religious community' (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.4).

The next set of questions was aiming to diagnose pupils' knowledge and attitudes towards the different ethnic groups-religious communities of Cyprus and the foreign workers living and working in Cyprus. It seems that the majority of the pupils studying

in the village have some knowledge of the official religious communities of Cyprus (Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins), whereas most of the pupils studying in the town lack this knowledge, so they gave the wrong answer by responding that the official ethnic groups are the Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots and English (Tables 19&20, p.458). Most pupils probably consider English as one of the ethnic groups of Cyprus due to the previous British colonialism and because a great number of English people reside in Cyprus.

Students' lack of knowledge about the religious communities of Cyprus is also apparent in the next set of questions, where the majority of them answered that they have not got any particular feeling towards the religious communities of Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites and Latins (Tables 22-29, pp.459-461). This would seem to suggest that the expression "I have not got any particular feeling towards them" means that they do not know who the Turkish-Cypriots are, and for this reason, they have chosen to give this answer; in other words, that "they have not got any particular feeling towards this ethnic group". Moreover, while pupils were filling in the questionnaires, they expressed this thought explicitly; that since they do not know who the Turkish-Cypriots are (and likewise Armenians, Maronites and Latins), they have chosen this option: "I have no feelings for them". Students generally demonstrated a lack of knowledge of the religious communities of Cyprus and for this reason, they were giving the answer: "I have not got any particular feelings towards them".

At the same time, however, the majority of them agree that Greek-Cypriots are good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people (Tables 21&21a, pp.458f); an answer which was to be expected since most of the participants are Greek-Cypriots themselves, so it is quite normal to consider their own community as good, trustful etc. Similar results were found by Zembylas et al (2010, pp.5&18) in their own research about Greek-Cypriot students' attitudes toward immigrants and toward those considered as the 'enemy-others' (Turks and Turkish-Cypriots). Their survey revealed that Greek-Cypriot students consider Greeks as the most 'civilized', 'hard working' and 'nice' national group, followed by the English, then Americans and Chinese (Zembylas et al, 2010, p.18). The Bulgarians come afterwards, but always before the Romanians in the ranking scale, and Turkish-Cypriots are ranked in the middle, without having a stable ranking position (Zembylas et al, 2010, p.18). However, the last national group, with a significant difference from all the others, is always the Turkish nation and Pakistanis who are always toward the end of the ranking scale (Zembylas et al, 2010, p.18).

According to Zembylas et al (2010, p.19), these findings indicate how the Greek Cypriot students' views include biases, prejudices and particular preferences towards specific national groups. However, without more data to analyze these findings, it is very difficult to explain why some groups are perceived, by students, differently than others (Zembylas et al, 2010, p.19). A speculative reason might be that the positive perceptions towards the English might be because English have 'good culture' as opposed to the Asian cultures, about which Greek Cypriot students seem to be not so well informed (Philippou, 2009). Unsurprisingly, Greek Cypriot children express their greatest negativity toward the Turks who are usually presented, within Greek Cypriot society and schools, as their 'arch-enemy' (Papadakis, 2008). Some other recent studies in Cyprus, however, have revealed that Turkish Cypriots are not perceived so negatively as the Turks, possibly because of the recent and constant efforts of the Greek Cypriot society to make this distinction (between Turks and Turkish Cypriots) at various educational, social and political levels (Zembylas, 2008).

RE in Cyprus pays little or no attention to teaching about the other Cypriot communities (Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins). The previous RE Syllabus did not include not even a single lesson about these communities (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1996). As for the new syllabus, there are a few chapters about the religious communities of Cyprus, but again, this is very limited. Children are now taught a few things about these communities but only in the third year of the primary school. The RE textbook of that year is called 'All of us are brothers and sisters' (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2012c) and includes topics such as: 'The baptism of Jesus', 'We respect others' differences', 'Children with special educational needs', 'Our brothers: The Saints', 'My neighbors: Different and Loved', 'My neighbors: Turkish-Cypriot and Latins', 'My neighbors: Maronites and Armenians', 'My neighbors: A foreigner moves into my neighborhood'. The new Syllabus makes some effort to introduce teaching on the religious communities of Cyprus and to provide children with some knowledge on this. But this teaching is, unfortunately, limited to a few lessons only in the third year, when children are between eight and nine years old. There is nothing afterwards, when the children become older and more mature, and thus able to understand better. It offers just simple knowledge which comes out of nowhere and which stops suddenly after the third year. The way children are taught now about the religious communities of Cyprus is not appropriate, because it does not seem that they are taught enough and the knowledge is inadequate.

But how much does this lack of knowledge affect pupils' respect towards the "other" religious groups? Could it be that having knowledge of the "others" results in respect towards them, or is this not necessarily the case? Or maybe only to a certain extent? In my personal opinion, as an educator, I believe that knowledge of "others" can influence respect towards "others". Having a knowledge of others encourages respect towards them; knowing about their culture, religion, customs and ethics will enhance the respect towards them.

Finally, regarding the foreign workers in Cyprus, the majority of the pupils, both in the town and the village, believe that foreign workers are just 'good' people, although some pupils in the village also indicated that they have 'no feelings' for them (Tables 30&31, p.462).

In addition, most of the students agree that people from different countries can easily coexist peacefully (Tables 32&33, pp.462f), even though most of them (students) only occasionally mix with people from different religious backgrounds (Tables 38&39, pp.464f); nor do they feel safe when walking through areas where another community is in the majority (Tables 36&37, p.464). They also note that they have not got friends from a different religious-ethnic background and if they have, then it is only a few (Tables 40&41, p.465). However, the vast majority of the pupils, both in the town and the village, wish to have a good, trustful and helpful friend regardless of this friend's origins (religious or ethnic) (Tables 42&43, p.466). At this point, it seems that there is a difference between theory and practice; between views and action. On the one hand, they believe that different communities can coexist peacefully and they love to have a good friend practicing a different religion; but on the other hand, they neither mix with people practicing a different religion, nor do they feel safe walking in areas where another community is in the majority. Students might have multicultural views but they do not put them into practice, either because they have perhaps not had the chance to do so, or simply because nobody has taught them how to do it. They may never have had the opportunity to mix with, or have a friend from, a different ethnic or religious background, because in Cyprus there are not many residents non-Greek Christian Orthodox. Also, maybe neither the school nor their family have taught them how to put their multicultural ideas into practice. As Zembylas (2015) notes, RE in Cyprus neither encourages mutual understanding nor tolerance of difference, even though there are opportunities for interaction with people from other religious backgrounds.

The students' answers regarding North (occupied) Cyprus and Turkish Cypriots were also very interesting. Most of them noted that they have visited North Cyprus at

least once and that they felt nervous and curious during their visit (Tables 44-49, pp.466-468). It is likely they felt nervous for several reasons: because they had not visited that side of Cyprus before; because the island has been divided in two parts and so is not easy to travel or to gain access the other side; because of the ongoing political conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots; because of the information that they might have heard from their parents and grandparents about the 1974 war, and maybe also a slight fear about the Turks who reside in North Cyprus since they might view them as the "enemies" who captured half of their country. They also felt curiosity, probably because they had never been in North Cyprus before and they were curious to see what there is behind the border; unknown places and people, places that they only have encountered through schoolbooks and old pictures.

When the pupils were asked whether or not they wished to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend, the majority of them, both in the town and the village, replied that they do not wish to have one (Tables 60&61, p.472), for various reasons. More specifically, the pupils attending the school in town noted that they do not wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend because they do not like them; they are bad and they hate them (Table 64, p.473). Similar answers were also given by the pupils attending the school in the village: "Turkish-Cypriots are dangerous", "I do not know their language or religion", "I do not trust them", "I do not like them" and "they have captured half Cyprus" (Table 65, p.473). In addition, other answers, less frequent, were that "Turkish-Cypriots are our enemies", "they have done so many bad things to us", "their origins are from Turkey", "I do not like Turks", "I do not wish to have a friend whose ancestors damaged our country" and "they might attack us again one day". Other statements, again less frequent, were that "Turkish Cypriots cannot speak Greek so we are not going to be able to communicate"," they do not live locally", "I do not want to have any kind of relationship with them", "they do bad things to children" and "I only want to have Cypriot friends". Further statements from students included: "I do not want to have a Turkish Cypriot friend because Turkey has invaded and damaged Cyprus", "I cannot forget and forgive easily what they done to Greek-Cypriots", "Turkish-Cypriots are traitors, they stole Cyprus from us and they are dirty people". The hate towards Turkish-Cypriots is apparent here, but it is also evident that students have so many cultural misconceptions and that they are biased against Turks and Turkish Cypriots. Children most probably gave these answers because of the ongoing political conflicts between the two communities (Greek and Turkish Cypriots), because of the current division of the island and also because of the constant school propaganda against Turks and Turkey in general.

According to Psaltis (2016, p.21), the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities have been geographically divided for almost half a century. During this half century of division "different social representations have evolved in each community, especially regarding the Cyprus problem and its history" (Psaltis, 2016, p.21). Each community promotes systematically, through the media and educational system, rituals, national symbols, memorials, commemorations and national liberation museums (Psaltis, 2016, p.21). All these factors contribute to prejudice and distrust towards the other community (p.21).

In addition, both communities use nationalistic historical narratives in order to reinforce this prejudice and distrust towards the 'enemy community'. On the one hand, the Greek Cypriot nationalistic historical narrative begins with the arrival of Greeks (in the 14th century B.C.) in Cyprus and therefore, the Hellenization of the island (Papadakis, 2008). The plot of this nationalistic history continues with the constant struggle of the Greek-Cypriots to survive against various conquerors but mainly, against their main enemy, the Turks (Papadakis, 2008). The narrative ends tragically with the "Barbaric Turk Invasion" in Cyprus (Papadakis, 2008).

On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriot nationalistic historical narrative begins with the arrival of Turks in Cyprus (in 1571 A.D.), and here the main enemies are the "Rums" (Greek-Cypriots) (Psaltis, 2016, p.21). In a similar way, the plot of this historical narrative continues with the struggle of the Turkish-Cypriots to survive against the Greek-Cypriot domination (p.21). The Turkish-Cypriot narrative has a happy ending with the "Happy Peace Operation" of Turkey which saved Turkish-Cypriots from Greek and Greek-Cypriots (p.21).

Undoubtedly, the above Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalistic historical narratives promote collective remembering of victimization by the other side, encourage prejudice and result in a reduced desire to coexist with the other community (Psaltis, 2016, p.21). It seems that the feelings of victimization, prejudice and the reduced desire to coexist are formed from an early age through the educational system (p.21). An example of 9-10-year-old Greek-Cypriot primary school students' responses are proof of this (Makriyianni, 2006, p.240). More specifically, Makriyianni (2006, p.240), during her research about "history, museums and national identity", asked these students to write down a short "History" of their homeland, and elicited the following responses:

> "My homeland is Cyprus. Cyprus is 8000 years old. Its capital is Nicosia. The mother homeland is Greece and we are Greek-Cypriots. In 1974 there was an invasion by the Turks and we were conquered. Some people are now refugees and they long for their villages (Girl, 4th grader).

"My homeland is Cyprus. Various people came and conquered us.
The last enemies were the Turks. They made war against us and took
half of Cyprus" (Boy, 4th grader).

It is apparent from the above children's writing that the feelings of victimization, hate, threat, distrust and prejudice are formed from a very early age. The education system, media and families are responsible for the development of the children's negative feelings. Undoubtedly, the role of the family and the school is vital in order to reform students' views, misconceptions and prejudice.

However, a few of them did indicate that they wished to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend and others even noted that they already had one (Tables 62&63, pp.472f). A few of them also wrote that they would like to have one but only if she/he was kind, good, polite, trusted and friendly (Tables 62&63, pp.472f), and others answered that they wanted to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend because they would like to learn the Turkish language and because the Turkish-Cypriots' origins are from Cyprus and therefore they are kind and friendly; and because all of us should be good friends and love each other; and because they would like to see each other's culture and customs (Tables 62&63, pp.472f). Although the number of students who wished to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend is small, is still encouraging that there are even some Greek-Cypriot children who want to be friends with Turkish-Cypriots, want to love each other and encounter each other's culture and customs. Undoubtedly, it is difficult for these children to hold such positive views towards Turkish-Cypriots when the majority of their peers hold such negative views.

Three of the questions requested the children to describe the meaning of peace and peaceful coexistence and what actions could make the world a more peaceful place. The vast majority of them, both in the town and the village, replied that peace means no fighting, no wars, joy, happiness, freedom, friendship and to love each other (Tables 66&67, p.474). Similar answers were also given when children were asked about the meaning of peaceful coexistence. The vast majority of them answered that peaceful coexistence means to love each other and for people practicing different religion to live together peacefully without making war. Other popular answers were: "all of us to be united", "friendship", "live with other people without fighting", "cooperation", "no guns" and "no wars". There were also some pupils who answered that they do not know what peaceful coexistence is (Tables 68&69, pp.474f). In response to the question about what actions could make our world more peaceful, most of the pupils suggested not making

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war, and to love each other; and they also suggested stopping gun manufacture, not fighting, not killing and developing friendship between us (Tables 70&71, p.475).

It is apparent from the above students' answers that there is a difference between what they say and what they do in practice. On the one hand, they are saying that people should love each other and, even if they profess different religions, should live together peacefully without making war, but on the other hand, they are saying that they dislike or even hate Turkish-Cypriots.

Also, pupils are aware of some religions but most of them have mentioned Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Idolatry (referring mainly to polytheism and animism), Maronites and Armenians. Most probably, they have mentioned Idolatry because during previous years, in History lessons, they were taught about Idolatry in the ancient Greek era and how people used to worship idols and natural phenomena. Other religions mentioned by pupils were Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism, Hinduism, Judaism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism and Jehovah Witnesses. They also mentioned some ethnic groups that they have misconceived as world religions: Turkish, Greek, Turkish-Cypriots, English, Arabs, Chinese, Spanish, French, Cypriots, Palestinians, Romanians and Germans. It would appear that children of this age have misconceptions regarding the world religions and confuse them with different ethnic groups (Tables 56&57, pp.470f).

Regarding pupils' knowledge about the different world religions, the most popular answers given by them were that Muslims believe in Allah, Christians are good people, Muslims believe in Buddha, Buddhists believe in Buddha, Idolaters worship idols-statues, Christians believe in God, Christians believe in Jesus and that Muslims become suicide bombers in order to go to paradise (Tables 58&59, p.471). Apparently, pupils have some kind of a knowledge regarding the world religions, but at the same time, they also have many misconceptions; they are biased and have prejudices.

When pupils were asked in what cultural-religious activities had participated, the vast majority of them replied that they had visited the other side of the border, North occupied Cyprus. Similarly, the vast majority of them wish to visit the North occupied Cyprus again (Tables 52-55, pp.469f). This is quite interesting and reveals that children of this age, both in the town and the village, do wish to visit the other part of Cyprus but do not have the chance to visit often because of the border. They might be curious about what is it on the other side of the island, curious about the people living there or about the place itself. This is very encouraging for the future of Cyprus since the younger generation at least wish to visit north Cyprus.

Pupils, in both the town and the village, also appear not to become involved in any kind of voluntary work (tables 72&73, p.476). Only few of them are involved in some kind of voluntarism and that is mainly scouting, selling raffle tickets to support children with special educational needs, participating in a charity festival for raising money for their classmate who suffered from leukemia and helping in their local church (tables 74&75, pp.476f). It seems that voluntarism is not very popular among Greek-Cypriot students and they do not wish to engage much with voluntary activities. This is possibly because they are too young or that they do not recognize some activities as voluntary work.

Finally, the last questions of the diagnostic questionnaire requested the children to write down their opinions about the controversial issues of the creation of the universe and euthanasia. The vast majority of the pupils believe that the universe has been created by God (Tables 50&51, pp.468f) and they disagree with euthanasia (Tables 76&77, p.477). However, it is interesting to note the reasons why children agree or disagree with euthanasia. The vast majority of those who agree with euthanasia believed that it is terrible for someone to suffer from pain (Tables 78&79, p.478). On the other hand, most of the children did not support euthanasia, mainly because they believe that only God decides about death and that maybe eventually He will perform a miracle and these ill people might be saved (Tables 80&81, pp.478f). It is apparent here that students strongly believe in God's will and power. Their answers regarding these controversial issues reveal that the majority of them are strongly convinced that universe is been created by God and also that only He can decide about life and death.

To sum up pupils' answers in the diagnostic questionnaires, pupils believe that it is very important for RE to teach them about Christianity, how to become good Christians, how to protect the natural environment and how to respect every individual despite their cultural, religious, social and economic background. At the same time, they believe that it is less important for RE to teach them about the various religious and faith systems. In addition, almost half of them stated that the official ethnic groups of Cyprus are Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots and English, and almost half of the remainder stated that the ethnic groups are Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins, which is the correct answer to the question. It is interesting that the majority of the pupils believe that Greek-Cypriots are good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people, whereas for the Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians, Latins and foreigners living in Cyprus they have no special feeling; they do not believe that they are either good or bad people. However, they believe that people from different countries can easily coexist. It is also

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interesting to note the fact that they only have occasional contact with people of a different religious background and that they have few friends with different religious ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, they do not wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend because they hate them and because they have captured half of Cyprus. At the same time, however, they stated that they would like to have a good, trustful and helpful friend and it does not matter where she/he comes from. In addition, pupils feel completely safe walking through their own neighborhood but they do not feel safe at all walking through areas where another community is in the majority. Regarding occupied Cyprus, the majority of them have visited the occupied (North) Cyprus at least once and most of them stated that they felt nervous during their visit. Only few of them have visited a mosque or viewed a religious ceremony in an Armenian, Maronite, Protestant or Catholic Church. The most popular religions for children where Christianity, Islam, Catholicism, Buddhism, Idolatry, Maronites and Armenians and for some of these religions they display misconceptions, for example that Muslims believe in Buddha or that they become suicide bombers in order to go to paradise. Regarding the meaning of peace, for them it is to love each other, not to make war and for people practicing different religions to live together peacefully. It is also significant that the vast majority of them do not involve themselves in any kind of a voluntary work activity. Finally, the majority of them believe that the universe has been created by God and most of them disagree with euthanasia because they believe that only God decides about death and that He might perform a miracle for ill people to be saved.

All things considered, pupils' answers in the diagnostic questionnaires revealed that they prioritize the teaching of Orthodox Christianity since they believe that the teaching of their own religion is the most important aim of RE. Conversely, for them teaching about different world religions is a less important aim of RE. Students seem to have well-embedded confessional views due to the fact that RE is focused, for many years, almost entirely on the teachings of Orthodox Christianity. In addition, they display many misconceptions and false knowledge regarding the religious communities of Cyprus and other world religions. This is most probably due to the fact that they lack knowledge of these two groups, i.e. the religious communities of Cyprus and world religions. Whereas in the case of the religious communities of Maronites, Armenians and Latins they display neutral feelings and no knowledge, it seems that in the case of Turkish Cypriots, they have very negative views and feelings towards them. Students also display a lack of knowledge regarding different social and environmental issues, due to the fact that RE teaching textbooks do not include much content on these issues. Another important outcome from the diagnostic questionnaires was that students' ability to think

critically, to express and to support their own personal opinions on different issues was very restricted, since they could not support their own opinion with arguments. However, one positive outcome was that children do believe that RE should teach them how to respect people despite their cultural, religious, social and economic background, and this is very positive in that at least they are willing to accept people's differences within the society.

Evaluating pupils' knowledge and attitudes
(After teaching the RE Booklet)

One of the last steps of this research was to evaluate the pupils' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, different RE topics and to identify any changes in their knowledge and attitudes after the teaching of the RE booklet's content for one school year. For this reason, eight different questionnaires were given to them. These questionnaires were focused on eight different RE topics: Cypriot communities, health, moral, religious and social issues, world religions, religion and science and what they liked the most in RE this year. It must be mentioned, as it was also mentioned in Research Design and Methodology chapter, that this round of questionnaires was different from the previous one (diagnostic questionnaires). Therefore, the diagnostic questionnaire was different than the final/evaluation questionnaires (see page 147 for more details on the final/evaluation questionnaires).

It seems that in some instances, pupils' attitudes, knowledge and views regarding different social, cultural, spiritual and moral issues have been changed, in some way, after teaching the RE booklet.

Firstly, it seems that after the teaching of the booklet, their knowledge has been enriched and changed, in some way, regarding different topics. Specifically, before the booklet, pupils did not have any knowledge of the five religious communities of Cyprus, whereas, after the teachings of the booklet most of them gave the right answer. In addition, before the RE booklet many pupils were not aware of world religions and therefore most of them were considering different ethnic groups, such as Greeks, English, Arabs, Chinese, Spanish and French, as world religions. This misconception seems to change after the teaching of the booklet. Also, pupils were able to answer questions such as "how to combat racism" more knowledgeably and gave answers such as "treat everybody equally regardless of their color, religion, gender or nationality". Finally, they were able to identify the disadvantages of war such as death, poverty, hunger and insecurity.

Secondly, it seems that the teaching of the RE booklet has changed, in some way, their views and attitudes, since their answers in the final questionnaires were quite encouraging. They are encouraging because the majority of them now they believe that it is good that there are so many and different religions around the world and that all religions have something to teach us. In addition, most of them believe that the different religious communities of Cyprus can coexist peacefully and this shows that the RE booklet promotes intercultural relationships among the religious communities. However, some of their views and attitudes have not changed; specifically, their views towards Turkish-Cypriots, since in the question "which religious community of Cyprus you like the least?", most of them have answered "Turkish-Cypriots".

Thirdly, the last questionnaire completed by the pupils was aiming to investigate their views about the way RE was taught in that specific year. Their answers were encouraging and positive, since most of them liked the teaching about the different religions and they also mentioned that they like the fact that extra teaching material was delivered by the teacher and that RE lessons were taught completely differently than in previous years.

To begin with, the majority of the pupils, both in the town and the village, were aware of the five religious communities of Cyprus and therefore, they have given the correct answer, which is: Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins (Tables 82&83, p.479). At the same time, the vast majority of them believed that all five communities could live together peacefully, which is a very positive and encouraging response (Tables 84&85, p.480). When pupils were asked to write down which religious community of Cyprus they liked the most, the majority of them noted that they did not like any one of them the most (Tables 86&87, pp.480f). However, in the question asking them which religious community they liked the least, the majority of them answered that they liked Turkish-Cypriots the least, although some of them also answered "none of them" (Tables 88&89, p.481). It is encouraging and positive that the knowledge of the pupils has been changed, in some way, after the teachings of the booklet so that they now have a basic knowledge of the five communities of Cyprus. It is also encouraging that they believe that the Cypriot communities can coexist peacefully. It shows that pupils possess the good will to live with others peacefully, even though their attitudes and views towards the Turkish Cypriots have not been changed despite the teachings of the RE booklet. This reveals that the teaching of only few lessons cannot significantly change pupils' well-embedded views and attitudes.

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Some of the questionnaires were aimed at investigating students' views about environmental and social issues. Regarding their views about environmental problems, the most popular answers were: car emissions, the hole in the ozone layer and pollution from factories (Tables 90&91, p.482) and their suggested ways to protect the environment were to recycle, to use mainly renewable energy sources and to plant trees. Some of them also suggested including environmental education in schools (Tables 92&93, pp.482f). Where social issues are concerned, children consider the most significant social problems which affect people's health seriously to be: drugs and alcohol, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, smoking and overuse of medicines (Tables 94&95, p.483). Children have also suggested some ways to combat these social problems. The most popular answer was that people need to be informed about the negative consequences of smoking and drugs on their health and some other answers were 'not to use drugs', 'not to drink alcohol', 'do more physical activity' and 'have a healthy diet' (Tables 96&97, p.484).

After the teaching of the RE booklet's input, students were capable of providing answers and suggestions regarding universal values, ways to improve the world and ways to help other people. They were able to suggest some actions for improving the world, such as cooperation, living peacefully, education for all children, protection of the natural environment, helping each other, not being racist and loving each other (Tables 98&99, pp.484f). Conversely, they have identified some other actions that can exacerbate the world's problems; fighting each other, drugs, stealing from other people, racism and wars (Tables 100&101, p.485). At the same time, they recommended some ways in which to help poor and sick children around the world: by sending them money, food, clothes and medicines and also by loving them and giving them a home (Tables 108&109, p.488). They also perceived the most important universal values to be love, understanding, justice, freedom, friendship and respect (Tables 102&103, p.486).

It is significant that after the teaching input of the RE Booklet students were able to identify important social and environmental problems and also to provide their own suggestions and opinions on how to combat these problems. It is vital for children to be aware of these environmental and social issues because it might prevent them, in the future, from being part of the problem. If they have knowledge of the dangers and disadvantages, then most probably, they will be able to protect themselves from the harmful effects of them. Also, if they are aware of the ways to combat these problems they will be able later, mainly as adults, to contribute to the solution of these problems.

The children are now able to give some answers regarding universal values, and about good and bad human actions. It seems that the RE booklet's input has changed, in

some way, and enriched their knowledge. It is important to have knowledge of the universal values because these values contribute to the promotion of multiculturalism; universal values such as love, friendship respect and justice are vital for the promotion of multicultural RE. The role of citizenship education is also instrumental, because (as was also noted in Chapter III, "Relating Religious and Citizenship Education"), when it is taught in conjunction with RE, then their combined role is beneficial. One of the basic aspects of teaching citizenship and religious education is the promotion of "intercultural dialogue", which means that within a society the various cultural groups have to coexist, cooperate, respect and understand each other mutually. Dialogue and discussion play a vital role in the development of pupils' thinking, understanding, tolerance and respect (Russell, 2002 in Deakin Crick et al, 2004, p.26) and the combination of RE and citizenship education can promote this.

The booklet's teaching material enriched their knowledge and changed, in some way, their views and attitudes. They are now enabled to answer critical thinking questions and to provide their own personal suggestions. They are able to successfully identify the advantages of peace ('development and creation, children getting educated, friendship, safety, love and joy') (Tables 104&105, pp.486f) and the disadvantages of war ('death, poverty, hungry people, illnesses, insecurity, hatred and fear') (Tables 106&107, p.487), as well as ways to combat racism ('not to make fun of other people, play with all children, develop friendship, treat everybody equally regardless of their color, gender, religion and nationality and love all people despite their color') (Tables 110&111, pp.488f).

Children's views on different controversial issues, such as the creation of the universe and life after death, do not appear to have much changed following the teaching input of the RE booklet. The vast majority of them believe that God is the one who created the universe (Tables 112&113, p.489) and they also believe in life after death (Tables 114&115, p.490). In addition, most of them believed that when a person is seriously ill, they should be seeking help from both God and their doctors. Some of them believed that (a seriously ill person) should be seeking help only from God; but none of them believed they should seek help only from doctors (Tables 116&116a, pp.490f). The fact that children's views regarding different controversial issues have not significantly changed after the teaching input of the booklet reveals that the booklet on its own cannot reform strongly embedded confessional views and attitudes. In order to achieve any change, it is imperative that students should be taught more frequently and more consistently about these issues throughout their school life. Changes to core views tend not to happen

rapidly, but these views can be challenged and change can be effected through education and experience.

These strongly embedded confessional views are due to the fact that RE in Cyprus has a catechistic-denominational character, since it focuses mainly on Orthodox Christian worship (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2000, p.3). It is also apparent that a strong link exists between Orthodox Christianity and the Greek national identity (Latif, 2014, p.57), since in most school's History textbooks, the Greek Orthodox Church always appears to be the main supporter of the Greek national identity. During the long years of foreign denominations, in Greece and Cyprus, the Orthodox Church, in the history textbooks, is presented to be the core agent for maintaining and enhancing people's religious, ethnic and cultural identity or supporting any uprising against the enemies and conquerors. At the same time, the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus also plays an instrumental role in enhancing pupils' confessional views. More specifically, the Church provides informal RE in the form of catechistic indoctrination, which takes place in church buildings on Saturdays (Latif, 2014, p.57). The priest of each district is responsible for organizing these catechistic schools and for offering RE lessons free of charge (p.57). The lessons are provided either by the priests themselves, teachers or other volunteers (p.57) and they are optional, so anyone who wants to do so can attend at any time free of charge. During the school year 2018-2019, about 1700 primary and secondary school children, from 35 different parishes[21], have attended these catechistic lessons. The instrumental role of the Church of Cyprus in the educational system goes back centuries, all through the different foreign occupations of the island. For instance, during the Ottoman occupation, the Orthodox Archbishop was not only the Orthodox Christians' religious leader but was also their political leader (Nevzat, 2005, p.62) and he "was the supreme authority in all matters pertaining to Christian education" (Latif, 2014, p.57). Afterwards, during the British colonial administration, the Church of Cyprus promoted Greek Christian Orthodox nationalistic ideas in order to help Greek Cypriots to preserve their identity (Latif, 2014, p.57). According to Latif (2014, p.48), this led gradually to the rise of nationalism and ethnic clashes between the two communities; Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Regarding the world religions, pupils' knowledge has been changed, in some way, because the majority of them correctly named some world religions and it seems that they

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[21] This number is only from one ecclesiastical district but there are several other districts all over Cyprus. Therefore, the number of students attending in these lessons is much larger than 1700, if calculating all districts of Cyprus, but no information was available for all districts. This information was provided by the Office of Ecclesiastical Catechism and Ministry of the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus, in August 2019.

no longer have so many misconceptions; for example, they do not confuse religions with ethnic groups or languages as they used to previously. So now pupils correctly named as religions Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Atheism (Tables 117&118, p.491) and for the majority of them the most impressive religion was Islam but some of them have also mentioned as impressive religions Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism and Atheism (Tables 119&120, p.492). A very positive and encouraging finding is that the vast majority of the pupils believe that all religions have something to teach us (Tables 121&122, pp.492f) and most of the pupils attending the school in the town believe that it is good that there are so many different religions around the world (Table 123, p.493) although, conversely, the majority of the pupils studying in the village disagree with this idea (Table 124, p.493). Students' knowledge regarding world religions has been enriched and many of their original misconceptions and false knowledge have been changed, in some way. This reveals that, even after a short time of teaching a specific topic, students' knowledge can be enriched. However, attitudes towards religious communities would seem to need longer and more consistent education to change.

Attitudes are difficult to change, particularly because RE books approach other religions in a skeptical way. This is especially the case in secondary education where RE aims to inform students about the main para-religious movements and phenomena and how these movements differ from Orthodox Christianity (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2000, p.3). At the same time, it encourages students to criticize and reject the other religions by using Christian Orthodox arguments against them (Philippou, 2010, p.22). Similarly, the RE syllabus in secondary education covers other Christian denominations, particularly Roman Catholicism, as well as other religions such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, African, Chinese and Japanese religions, again with the aim of criticizing them from an Orthodox Christian perspective (Philippou, 2010, p.23). It appears that the way other religions are presented in the RE Syllabus contributes to the sense of "us" (Greek Orthodox) and "them" (non-Greek-Orthodox) (Latif, 2014, p.57).

Finally, the last evaluative questionnaire aimed to investigate what pupils liked the most about RE that year. This questionnaire was crucial because it revealed pupils' views about the RE booklet itself and the way RE lesson had been taught over the previous two years. It also investigated whether RE lessons met their expectations.

The majority of the pupils, both in the village and in the town, stated that they mostly liked the teaching about the different religions and traditions. They also liked the

lessons about drugs, life after death and racism. Some pupils also liked it when the teacher invited a child from another classroom, who practiced a different religion, to talk to them about his/her own religion. In addition, many children liked the extra teaching material given by the teacher, the fact that the RE lesson was taught completely differently than in other years, and they found the teaching topics were more interesting and that everything was different to before (Tables 125&126, p.494). Pupils' answers in this question were very positive regarding the teaching of RE and the RE booklet's lessons.

Some additional topics that pupils would have liked to have been taught but were not included within the booklet, were about children with special educational needs, about Sikhism, about serious illnesses such as cancer and to learn more about world religions. However, the majority of them stated that they did not want to be taught about anything else and that they were happy with the lessons included in the booklet (Table 127, p.495). This is again very positive and proof that children really liked the RE topics included in the booklet, and that they did not feel the need to be taught about anything extra. The vast majority of the children found RE topics very interesting (Table 128, p.495) and additionally, all of them noted that the most interesting teaching topics were included within the extra teaching material that the teacher had provided to them rather than within the RE textbook (Table 129, p.495). Pupils' answers in the last evaluative questionnaire were extremely positive and pleasing. They noted that they have enjoyed and found very interesting all the additional teaching topics and they even wished to be taught more different and new topics. This reveals that children love to be taught about something new and different from the usual. They found new topics exciting and they enjoyed investigating and searching for new knowledge.

To sum up pupils' answers in the final questionnaires: after the teaching of the RE booklet pupils were then able to identify the five official religious communities of Cyprus and they believe that these communities can live together peacefully. However, they stated that they have not got any special preference towards any of those communities, but in particular they do not like Turkish-Cypriots. Pupils were also enabled to detect some environmental problems such as car emissions, the hole in the ozone layer and pollution, and to suggest ways to protect the natural environment, such as recycling, using renewable sources and planting trees. In addition, they spotted some social problems that seriously affect people's health - for example, drugs and alcohol - and they were also capable of suggesting some ways to combat these social problems; for instance, people need to be informed about the negative consequences of smoking and drugs on their health. Pupils could then identify some positive actions to make the world a better

place; for instance: cooperation, peace, education for all and the protection of the natural environment - and some negative actions that can make the world a worse place to live, such as: fighting, drugs, stealing, racism and wars. Furthermore, some universal values mentioned by the students were: love, understanding, justice, freedom, friendship and respect. In addition, they were able to detect the advantages of peace; friendship, safety and love, and the disadvantages of war; death, poverty, hunger, illnesses and insecurity. They have also suggested ways to help poor and sick people by sending them money, food, clothes, medicines and by loving them, and recommended ways to combat racism; with friendship, love, treating everybody equally regardless of their color, gender, religion and nationality. Moreover, the majority of the pupils believe that the universe was created by God, they believe in life after death and they have also stated that when someone is ill they should be seeking help from both God and doctors. After the teaching input of the booklet, pupils were also able to name different religions and world views: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Atheism - and they mentioned that the most interesting religion for them was Islam, and that all religions have something to teach us. Finally, most of them liked the way that RE was taught over the previous year, they found the RE Booklet topics very interesting and they enjoyed the teaching of the different religions and beliefs.

Comparing the data between the town and the village schools
(Before and After teaching the RE Booklet)

When comparing children's knowledge, views and attitudes between those who attended the school in town and those attending the school in the village, there were few differences. This is mainly because Cyprus is such a small island with roughly a million citizens, and also because the distances between villages and towns are not great; there are no isolated villages, located far away from the big towns. Therefore, the views of people residing in the village do not vary significantly; only occasionally were some differences observed. It seems that students in the town are more open minded to some issues than the students in the village.

Firstly, the majority of the students in the town believe that it is important for RE to teach them about the various religious and faith systems, whereas the majority of the students in the village believe that this is a less important aim for RE (Tables 13&14, p.456). Most probably, students in the village might be bit more conservative regarding the teaching of RE, whereas the students in town are more open-minded since they come across more people who practice different religions.

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A second difference which was observed between village and town was regarding the reasons why pupils wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend. Students in the town noted that they wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend only if he/she was good, polite and friendly and some of them even said that they already have one (Turkish-Cypriot friend) (Table 62, p.472). In contrast, students in the village provided a variety of reasons why they wish to have a Turkish Cypriot friend, such as: because they wish to learn their language, Turkish-Cypriots originate from Cyprus so they are kind and friendly, all of us should be good friends and love each other; and some said they already have a Turkish-Cypriot friend (because they wish to meet each other's culture and customs) (Table 63, p.473). Probably, the reason why children of the village school provided more reasons than those of the town is because the majority of the people living in that specific village have left wing political views and which means they are more involved with Turkish-Cypriots and they are generally more open-minded in any kind of relationship with them. This theory is based on the recent presidential election results in February 2018, where 66,58% of people in that village voted for the candidate supported by the left wing, against 33,42% who voted for the candidate supported by the right wing (Central Electoral Service, 2018).

In fact, in some areas of Cyprus there are many left wing citizens and this impacts on their views and attitudes towards Turkish or Greek Cypriots respectively. If the individuals are left wing, then they are more likely to be less prejudiced and to wish to coexist with the other community. Psaltis (2016, p.25), who has interviewed both Greek and Turkish older people, provides some of these examples from both communities. Firstly, a 63-year-old Greek-Cypriot man, supporting a left party, noted that before the 1974 war he had a lot of Turkish-Cypriot friends; and that after the opening of the checkpoints he reunited with his old friends and he even made new ones (Psaltis, 2016, p.25). He also remembers that there was a lot of contact between the two communities; they visited each other's shops and coffee shops (p.25). However, he also remembers that in the past, the Republic of Cyprus discriminated against the Turkish-Cypriots and therefore Greek-Cypriots held higher paid jobs than the Turkish-Cypriots (p.25). Secondly, a 61-year-old Turkish-Cypriot woman recalled an incident during the 1974 war, where a Greek-Cypriot saved many Turkish-Cypriots from being murdered by Greek-Cypriots far-right extremists (p.25). In addition, she mentioned that her father used to have many Turkish-Cypriot friends (p.25). Apparently, individuals' political affiliations significantly influence their views and attitudes towards the other community and undoubtedly, they also affect their children's views on the same issues.

A third difference between the town and the village findings was that the most impressive religion for the students in the town was Islam; but for those in the village, it was Christianity and Catholicism (Tables 119&120, p.492). Again, this response may be due to the fact that people in the village live in a smaller and more traditional community, and might be more religious as well.

Finally, one last difference, which is quite significant, is that the students in the town believe that is positive the fact that there are so many and different religions around the world, whereas, the children in the village believe that this is not something good (Tables 123&124, p.493).

In conclusion, it seems that students in the town are more open-minded regarding the teaching of various religious and faith systems than the students in the village. This finding is similar to the findings of other studies which revealed that across Europe attitudes in big cities tend to be more tolerant than those in rural areas because in big cities people mix more often with people from other ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. As Griffiths (2014) notes, in her article in Daily Mail Online, "living in ethnically diverse areas makes people more tolerant without knowing it". Griffiths (2014) refers to Professor Hewstone's research about social tolerance. Hewstone and his colleagues found that white people's racial prejudice drops significantly when they live in ethnically mixed communities, even when they do not have direct contact with the different minorities (University of Oxford, 2014). Hewstone argues that "positive contact between people belonging to different ethnic groups leads to more tolerant societies overall and simply by living in a neighborhood where people are mixing with minorities is enough to reduce racial prejudice" (University of Oxford, 2014). Hewstone and his researchers have called this effect "passive tolerance". As Hewstone argues, even though their study was conducted in Germany, these effects can apply across the world since cross-sectional studies conducted in England, the USA and South Africa supported the same idea of "passive tolerance" (University of Oxford, 2014).

Similar patterns were found in Scandinavia as well. According to Herbert (2018, p.9) the 'fear' of religious diversity seems to be higher in areas of least diversity and the evidence for this, is in voting/elections outcomes. The support for anti-immigration political parties seems to be strongest in places where fewer immigrants and ethnic minorities are resident (Herbert, 2018, p.9). For instance, in Denmark, in the 2015 elections, the anti-immigrant party was strongest in rural areas (Herbert, 2018, p.9). Likewise, in Norway and Sweden, the support for right wing, nationalistic and conservative political parties was strongest in rural and small town areas (Statistics

Norway; Statistics Sweden in Herbert, 2018, p.10). Herbert (2018, p.10) explains that the reason why people living in areas with fewer immigrants worry more about immigration than the people living with more immigrants is the influence of the national media which produces anxieties about immigration. As Jewkes (2011) argues, the people who live in areas with fewer immigrants fear what they perceive through the national media, which tends to over-represent the immigration problems and conflicts. On the contrary, people living in urban areas are used to living with ethnic diversity, so they are less fearful (Herbert, 2018, p.9). This tendency, where people living in rural areas (with low immigrant concentration), but near to big cities (with high immigrant concentration), tend to vote for radical right is often called the "halo effect", because it forms a kind of halo of high prejudice around major cities (Rydgren & Ruth, 2013, p.711).

Rydgren and Ruth (2013) have studied the radical right-wing support in Sweden focusing on socioeconomic marginalization, group threats and the halo effect. They have concluded that the main reason for radical right-wing support is mainly the socioeconomic marginalization, and not so much the low or high concentration of immigrants in one area. (Rydgren & Ruth, 2013, p.725f). Their results have indicated that "socioeconomic factors are potentially very important for understanding macro-level variance in the electoral support for radical right-wing populist parties" (Rydgren & Ruth, 2013, p.726).

In the case of Cyprus, the fact that children who live in rural areas near the town seem to be less open minded towards world religions might be due to a combination of reasons: a "halo effect", national media influence and socioeconomic marginalization could all be relevant factors. In particular, "the media play a large role in framing public policy and discourse about immigrants and refugees" (Alecou and Mavrou, 2017, p. 3). As noted by Alecou and Mavrou (2017, p.4), national media in some European countries (such as Italy, Spain, Germany, Britain and Sweden) discuss refugees and immigrants as threats to national security (Berry et al., 2015 in Alecou and Mavrou, 2017, p.4) and sometimes they even express open hostility towards them (Alecou and Mavrou, 2017, p.4). Gabrielatos and Paul (2008) also state that newspapers, and the press in general, can influence public views and attitudes towards minority (social and ethnic) groups. As they claim, newspapers are the ones which have the greatest impact on people's attitudes regarding immigration and race. Gabrielatos and Paul (2008) goes on to argue that press reports and comments about refugees are often "hostile, unbalanced and factually incorrect"; but they definitely influence public views negatively.

Control Group Findings (Before and After teaching the RE Booklet)

(a)Comparing Diagnostic with Evaluative/Final Questionnaires

Generally, the control group children's knowledge, views and attitudes have not been changed from the beginning of the school year. When comparing the diagnostic questionnaires at the beginning of the year with the evaluative questionnaires at the end of the year, their knowledge and views remained roughly the same without any significant change. Their knowledge and views regarding RE lessons, ethnic groups within Cyprus, foreign workers, peaceful coexistence, friendship, North Cyprus, creation of the universe, cultural and religious activities, world religions, Turkish-Cypriots, peace and war, voluntarism, euthanasia, environmental and social issues, universal values, racism and life after death, appear to be unchanged because they were taught from the usual RE textbooks and not from the extra teaching material included in the RE Booklet (see 'Appendix F: Findings and Analysis Tables', Tables 133-199, pp.499-520). The above topics were not included in the usual textbooks and therefore, it was not expected that their knowledge and views would be changed in any way.

This becomes more apparent when comparing and observing the differences between the research group's answers in the evaluative questionnaires and the control group's answers in the same questionnaires. As it will be presented in the next section, there were significant differences between the research and the control group.

(b)Comparing research and control groups

The following table presents briefly the differences between the research and the control groups, as resulting from the data analysis.

Table 16: Comparing the research and the control groups

Research Group	Control Group
1. Knowledge of the religious communities of Cyprus.	1. Lack of knowledge and misconceptions about the religious communities of Cyprus.
2. Rich knowledge about the protection of the natural environment.	2. Limited knowledge about the protection of the natural environment.
3. Complete answers regarding the combat of the social problems.	3. Irrelevant and limited knowledge regarding the combat of the social problems.
4. A variety of suggestions regarding the actions that can make world better.	4. Limited suggestions regarding the actions that can make world better.
5. Knowledge about the universal values.	5. Lack of knowledge regarding the universal values.

6. Rich knowledge about the different world religions.	6. Limited knowledge about the world religions.
7. Most impressive religion for them is Islam and Buddhism.	7. Most impressive religion for them is Christianity and Orthodox Christianity.
8. They believe that it is good the fact that there are so many and different religions around the world.	8. They believe that it is not good the fact that there are so many and different religions around the world.
9. They do not wish to be taught about anything extra because what was included in the RE booklet was enough. Some also want to be taught about special education needs children.	9. They remained focused on Orthodox Christianity issues since they wish to be taught more about icons, miracles and saints.
10. They found Booklet topics very interesting and teaching medium interesting and none of them complained that it was not interesting at all.	10. They found RE textbooks' topics very interesting, but only some of them found teaching medium interesting and some even not interesting at all.

As presented in the above table, the research group (both town and village) students, after the teachings of the Booklet, gave the correct answer regarding the religious communities of Cyprus ('Appendix F: Findings and Analysis Tables', Tables 82&83, p.479), whereas, in the control group, where they had not been taught from the RE Booklet but only from the RE textbooks, students gave wrong answers by mentioning Catholics and Muslims as religious groups of Cyprus. Also, a great number of them said that they do not know what the religious groups are (Table 174, p.511). Apparently, the Booklet provided the correct knowledge to the students of the research group.

In the questions about which religious community they like the most or the least, the majority of the control group replied either none of them or they said that they do not like Muslims (Tables 176-177, p.512). Again, here their answers reveal a lack of knowledge because they named as communities Christians, Cypriots, Turks, Muslims and Catholics. On the contrary, research group students named the religious communities of Cyprus correctly; Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins (Tables 86-89, pp.480f).

In addition, the control group's answers about the ways to protect the environment seem limited, since they have mentioned only the use of bicycles instead of cars, putting rubbish in the dustbin and recycling (Table 179, p.513). Conversely, students in the research group provided a variety of answers such as the use of renewable energy sources, environmental education, planting trees, use of bicycles instead of cars, recycling

and energy saving (Tables 92&93, pp.482f). Undoubtedly, their knowledge has been enriched after the teaching of the Booklet and for this reason, they were able to give this variety of answers, whereas the control group lacks of this knowledge.

Some of the control group's answers about the ways to combat social problems look a bit irrelevant (for instance healthy diet, protect environment and recycling) and also limited (for instance cooperation) (Table 181, p.514) compared to the research group's answers which are more complete (i.e. do not use drugs or alcohol, physical activity, healthy diet, inform people about the negative consequences of smoking and drugs) (Tables 96&97, p.484). It seems again that the Booklet enriched children's knowledge and enabled them to provide the appropriate answers regarding this issue.

In the same way, control group's answers regarding the positive actions that can make our world a better place were also limited compared to those of the research group. On the one hand, the research group suggested, once again, various actions, such as cooperation, peace, education for all, protection of the environment, to help each other, avoid racism and love each other (Tables 98&99, pp.484f). On the other hand, the control group provided limited answers such as being good and polite, no war, not throwing rubbish, not fighting (Table 182, p.514).

Also, some of the control group's pupils were not able to name any universal value and simply wrote "I do not know" (Table 184, p.515). In response to the same question, all of the research group pupils were able to name at least few universal values (Tables 102&103, p.485).

The children of the research group, after being taught from the booklet, were able to name a variety of world religions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Atheism (Tables 117&118, p.491). On the contrary, the children of the control group were able only to name a few world religions; Christianity, Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (Table 192, p.517). It is apparent that the research group named only three denominations of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. Undoubtedly, the teaching of the Booklet enriched research group's knowledge regarding world religions.

The most impressive world religion for the control group was Christianity (Table 193, p.518). Again here, children's preferences regarding the most impressive religion was limited, since the majority of them have mentioned only Christianity and Orthodox Christianity. For the research group, the most impressive world religion was either Islam or Buddhism (Table 119, p.492). Once again, this is due to the RE booklet, which gave the opportunity to students to learn more about religions and to be impressed by the new knowledge.

Moreover, control group students believe that it is not good that there are so many and different religions around the world (Table 195, p.518), whereas the majority of the students of the research group believe that it is good (Table 123, p.493). The RE booklet has not only enriched children's knowledge but also changed, in some way, their views and attitudes towards world religions and they are now more accepting of the various religions.

Finally, it is interesting to view children's answers in the last questionnaires which investigated their views about the way RE was taught that year. On the one hand, research group students found the teaching about the various religions and traditions very interesting, as well as the teaching about drugs, racism and life after death. They also stated that the extra teaching material and topics were more interesting than those of previous years (Tables 125&126, p.494). On the other hand, the control group found most interesting the teaching about Saints and Prophets, Christian Orthodox prayers and religious celebrations, and they also stated that the teaching topics were interesting for their age (Tables 196&197, p.519). It is apparent, however, that the control group's preferences are focused on Orthodox Christianity: Saints, Prophets, prayers and religious celebrations. The teaching of RE has not enriched their knowledge, has not taught them anything different from previous years and certainly did not broaden their spiritual, social, cultural and religious horizons.

Control group children also indicated that they wanted to be taught how to make Orthodox Byzantine icons, learn more about miracles and modern saints (Table 198, p.519), whereas the majority of the research group noted that they do not wish to be taught about anything extra because what was included in the RE booklet was enough. A few of them, however, noted that they wanted to be taught about special educational needs children, about more religions and about cancer (Table 127, p.495). It is again apparent that the teachings of the booklet broaden children's views and for this reason, they wanted to be taught more about different social, cultural and religious issues. The control group children remained focused on Orthodox Christianity issues, such as icons, miracles and saints.

Finally, the vast majority of the research group students found RE topics 'very' interesting; only two of them found them 'medium' interesting but none of them complained that it was not interesting at all (Table 128, p.495). The control group students still found RE topics 'very' interesting or 'medium' interesting, but some of them found it not interesting at all (Table 199, p.520).

In conclusion, there was a significant difference between research and control groups regarding children's knowledge and attitudes about the religious communities of Cyprus, environmental issues, social issues, universal values and world religions; and this difference is due to the fact that the research group was taught for one year from the RE Booklet. At the same time however, there was not any significant difference between the two groups regarding peaceful coexistence, peace and war, racism, the creation of the universe and life after death. The interdisciplinary teaching topics of the Booklet have changed children's views to some extent. In some cases, their knowledge has been enriched and their views have been changed, in some way; but in some other cases, these have remained the same. Of course, it must be acknowledged that the research group consisted of more children than the control group; this might explain in part why research group children provided a variety of answers compared to those of the control group. However, the differences in sample size, between the research and the control group, still do not explain the large attitudinal differences between them. Therefore, it seems that the contribution of the RE booklet was important in enriching children's knowledge and reforming their attitudes.

Interviewing primary school pupils about RE

(During the teaching of the RE Booklet)

(a)Qualitative Data Analysis: Coding and Categorizing Pupils' Answers

Pupils' answers were first reviewed, then monitored for any recurring ideas, views, attitudes and concepts, and subsequently tagged with codes. These codes were then grouped into categories created according to thematic groups. More specifically, they were categorized into 9 groups and 33 different subcategories:

Table 17: Coding pupils' answers in categories and subcategories

Orthodox Doctrine
1.   Drawing and coloring icons and pictures.
2.   Jesus, Saints and Christian prayers.
3.   Jesus' parables and miracles.
4.   Learning more about God.
5.   Orthodox Churches.
6.   Byzantine psalms.
7.   Details about Jesus' life.
8.   A critical approach to Orthodox Christianity – Pupils' religious doubts.
RE as a Teaching Subject
1.   RE as a relaxing subject.
2.   RE as a theoretical and a boring subject.
3.   RE teaching books.
4.   Expressing thoughts and views.

Contemporary life in Cyprus
1. Contemporary social issues and problems.
Spiritual Issues
1. Spiritual issues.
2. Origins of the universe.
Health Education
1. Environmental Educational.
2. Health education.
World Religions
1. World religions.
2. Converting to another religion.
3. Skepticism towards other religions.
4. Religious symbols.
5. Other people's dietary habits.
6. Learning about different customs, ethics, religious celebrations and traditions.
7. Learning about other religions because of curiosity.
8. Learning about other religions because of personal reasons.
9. Learning about other religions because of social reasons.
10. Comparing religions.
Universal Values and Human Personality
1. Improving human personality.
2. Developing love and understanding.
3. RE for human-universal values.
4. The common purpose of all religions.
Pupils' Religious Misconceptions
1. Pupils' most frequent misconceptions.
The Orthodox Christian Education through the eyes of a Muslim child
1. The Orthodox Christian Education through the eyes of a Muslim child.

(b)Pupils' Answers

(i) RE an interesting/not interesting subject

To start with, pupils' answers in the question if they find RE an interesting subject, their answers can be categorized in 7 groups as it shows in the following table.

Table 18: Why I find/do not find RE an interesting subject

1. Drawing and Coloring icons and pictures.
2. Jesus, Saints and learn Christian prayers.
3. World religions.
4. RE is a relaxing subject.
5. A lesson where we can express our thoughts and views.
6. RE is a theoretical and a boring subject.
7. RE teaching books.

Younger pupils (in the 1st and 2nd classes) seem to like RE and find it an interesting subject because they draw and color a lot. Pupils of that age like drawing and coloring pictures. They find it more relaxing and much easier than reading or writing.

> "I like RE subject because we are coloring Saints' icons and other pictures".   (Student, age 8)

Most of the pupils find RE very interesting because they are taught so many stories about Jesus and other Saints. It seems that Jesus' stories, Saints and Christian prayers are very popular among pupils. In particular, most of the saints' biographies are like adventure stories, so children seem to enjoy them a lot. Saints' biographies present the saints' lives in a narrative way, like a fairytale: the saint is born, then grows up, then performs many miracles during his/her life, then a king tries to force him/her to convert to another religion (usually from Christianity to idolatry or Islam), the Saint refuses and then he/she is executed and dies as a martyr. That is the main context of almost all Saint's Biographies. So children find all these stories really fascinating.

> "I like RE because we are taught so many stories about Saints. I particularly loved the story about Saint Christopher, who carried Jesus on his shoulders and helped him to cross the river".
>
> (Student, age 10)

Many children find it very exciting and interesting to learn about the different world religions.

> "Yes, I like RE because we are taught about other religions and it is really nice! We learn about other religious symbols and that is also nice!"
>
> (Student, age 9)

Some others like RE because they find it a relaxing school subject, compared to other subjects, such as Mathematics, Greek or Science. The main reason is because they do not usually have tests or exams in RE and most of the time, they do not even have a homework to do. Also, in RE there is only one textbook to be taught in one year, in contrast to Mathematics and Greek where there are four textbooks that have to be taught during the year. This forces teachers to rush children when teaching Mathematics and Greek. Thus, pupils feel more relaxed when they are taught RE, Geography or History, because the pace is more laid-back and the teaching more flexible.

> "I like RE because is a relaxing subject and we don't have to rush ourselves to do things like we do in Mathematics or Greek!"
>
> (Student, age 12)

Additionally, students said that they like RE because during this lesson they can express freely their thoughts, views and opinions and say what they believe about any topic.

However, there were some students who stated that they do not like either RE subject or RE textbooks because they find them theoretical and boring. Most of the teachers use only the RE textbook when they teach RE. This limited approach is clearly boring for children of primary school age because most of the time the texts included in those textbooks are considerably removed from children's interests and their everyday habits.

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> "I don't really find RE an interesting subject… OK we are taught about our religion, about Jesus' life, Saints' life, about our civilization, our traditions… But still, sometimes it is a bit boring because there is no fun in it!! It's mostly a theoretical subject… Theory, theory all the time"!
>
> (Student, age 12)

One boy complained about the RE textbooks because he found them confusing and badly structured. RE textbooks usually include philosophical and religious texts that are difficult for children of that age to understand. Those texts are usually written either by Saints or by ancient Greek philosophers. They are usually written in very formal language and include difficult words for primary children to understand. Also, children of that age do not usually find it interesting to read these kind of texts.

> "Something that I do not like in RE is the teaching books. Books are sometimes a bit confusing and not well structured. It would be nice if the teaching topics within the books were structured in a different way, according to the season. For instance, Christmas, Easter and summer units. So, teaching topics related to Christmas to be included in that unit, others in Easter unit etc. In this way, RE subject will become more structured and more interesting for pupils".
>
> (Student, age 12)

To sum up, it seems that younger students find RE lesson very interesting because they partake in very enjoyable activities for their age, such as drawing and coloring pictures and listening to stories about Saints. However, the older children express criticisms about the way RE lessons are taught and therefore they do not find it very interesting. On the contrary, they find it confusing and badly structured. While children grow up and mature, they become more demanding about their school lessons and they are able to criticize and comment when they do not like something. Younger children are easier to please than older ones. Younger ones enjoy straightforward activities like drawing and listening to stories, whereas older ones are looking for more challenging and exciting activities.

(ii) Students' preferences about RE teaching topics

Students' answers in the question about what would they like to be taught during RE lessons can be categorized into 12 groups, as shown below in Table 19.

Table 19: What I would like to be taught about during RE lessons

1. Jesus' parables and miracles.
2. Details about Jesus life.
3. Learning more about God.
4. Orthodox Churches.
5. Byzantine psalms.
6. Improving human personality.
7. Environmental education.
8. Health education.

9. Contemporary social issues and problems.
10. Talking about spiritual, controversial and paranormal issues.
11. Origins of the universe.
12. Skepticism towards Orthodox Christianity – Pupils' religious doubts.

Most of the pupils love to hear about Jesus' parables and miracles because resemble stories, like fairytales, which often include supernatural elements; and children are always fascinated by supernatural stories. They also stated that they want to learn more things about God. Usually the teaching of RE is focused on stories relating to Jesus, the Virgin Mary and Saints, and not directly about God. Therefore, the children are really curious to learn more about Him:

> "I want to learn more about God because we just have been taught only about Jesus and Virgin Mary".   (Student, age 7)

Children were also curious to learn details about Jesus' life, and these details are not even mentioned in the Holy Books (New Testament). They want to learn the specific dates for all the special events, such as Jesus' crucifixion, or exactly which year Jesus was born, baptized, died and many other details.

> "Some extra things that I want to be taught during RE subject are about Jesus' life. How Jesus was born and how He died, how the Virgin Mary was baptized and how she got married".   (Student, age 8)

Some students wanted to know how churches were built, or about the Byzantine psalms and music. A few of them even mentioned that they wish to learn to sing these Byzantine psalms.

Other students want to be taught how to improve their personality. Religious Education is similar to Moral Education, which aims to teach children how to behave in their everyday lives. RE and Moral Education provide them with behavioral and moral guidelines which must be followed by people during their life. Therefore, children wish to be taught about those moral guidelines.

> "In RE lessons I want to be taught about how we can be good people, how can we improve our personality. This will help especially kids who disobey their parents and teachers. RE will help disobedient kids to improve their behavior and character".   (Student, age 11)

One student was very interested in relating environmental education with RE in order to be taught and informed about how each individual can respect and protect the natural environment. Religion and the environment are often related, since God is the one who created the environment. Thus, almost all RE textbooks include special texts about the relationship between God, the natural environment and human beings. These texts are

mainly focused on the motto: "If you respect God, then you respect the natural environment". Other students, mainly older, indicated that they wish to be taught about topics that they are interested in and which are relevant to their age group, and specifically about health issues such as smoking, alcohol and drugs; or about contemporary social issues and problems such as parents' divorces, car accidents and speeding.

> "The topics we are taught this year are more relevant to our needs as teenagers since we are taught how to resist smoking, alcohol, drugs and other addictions. Something that I found really interesting this year was the lesson on human organ transplantation and the other one on drug addiction. We were taught that is very easy for a teenager to become addicted to drugs and then it is very difficult to quit this bad habit. Particularly when a teenager is facing a problem, then is easier to get addicted by drugs. But this is wrong because there are other ways for people to solve their problems than turning to drugs use".   (Student, age 11)

A few students noted that they wish to be taught about spiritual, controversial and paranormal issues; for instance, about life after death, hallucinations, ghosts and spirits and also about the origins of the universe and the creation of human beings.

A few other answers were particularly interesting because students expressed their skepticism and doubts towards Orthodox Christian doctrine and teachings; doubts regarding Jesus' miracles, parables, Scriptures and so many others.

> "I would like to know, how do we know for sure that Jesus' story (about being the son of God) is really true? Are Jesus' miracles true? Did he do those miracles for sure? Did he really say those parables? What did he really mean by telling parables? Did all those happen for sure? Who wrote Jesus' stories? How do we know that they are telling the truth? In what language were they written? If they were written in an ancient language, how can we understand them nowadays? How do we know that those scriptures were translated correctly?"   (Student, age 9)

Again, it is evident that students' preferences about RE topics change as they grow older. Whereas younger children seem to prefer to be taught about Jesus' parables and miracles, the older ones prefer more intellectually advanced topics, rather than religious. Therefore, they prefer to be taught about human personality, about the relationship between God and the environment, and other students even expressed their skepticism and doubts towards the Christian doctrine and indicate their wish to investigate more into different religious issues in order to find out whether they are true or false.

(iii) Students' opinion about world religions

Pupils' answers in the question asking whether they would like to be taught about other world religions can be categorized in eleven groups, as shown in Table 20:

Table 20: Why I would like to be taught about other world religions

1. Learning about different customs, ethics, religious celebrations and traditions.
2. Religious symbols.
3. Learning about other people's dietary habits.
4. Learning about other religions because of curiosity.
5. Learning about other religions because of personal reasons.
6. Learning about other religions because of social reasons.
7. Developing love and understanding.
8. RE for human-universal values.
9. The common purpose of all religions.
10. Comparing religions.
11. Converting to another religion.

Most of the students wish to be taught about world religions mainly because they want to learn about the different customs, ethics, religious celebrations and traditions. They were curious to know how other people worship their own God, how they practice their own religion, how they pray, about their traditional dress, what is written in their own Holy Books, what religious symbols they have, and why they have chosen those symbols, and about their dietary habits; what they are allowed and not allowed to eat.

> "I liked it a lot when Hatem, the Muslim boy from Class 4, came in our classroom and talked to us about his religion, Islam, I particularly enjoyed it when he brought the Holy Quran in the classroom and read a few excerpts, and also when he wrote a few Arabic words from The Quran on the board".
>
> (Student, age 11)

Some others wish to learn about other religions because they were curious about what every religion teaches.

> "I am curious to know what other people around the world believe in. For instance, I know that there is a religion that says that if someone kills many people who practice a different religion, then he will go directly to Heaven! And I want to know which religion this is! Also, I want to learn about other religious traditions and customs".
>
> (Student, age 12)

A few of them wanted to be taught about other religions because they had some personal or social reasons, for example if one of their parents or step-parents practiced a different religion, or simply for reasons of friendship.

> "I want to learn about other religions because in this way it is as if we have met other people from around the world! When I started learning about other religions, I realized that other people are also friendly. Before, I thought they

were bad and unfriendly! I also realized that they similar to us and we have so many things in common"!

(Student, age 9)

Many students wish to be taught about world religions because they believe that in this way, they will acquire knowledge about these religions and therefore able to respect, understand and love people who practice different religions to them. At the same time, they believe that the common purpose of all religions is 'to love each other' and hence, by having a knowledge of the religions, some important human and universal values can be developed as well: compassion, forgiveness, calmness, tolerance, patience and voluntarism.

Comparing religions was another reason why children wanted to be taught about world religions, mainly to compare Orthodox Christianity with other religions; to identify similarities and differences between them, to find out about their histories and origins, about their Gods, celebrations, and rites of worship. As one student said:

"All religions have advantages and disadvantages, […], so it is good to choose and pick what is good from every religion and try to follow it".

(Student, age 12)

Another student even said that he wants to have a knowledge of other religions in order to make the right choice in case one day he decides to convert to another religion.

A number of children were skeptical towards the teaching of world religions because as they noted, they do not want to be proselytized or converted to another religion since Orthodox Christianity is the only true religion and the other religions teach about unrealistic and complicated things.

It is, however, encouraging that most of the children wish to be taught about world religions for a variety of personal reasons. The majority of them want to enrich their knowledge regarding the different religions. Only few of them were skeptical towards the teaching of world religions.

(iv) Pupils' most frequent misconceptions

A great number of students appeared to have misconceptions about world religions, as shown in table 21 below:

Table 21: Students' misconceptions about world religions

1. Confusing religions with foreign languages.
2. Jesus is "included", in all world religions.
3. All religions have Saints.
4. Christmas and Easter are celebrated worldwide by all religions.
5. All religions have churches.
6. Misconceptions about the Muslims.

A few young pupils, mainly from the 1st class (age 6-7) seem to confuse religions with foreign languages, since they repeatedly stated during the interview that they would like to learn foreign languages in order to communicate with foreigners. Some others, older ones, had the misconception that Jesus is "included", in all world religions, that all religions have saints, churches, priests and that Christmas and Easter are celebrated worldwide by everybody. Some of them seem to have a misconception about Muslims since they stated that Muslims crucified Jesus and they are idolaters.

(v) Orthodox Christian Education through the eyes of a Muslim child

One Muslim child was interviewed during the research and it is interesting to view his thoughts and ideas regarding Orthodox Christian Education (RE). He mentioned that he likes RE because he learns about his classmates' religion, that is, Christianity. He particularly liked it when during the lesson they talked about Islam, and he wished that they could do more lessons on Islam, because that it would give him the opportunity to talk more about his religion and inform his classmates about the way Muslims pray and about Allah as well.

Undoubtedly, Cypriot society is no longer homogeneous and that means within Cypriot schools there are not only Greek Orthodox children attending but also other children who practice different religions. Therefore, in the development of the RE Syllabus, they must take into consideration the existence of non-Orthodox children; their religious and cultural background, their interests, how to develop an interesting lesson for non-Orthodox children, how to give these children the chance to talk about their own religious beliefs. The RE lesson should be designed in a way that will provide equal opportunities for everybody, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, to learn.

But how much do the RE lessons and the educational curriculum, in general, provide equal opportunities for everybody? The new curriculum of Cyprus has adopted the rhetoric of 'human' and 'democratic' schools as important aims of the Cypriot education system (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010). A democratic and human school system that provides "equal opportunities for access, participation and success for all students" (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.158) is included in the curriculum. However, equal opportunities and social justice are often ignored at school and classroom levels (Angelides and Karras, 2009; Zembylas, 2010). As Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.158) note, the micro-politics within the classroom and within schools should always be acknowledged, because on many occasions, specific policies or agendas are not implemented as required at school and classroom levels. In the same way, the official

curriculum might talk about social justice and equal opportunities for everybody, but within the classroom itself there is neither social justice nor equal opportunities.

To sum up, pupils' answers in interviews were grouped into nine categories and thirty-three subcategories. More specifically, many children find RE interesting because during the lesson they draw and color a lot of Saints' icons and pictures, they listen to many stories (biographies) about Jesus and the Saints, and because they learn about world religions. Also, most of them stated that RE is a relaxing school subject compared to other subjects, such as Mathematics, Linguistics or Science, which are perceived as being more "demanding" lessons.

Conversely, some children find RE a theoretical and a boring lesson because they are taught the same topics repeatedly; about Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Saints, Easter, Christmas - and all these are boring for them. Some children also complained that the texts included in the RE textbooks are complicated and confusing and therefore very difficult for them to understand.

In addition, during the RE lesson many pupils would like to be taught more about Jesus' life, parables and miracles and more about God. Others said that they wanted to be taught some behavioral and moral guidelines in order to improve their personality. They also wanted to be taught about environmental and health education in order to learn ways to respect and protect the natural environment as well as ways to protect their personal health, such as avoiding smoking, alcohol, drugs and other addictions. Some additional interesting topics that pupils wish to be taught about during RE lessons were contemporary social issues and problems, for instance parents' divorces and car accidents, and about ways to express their thoughts and views. Moreover, they wanted to talk more about spiritual issues such as life after death, origins of the universe, about ghosts and spirits. At the same time, many of them wish to learn more about Orthodox churches and Byzantine psalms. Some of them express their skepticism and doubts towards Orthodox Christianity and specifically, their doubts regarding Jesus' miracles and parables.

Most of them have answered that they would like to be taught about other world religions because they like learning about different customs, ethics, religious celebrations and traditions, religious symbols and dietary habits. Others said that they would like to learn about different world religions because they are curious or because they want to compare the other religions to their own one and identify some similarities and differences, or even because they want to develop love and understanding towards people who practice a different religion to them. At the same time, however, some children

expressed their skepticism towards other religions and stated that they do not wish to be taught about other religions because they believe that Orthodox Christianity is the only "true religion" and that the other religions are "unrealistic" and "unreal".

Finally, during the interviews, the most frequent misconceptions expressed by students were that they confuse religions with foreign languages, that they believe that all religions have Saints and churches, that Jesus is included in all religions' teachings, that all religions celebrate Christmas and Easter; and they also have some misconceptions about Muslims and Islam in general.

Interviewing primary school teachers about RE
(During the teaching of the RE Booklet)
a) *Qualitative Data Analysis: Coding and Categorizing Teachers' Answers*

Teachers' answers were first reviewed, then monitored for any recurring ideas, views, attitudes and concepts, and subsequently tagged with codes. These codes were then grouped into categories created according to thematic groups. Their answers were categorized in six main categories and many subcategories which are presented below:

Table 22: Coding teachers' answers in categories and subcategories

The main teaching purposes of RE in the Primary School
1. The development of love.
2. Love towards God.
3. Love towards people.
4. Love towards the universe.
5. Love towards the environment.
6. Learn how to worship God.
7. Participation in the Holy Sacraments.
8. Respect of the human personality.
9. Respect and accept people that practice different religions.
10. Teach the religion that is practiced by the majority.
11. Teaching about world religions and beliefs.
12. Topics from everyday life: religious, spiritual, emotional and psychomotor.
13. The principles of Christianity.
14. Children to realize that all people are equal and that God loves everybody despite their religion.
15. Moral and universal values such as love, friendship, appreciation, equality and antiracism.
16. Taught about different social issues and problems, such as drug addiction, bullying and racism.
The main difficulties and problems in teaching RE
1. There are so many children in schools who profess different religions, other than Christian Orthodox.
2. There are so many children whose families follow religious "heresies", such as Jehovah witnesses.

3. Many teachers lack knowledge regarding religious matters and have not got any religious experience (i.e. they do not practice their religion, Christian Orthodoxy).
4. There is not any effective or sufficient training for teachers, during their university studies, regarding the teaching of RE.
5. No supportive seminars regarding the teaching of RE are available from the Ministry of Education
6. The RE curriculum and related textbooks are not appropriate because focus mainly on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity and on topics that are not so interesting for the children.
7. RE textbooks are mainly focused on the teaching of the principles and regulations of Christian Orthodox doctrine.
8. The teaching of universal values is being neglected within these textbooks.
9. Insufficient teaching time for RE lessons.
10. Teachers often teach other lessons at the expense of RE

Recommended changes in the teaching of RE
1. Respect each other's individuality regardless of colour, ethnicity or religion.
2. Teachers to respect all pupils' views and identity.
3. Teachers during their university studies should be taught strategies and ways of how to teach RE.
4. Teachers and the Ministry of Education should be aware of how RE is taught in other European countries.
5. The Ministry of Education should organise seminars regarding the teaching of RE.
6. The RE syllabus and related textbooks should be reformed and enriched with new teaching topics.
7. RE not to encourage the memorization or rote learning of information.
8. Textbooks not to include a lot of information about Saints' biographies but to focus on Jesus' parables instead.

Additional RE Teaching Topics
1. World religions.
2. Pupils need to realize through RE lessons that Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion or the only correct, true religion.
3. Social issues.
4. Universal values.
5. Parents' divorce.
6. Alcoholism
7. Smoking
8. Drugs
9. Gender relationships.
10. Racism
11. Peace and war.
12. Xenophobia
13. Environmental issues.
14. Different controversial issues.

Ways to promote Multicultural Education
1. The children who profess religions other than Orthodox Christianity to talk about their own religion during RE lessons, i.e. bring in some information and objects related to their own religion.
2. Teachers need to have some knowledge of the different religious traditions.
3. Teachers need to treat all children same despite their religious beliefs.
4. Teach children about the different world religions.

5. Teach children about the meaning of democracy and equality.
6. RE syllabus need to be reformed.
7. RE textbooks need to focus on the teaching of universal values such as love and friendship.

Teaching non-Christian religions

1. Willing to teach non-Christian religions as long as it is not at the expense of Orthodox Christianity.
2. If teachers have a good knowledge of their own religion, then it is easier for them to teach other religions.
3. Willing to teach other religions because it is important for children to encounter other religions as well.
4. Teaching non-Christian religions is interesting and challenging for teachers as well because in this way they can enrich their own knowledge and develop professionally.
5. Cyprus has become multicultural with people professing different religious traditions so it is important for children to be taught about different religions. In this way, they will become less prejudiced as well.
6. Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion or the only correct or true religion. There are other religions too which need to be recognized and addressed.

(i)   The main teaching purposes of RE in the Primary School

As has been outlined above, in Table 22, teachers see the main teaching purposes of RE in Primary school as being: the development of love, love towards God, other people, the universe and the environment. RE teaching is also intended to teach mainly the religion that is professed by the majority, to teach the principles of Christianity and to encourage children to worship God and to participate in the Holy Sacraments. In addition, RE should teach them about the different world religions and beliefs, and about different social issues and problems, such as drug addiction, bullying and racism. Other important teaching aims are to teach children how to respect humanity, to accept people that profess different religions and to realize that all people are equal and that God loves everybody regardless of their religion. The teaching of moral and universal values such as love, friendship, appreciation, equality and antiracism, is another significant purpose, as well as day-to-day issues.

The oldest teacher (60 years old) has more conservative views regarding the teaching of RE and she is skeptical towards multicultural education and the teaching of non-Christian religions. She suggested that the most important aim of RE should be to teach students love towards God and to encourage them to worship God and participate in the Holy Sacraments of Orthodox Christianity. Her response might be due to being from a generation where people are more religious and actively practice their religion.

As interviewees' ages reduce, their views regarding the teaching of RE and multicultural education change as well. The younger teachers, aged 27-38, consider that

the aims of RE should be the teaching of universal values such as love, friendship, appreciation, equality and antiracism. They have also indicated the importance of teaching other religions and beliefs, as well as different social issues and contemporary problems such as drug addiction, school bullying and racism.

All teachers have suggested a variety of purposes regarding the teaching of RE. Their suggestions cover a wide range of teaching purposes, including conservative purposes focused on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity; but they have also suggested more contemporary and multicultural aims, such as world religions and universal values. It is interesting that the older teacher is focused on the teaching of Christianity, whereas the younger teachers are focused on the teaching of religions, universal values, contemporary issues and problems. This finding is in line with Everington's et al. (2011) study, who found that different social and cultural factors within a society affect the way teachers perceive and respond to issues of religious education. Therefore, in the case of these Greek-Cypriot teachers, their views and aspirations might be a product of the sociocultural factors within Cypriot society.

(ii) The main difficulties and problems in teaching RE

All teachers also identified a variety of difficulties and problems in the teaching of RE in the primary schools of Cyprus. According to the oldest teacher, one of the problems is that there are so many children in the school professing different religions other than Orthodox Christianity, including "heretic" religions such as Jehovah's witnesses. The 60 -year old teacher sees the existence of different religions and heresies as a difficulty in teaching RE. She claimed that when there are students professing different religion or heresies, then it is very difficult to teach RE. Most probably, she is claiming this because it is not easy to teach only Orthodox Christianity to non-Christian children. Since the RE textbooks focus mainly on Orthodox Christianity, then undoubtedly it is very difficult to teach RE to non-Christian students. Another problem for her is that many teachers lack knowledge regarding religious matters and have not got any religious experience themselves (i.e. they do not practice their religion).

At the same time, three (out of four) of the younger teachers mentioned that there is neither any effective or sufficient training for teachers during their university studies, or any supportive seminars regarding the teaching of RE organized by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, they lack the skills, strategies and knowledge to teach lessons effectively.

> "For example, when we were studying at the university, there was no subject teaching for RE. There was only coverage of one subject called Christian Orthodox Education and it was focused only on Orthodox Christianity. It was not training us how to teach RE, what strategies to follow and nothing about the methods of teaching RE. […] However, I believe that is not enough to have just one lesson to train and educate future teachers about how to teach RE effectively".
>
> (Teacher, female, aged 35)

The same problem, regarding teachers' training in RE, also seems to exist in North Cyprus[22]. Latif (2014, p.60), notes that in North Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot teachers have a high level of autonomy in their classes and they can deliver teaching material as they wish. In the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, there are no appropriate colleges to train religious education teachers, so RE is usually taught by history, philosophy, social studies or even music teachers (Suicmez, 2011 in Latif, 2014, p.60). Furthermore, similar to the Greek-Cypriot teachers, during their undergraduate studies they do not receive any input regarding RE, and as a result there are no specialist teachers; and consequently RE teaching has often been neglected (Atalay, 2007 in Latif, 2014, p.60).

An additional problem is that the RE curriculum and textbooks are not appropriate because they are focused mainly on the teaching of the principles and regulations of the Christian Orthodox doctrine. They neither teach universal values or topics that are interesting for young children. It seems that the RE lessons are more like a theology lessons; but is it appropriate to teach Christian Orthodox theology in primary school?

Finally, three (out of five) of the interviewees have mentioned that the teaching time for RE lesson is insufficient and that teachers often teach other lessons (such Linguistics or Mathematics or Science) at the expense of RE.

It seems again that there is a difference between the views of the older teacher and the younger ones. The oldest one considers the presence of non-Orthodox children within the classroom as a problem, because this makes it difficult to teach RE. But is this really a problem or is it a challenge to be faced that Greek-Cypriot classrooms are now multicultural? Or maybe this is only a problem if the teaching of RE is confessional? If the teaching of RE in a confessional way takes place within a multicultural classroom, where there are children with different cultures and religions, then clearly it can be a problem, simply because the lesson is not adjusted to children's backgrounds and existing knowledge. If teachers teach confessional RE and the lesson is focused only on the teaching of the Greek Orthodox doctrine, then the students who are not Greek Orthodox

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[22] North Cyprus and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus refers to the same.

will find it extremely difficult to understand or to show any interest. This is why the oldest teacher sees as a problem the presence of non-Orthodox children within the classroom; because it makes it difficult for her to teach RE in a confessional way.

(iii) Recommended changes in the teaching of RE

All teachers also suggested some changes for improving the teaching of RE in primary schools. One of the changes they suggested is that teachers ought to respect all pupils' views and identity and to teach children to respect each other's individuality regardless of their color, ethnicity and religion. Moreover, teachers during their university studies must be taught strategies and methods for teaching RE and the Ministry of Education should organize seminars regarding the teaching of RE. Both teachers and the Ministry of Education need to be aware of how RE is taught in other European countries and the syllabus and textbooks need to be reformed and enriched with new teaching topics. Textbooks should not include a lot of information about Saints' biographies and should not encourage the memorization of information by rote; the focus should be on Jesus' parables instead.

One (out of five) of the teachers proposed that the Ministry of Education of Cyprus should take into consideration the way RE is taught in other European countries. In various European countries RE is taught in many different ways, and therefore, it might be fruitful to take into consideration the way other European countries teach RE within their schools.

The youngest teacher referred to memorization as a problem, not only for RE but for the Cypriot educational system in general. The educational system encourages memorization in order for students to succeed in their exams. It does not actively encourage either critical thinking or creative thought, but only the memorization of information. Particularly in the case of RE, it is vital to focus on important universal values rather on rote learning or memorizing information. RE should be aiming to form attitudes and views rather than focusing on information. He also believes that RE teaching is more like indoctrination rather than a school subject, where Orthodox Christianity is presented as being the only correct religion.

> "They should realise that Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion and it is not the only correct and true religion. It is not right to teach that the only true religion is Christian Orthodoxy and all other religions are wrong. Even the world Orthodox derives from the words "ortho" and "dogma"; "ortho" means correct and "dogma" means doctrine. That means Orthodoxy is the only correct doctrine, and   this sounds a bit selfish".
>
> (Teacher, male, aged 27)

Moreover, the youngest teacher expressed his concerns regarding the usage of the official RE syllabus and textbooks. He claims that it is difficult for teachers not to follow the official RE syllabus and textbooks, i.e. to take the responsibility not to follow it and to use other teaching material instead. Most probably, the teacher gave this answer because he is a young, new teacher who feels insecure applying anything new in his lessons. He feels more secure following the official textbooks, which are approved by the Ministry of Education. It is normal for a new and inexperienced teacher to feel this way. He clearly expresses his concern that if he did not use the official textbooks he might face the negative reaction of the head teacher, parents or school inspectors.

Apparently, all teachers have recommended some necessary changes that need to be made to RE lessons, such as: teachers need to respect children's identity regardless of their religion or origins, the Ministry of Education should organize more seminars, teachers need to be aware of how RE is taught in other European countries and the RE syllabus and related textbooks need to be reformed with different topics and teaching techniques. It is positive that teachers are aware of the problems and they have suggested these changes; this means that they are willing to embrace large-scale reform of the RE syllabus. However, the youngest teacher seeks reassurance from the Ministry of Education; he prefers to teach what is included in the official syllabus and textbooks.

(iv) Additional RE Teaching Topics

The four younger teachers agreed that the RE syllabus needs to be enriched with additional RE topics such as the teaching of world religions, about different social issues (i.e. divorce, alcoholism, smoking, drugs, gender relationships, racism, peace and war, xenophobia) and environmental issues. The four younger teachers also suggested that students need to realize, through RE lessons, that Orthodox Christianity is neither the only religion, nor the only correct/true religion. Finally, students need to be taught about different controversial issues and universal values.

One (out of five) of the teachers suggested that new and interesting topics for young students should be added in the RE syllabus. Topics such as divorce, alcoholism, drugs, smoking, gender relationships, racism, peace, war, xenophobia, environmental issues and different controversial issues. These topics would be more likely to engage young people.

At the same time, however, the youngest teacher expressed his worries again, this time about the addition of new RE teaching topics. He stated that religious issues in Cyprus are a bit sensitive and many people might be negative about teaching something

different. He also argued that some people believe that the priority should be the teaching of Greek History and Orthodox Christianity so anything new would annoy them.

Most of the teachers (four out of five) agreed that new and interesting topics should be added in RE lessons, and it is positive that they have many ideas and have suggested a variety of interesting topics. The youngest teacher expressed again his concern that Cypriot society might not be ready for this kind of a change and that some groups of people might disagree to any proposal that focuses on topics other than Orthodox Christianity.

(v) Ways to promote Multicultural Education

All interviewees also suggested some ways in order to promote multicultural education. More specifically, four (out of five) of the teachers have suggested that teachers need to have some knowledge of the different religious traditions and that they need to treat all children the same regardless of their religious beliefs. They also recommended that the children who profess different religions than Orthodox Christianity should be able to talk about their own religion during the RE lessons, i.e. by bringing in some information and objects relating to their own religion. Another recommendation was that the RE syllabus needs to be reformed to include topics about the different world religions, to teach children about the meaning of democracy and equality and to be focused on the teaching of universal values such as love and friendship.

As far as the oldest teacher is concerned, on the one hand, she is willing to introduce multicultural education in her teaching, but on the other hand, she does not want to do this at the expense of Orthodox Christianity.

> "Multicultural education can be promoted in many ways. For instance, we can ask pupils professing a different religion to bring information about their own religion and to talk about their own religions. […] However, teachers must be careful not to do all these at the expense of Orthodox Christianity. They should not teach about other religions at the expense of Orthodox Christianity".
>
> (Teacher, female, aged 60)

Because of the ongoing conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots and also because of the long term hegemony of the Ottoman Empire over Cyprus and Greece, Islam is not one of the favorite religions among Greeks. Even the name 'Allah' is considered something negative and has connotations of the Turkish and Ottoman occupation. Therefore, the youngest teacher had suggested that RE lessons should aim to help students:

"To stop thinking when they hear the word "Allah" that is something evil but to realize that for Muslims Allah means God. […] In this way, they will not be xenophobic and prejudiced towards other people".

(Teacher, male, aged 27)

This teacher also shared his personal experience of when he was a student in high school where he recalls one of the RE teachers arguing with a Catholic child about his religious views. I also have personal memories of RE teachers who were not happy about the religious views of different children, especially Maronites or Jehovah's witnesses.

(vi) Teaching non-Christian religions

Generally, all teachers are willing to teach non-Christian religions and they find this really fruitful and interesting during the teaching of RE lessons. Only the oldest teacher seems to be more skeptical and doubtful regarding the teaching of other religions apart from Christianity. She is willing to teach them, but under the condition: "As long as it is not at the expense of Orthodox Christianity".

She also claimed that if teachers have a good knowledge of their own religion, then it would be easier for them to teach other religions. The rest of the teachers sounded happier and more willing to teach non-Christian religions, because, as they stated, it is important for children to meet other religions as well; and this is especially relevant nowadays because Cyprus has become multicultural, with many people professing different religious traditions. In this way, students will become less prejudiced. One teacher also stated that the teaching of non-Christian religions is interesting and challenging for teachers too, because in this way they can enrich their own knowledge and develop professionally. Finally, teachers mentioned that it is important to teach other religions because students need to realize that Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion, or the only correct or true religion.

The oldest teacher, as previously mentioned, is willing to teach non-Christian religions but as she states, she does not want to do it at the expense of Orthodox Christianity. She wants to maintain the focus on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity because as she claims:

"[…] if someone is aware of his/her own religion, then it is easier to approach other religions, with a greater respect. […] I think that religious fundamentalism can be found in those people that are not aware of their own religion. Because if you know your own religion, then you feel secure and open to other religions and views".

(Teacher, female, aged 60)

One (out of five) of the teachers mentioned that she wants to teach non-Christian religions not only because she believes that children will be benefit from this, but because she too would benefit as it would also enrich her own knowledge, improve her professionalism and develop her cultural skills. She finds the teaching of non-Christian religions challenging and interesting for her, and she is excited about the research, study and investigation this would involve.

Overall, it seems that the oldest teacher has more conservative ideas/views regarding the teaching of RE. She prefers to focus on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity and she believes that it is vital to teach children how to worship God and to study the Scriptures. On the other hand, the younger teachers seem to be more open-minded and also confident about teaching world religions and beliefs. Specifically, one of the teachers mentioned that the teaching of non-Orthodox religions will enrich her own knowledge, improve her professionalism and develop her cultural skills. It is encouraging that the new generation of teachers demonstrate these views regarding the teaching of world religions.

Similar results were found by Zembylas and Loukaidis (2016) in their own recent research about the "emerging relationships between religious and citizenship education". They investigated how Greek-Cypriot teachers perceive the aims and importance of citizenship and religious education, their understanding of the relationship between these two disciplines and the possibilities and obstacles pertaining to the interaction of RE and citizenship education within the Cypriot political context (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.6). On the one hand, their own results also revealed that some teachers believe that the main aims of RE should be for students to be familiarized with Christianity, the role of the church and Christian values, because these values can assist students in their future adult life (pp.7f). Moreover, some other teachers argued that RE should be connected to history and politics in Cyprus, because religion has contributed to the historical continuation of the Greek culture and tradition in Cyprus (p.8). On the other hand, there were teachers who disagreed with the confessional way that RE is taught (p.8). Those specific teachers have suggested a more secular approach in RE, based on inter-religious learning and civic values, which would include the teaching of different religions and beliefs (p.8). It is evident that there is a convergence of results between the two studies i.e. the present study and Zembylas' and Loukaidis' one, as teachers' views regarding RE seem to be converge in many occasions.

Undoubtedly, teachers' views are very important and need to be taken into consideration when reforming and developing the Educational Syllabus. Teachers are the

ones experiencing and using the syllabus within the classroom. They are the ones who can identify advantages and disadvantages of it; what works or does not work in practice. They are able to provide useful suggestions on how the Syllabus can be improved. Teachers are also aware of children's preferences within the different age groups. But how much is the Ministry of Education really taking teachers' views into consideration?

In 2009 during the Educational Reform in Cyprus, the Ministry of Education called for active (i.e. currently working in schools) teachers to act as volunteers for the development of the new syllabus. It was aiming to use these teachers' classroom experience and knowledge in developing the syllabus. Theodorou et al. (2017) conducted a research regarding teachers' participation in the new syllabus' development: "Caught between worlds of expertise: Elementary teachers amidst official curriculum development processes in Cyprus".

In order to achieve this, they interviewed the teachers who volunteered to work alongside academics and ministry officials in developing the new syllabus. At this point, it should be mentioned that I myself was interviewed for Theodorou et al research because I had worked with academics in developing the new RE syllabus (see Chapter I: "Religious Education in Cyprus and within the European context", "My experience in developing the new RE syllabus of Cyprus", p.51).

The analysis of these interviews revealed that the teachers' participation was limited and not particularly influential, because they (teachers) were subjected to the academics' and ministry officials' "authority" and "power" (Theodorou et al., 2017, p.217). Therefore, teachers were unable to either participate in or significantly influence the development of the syllabus since their teaching experience and knowledge were ignored (Theodorou et al., 2017). Instead, academics (mainly university professors) and ministry officials (mainly technocrats) reformed the syllabus using their power and position of authority (Theodorou et al., 2017). As some teachers noted:

> "What we had proposed, as elementary school teachers, was not followed. I have to admit that the product, the final product of the [subject-area] curriculum when it reached our hands was to us something foreign".
>
> (Interview 14, in Theodorou et al., 2017, p. 231)

> "No, I don't feel that the [end product of the curriculum] represents me [inaudible]. It represents me to a small degree because what we had proposed was not adequately taken into consideration".
>
> (Interview 10, in Theodorou et al., 2017, p. 231)

> "Essentially, we did not collaborate. There was no collaboration essentially".
>
> (Interview 2, in Theodorou et al., 2017, p. 230)

Many teachers argued that in many cases, they had not even seen the final text of the Syllabus before its final publication and thus, they felt disconnected and detached from what they had originally contributed (Theodorou et al., 2017, p.231). They also argued that they were treated as less-knowledgeable professionals and subjected to power imbalances (p.231). For instance, a teacher noted that one of the academics said:

> "We are academics, you are [elementary] teachers, we are not the same thing. We are academics, they called us in. You are simply here to tell us at a later stage how this will be done in class, which is your job. At this initial stage, though, it is us who will make them [curricula"].
>
> (Interview 11, in Theodorou et al., 2017, p. 226)

From the above interview extract is apparent that the academics were using their position and power to subjectivate the teachers. Theodorou et al. (2017, p. 217) compare the relationship between teachers and academics to the Foucauldian notions of subjectivation, subjection and resistance. In the case of the Cypriot teachers who have participated in the Syllabus' development, the notions of subjectivation, subjection and resistance are obvious. The academics, by using their power and authority, have subjectivated teachers and teachers have been subjected to academics' power. At the same time though, there were signs of resistance from teachers, since some of them responded to this subjectivation by resigning from their duties or by disagreeing openly with the academics (Theodorou et al., 2017, p.232).

Interviewing educators from the five different religious communities of Cyprus

It was vital to get information about the way RE is taught within the four religious communities of Cyprus (Turkish-Cypriot, Maronite, Armenian and Latin). Some of these four communities follow a different Educational Syllabus than the Greek-Cypriot community. Therefore, it was important to know how RE is taught within these communities and also to ascertain their views regarding the teaching of RE as well their attitudes towards the Greek-Cypriot community. In addition to the four religious communities (Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) one educator from the Greek-Cypriot community has been interviewed as well.

The interviews were first reviewed and monitored for recurrent ideas, views, attitudes and concepts and then tagged with codes. These codes were then grouped into created categories. Their answers were categorized in thirteen main categories and many subcategories and they are presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Coding educators' answers in categories and subcategories

RE Syllabus and Textbooks

1. Greek-Cypriots, Maronites and Latins follow the same RE Syllabus and use the same textbooks. Turkish-Cypriots and Armenians use their own RE Syllabus and textbooks in Turkish and Armenian language respectively.
2. In the Greek-Cypriot, Maronite and Latin communities the lesson is called Religious Education whereas in the Armenian it is called Religious Instruction and in the Turkish-Cypriot one it is called Religion and Morals.
3. In the Greek and Turkish Cypriot and Maronite communities the lesson is taught by teachers, whereas in the Latin and Armenian communities it is taught by Catholic and Armenian priests respectively.
4. For all five communities the lesson is compulsory for both primary and secondary education, apart from the Turkish-Cypriot community where it is compulsory only in the primary but optional in the secondary education.

The aims of RE

RE should aim to:

1. Teach children how to be good, moral and peaceful.
2. Teach them the basic principles of their religion.
3. Develop pupils' knowledge and faith about their religion.
4. Teach them how to practice their religious duties effectively.
5. Teach them the historical events from the beginning of Christianity and the Christian doctrines.
6. Teach them their religions' hymns and prayers.
7. Help them experience Christian love.
8. Teach them about other religions, traditions, social and ethical standards of other people.
9. Teach them mainly about Islam which is the religion of the Turkish Cypriots.
10. Help children to become open-minded at an early age and empathetic towards other cultures and people.
11. Teach them the major differences between religions so that they learn to appreciate differences in people and to be tolerant towards them.
12. Help children to gain not only the theoretical knowledge about other religions but also to gain hands-on experience of the existence of other religions by meeting other children who profess different religions.
13. Enable children to distinguish between good and bad.
14. Build their awareness of ethical issues that may exist in society and personal relationships.
15. Develop their self-respect.
16. Voice their concerns regarding human development, relationship and family.
17. Teach them about the different human and universal values such as love, family, respect and equality.
18. Triple aims: knowledgeable, emotional and behavioural.
19. Help them defeat their selfishness, chauvinism and religious fundamentalism.
20. Help them become universal citizens.
21. Teach them how to live in the societal context of multi-identities.

Promotion of mutual understanding and respect

This can be achieved by:

1. Teaching them about the world religions and beliefs.
2. Greek-Cypriots to be taught about Islam which is the Turkish-Cypriots' religion.
3. Turkish-Cypriots to be taught about Christianity which is the Greek-Cypriots' religion.

4. Both school and families can contribute to shape children's personality.
5. The idea of peaceful coexistence between Turkish and Greek-Cypriots is promoted within the Turkish-Cypriot schools.

Multiculturalism in Cyprus as a challenge

1. People that come from different countries and profess different religions can coexist and work together peacefully.
2. The school has a major role to play in helping pupils understand and respect one another's religion and culture.
3. Introduce in early school ages the teaching of other religions and traditions.
4. RE syllabuses need to be modified in order to meet the challenge of multiculturalism.
5. Qualified RE teachers, both knowledgeable and unprejudiced, can promote multiculturalism.
6. Teachers should be trained through seminars, training and tutorials, in order to become able to teach effectively in a multicultural classroom.
7. The Cypriot government has not in the past financed the promotion of multicultural education by organizing seminars or by developing educational programs.
8. The Cypriot Educational System should face as a challenge the new social phenomenon of multiculturalism.
9. Extra Greek language lessons should be provided to foreign children in order to help them integrate smoothly within Cypriot society.
10. To realise that all religions have common values and these common values can bridge the gap of people's differences.

Teachers' effectiveness in teaching RE

1. Teachers who are generally good and effective in other lessons will be effective in RE lessons as well.
2. Primary school teachers are not so effective in teaching RE lessons.
3. Teachers teach other lessons instead of RE, such as Linguistics, Mathematics and Science.
4. Teachers are neither educated nor trained enough in order to become able to promote multicultural and multi-religious education.
5. Teachers' effectiveness depends on the teaching purposes that they have set at the beginning of their lessons.

Difficulties in teaching RE

1. Lack of teaching time.
2. The religious fundamentalism of some families which affects their children's views and attitudes, so they do not wish to have any contact with other cultures or religions.
3. Some parents do not wish their children to be taught about other religious traditions other than Christianity.
4. Access to education for all children has not been always delivered within the Cypriot schools, even though the new Syllabus promotes the vision of a democratic and humane school.
5. The Educational Syllabus is not always implemented effectively at classroom and school level; the syllabus is sometimes non-existent.
6. Some children who profess a different religion do not show any interest in the RE lesson.
7. Some families do not recognize the value of religion and therefore do not show any interest at all. Their children are disinterested and neglect RE following their parents' example.

8. RE lesson is taught superficially because many topics are not understandable for young generation.
9. Children's behavior and attitudes are influenced by so many aspects: school, teachers, families, society, internet and media.

Advantages of the current RE Syllabus and Textbooks

1. These include the teaching of basic universal values, such as love, respect, help and understanding.
2. The textbooks teach Orthodox Christianity effectively.
3. They are quite easy for teachers to use.

Disadvantages of the current RE Syllabus and Textbooks

1. The Greek-Cypriot RE textbooks are focused on the ritual details of Orthodox Christianity and they marginalize other religious traditions.
2. RE in the Greek-Cypriot syllabus looks like indoctrination and therefore it cannot promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds.
3. Textbooks cover limited topics since they are mainly focused on Orthodox Christianity.
4. Neither the RE Syllabus or textbooks are appropriate because they include teaching topics that have nothing to do with modern Cypriot society and multicultural reality.
5. They include so many religious details that they are incomprehensible to young children.
6. They neither include enough pictures or electronic teaching material and hardware, which could make the lessons more interesting and attractive for children.
7. RE textbooks should not be published in Greece because the Greek lifestyle is different to the Cypriot one.

Political interference in education

1. The Turkish-Cypriot educator believes that the Greek-Cypriot Teachers' Association has right and conservative political views and is therefore more nationalist; and this makes it difficult to promote the idea of peaceful coexistence between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots.
2. Politics seem to play an instrumental role in the peaceful coexistence between two communities (Greek and Turkish Cypriot) and their future reconciliation.
3. It appears that politics do play an instrumental role in developing the educational syllabuses.
4. There are three different political identity positions within the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities regarding their intercommunal relations: proreconciliation, communitarian and ethnonationalist.

Religious interference in education

1. In all communities, apart from the Turkish-Cypriot one, religion in general and specifically the Church (either the Greek Orthodox, Armenian or Maronite church) influence the educational system. On the contrary, the Turkish-Cypriot educational system had been secular and no Islamic leader played an instrumental role.
2. In the Greek-Cypriot and Maronite communities, Sunday-religious schools are operating, all over Cyprus, under the guidance of Greek Orthodox and Maronite Archbishops respectively.
3. The Maronite Archbishop is involved actively in the teaching of RE within the Maronite community.

Opinion about the Greek-Cypriot teachers and community

1. The Maronite and the Turkish-Cypriot inspectors, along with the Armenian educator, believe that many Greek-Cypriot teachers have very negative attitudes towards religious and cultural diversity, meaning that they are unwilling to promote multicultural education within their classrooms.
2. Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites and Armenians consider the Greek-Cypriot community more nationalistic, conservative and religiously fundamentalist than their own communities. This perception of nationalism and fundamentalism is something that the Greek-Cypriot community, and especially the Ministry of Education, need to consider and address, because it affects communities' relationships negatively.
3. There is a degree of religious fanaticism among Greek-Cypriot teachers, which in many cases makes children who are not Greek-Orthodox to feel marginalized.
4. The Maronite inspector believes that Greek-Cypriot teachers treat children that belong to any Christian denomination other than Orthodox Christianity in a non-appropriate way.
5. The Maronite inspector claims that education in Cyprus has always excluded or marginalized people just because they are different, and that there was always a religious fanaticism and dogmatism within the Greek Cypriot education.
6. The Maronite inspector contends that it is difficult to change the narrow-minded views of some older teachers who oppose multiculturalism. Some of these older teachers belong to Christian Orthodox church organizations and they are very controlling and conservative regarding RE lessons.
7. The Turkish-Cypriot community is less nationalistic than the Greek-Cypriot community, and the proof for this is the 2004 Referendum.

Communities' educational problems

Turkish-Cypriot

1. The development of Kemalism in Turkey in previous years might be the reason why Turkish-Cypriot teachers are sceptical towards RE lessons.
2. Turkish-Cypriot teachers' union are strongly opposed to the teaching of The Quran in lessons by educated imams, because they believe they try to brainwash young people.
3. Both Greek and Turkish Cypriot teachers often use the teaching time of this subject to teach other subjects, more important for them, such as Language, Mathematics and Science.
4. The arrival and permanent residency of people from Turkey resulting in the enrolment of children from Turkey in Turkish-Cypriot schools.
5. People from Turkey have completely different traditions to the Turkish-Cypriots.
6. The Turkish-Cypriot educational system is not prepared to help children from Turkey to adjust effectively within schools or society.
7. Most of the young Turkish-Cypriot people are obliged to emigrate after their university studies because of the high unemployment within the Turkish-Cypriot community.

Greek-Cypriot

1. Some Greek-Cypriot school leaders refuse to acknowledge students' cultural or other diversity.
2. Some Greek-Cypriot teachers believe that their students' cultural or other characteristics are of minor importance to them and their students.
3. Greek-Cypriots are neither prepared nor socially mature enough to experience or tolerate anything different to their own views.
4. Teachers have to deal with the new social phenomenon of multiculturalism in Cyprus.

Maronite
1. Their cultural identity is in danger because Maronites are spread all over Cyprus and not just in one specific area.
2. There are many mixed marriages between Maronites and Greek-Cypriots.
3. There is some religious fundamentalism within the Maronite community.
4. The Maronite school which has ended up becoming a Maronite ghetto.

Suggestions on how to improve RE

Aims
1. Educators suggested that RE should aim to teach children the principles required to be good, moral and peaceful individuals.
2. All five educators believe that in order to promote understanding among people it is necessary to teach children about the different religious traditions and worldviews of other people.
3. The RE syllabus should include the teaching of other religions and also to teach common ethical issues of the different religions, particularly those common to every religion. In this way, students will realize that diverse does not mean different in every aspect.
4. Students need to be taught not only knowledge but also how to improve their attitudes and to develop their faith and spirituality.
5. To be taught about everyday issues such as human relationships, racial and gender equality.
6. The Turkish-Cypriot inspector believes that RE should teach students only the basic principles of Islam and about religious days.

Textbooks
1. New teaching topics that promote multicultural and multi-religious education.
2. New and modern teaching topics should be added to the Syllabus, such as everyday social problems, controversial issues and environmental issues.
3. To use examples from everyday life in order to be comprehensible and meaningful to young children.
4. They should be published in Cyprus and follow the Cypriot culture.
5. They should be anthropocentric and aim to transmit universal values.

Teachers
1. Teachers need to take the teaching of RE seriously and not to teach other lessons at the expense of RE lesson.
2. They should attend special seminars or do postgraduate studies in order to improve their effectiveness in teaching RE.

Inspectors
1. School inspectors should inspect more effectively and also provide teachers with useful guidance regarding the teaching of RE lessons.

Government
1. The educational reforms should not be influenced by politics.
2. Cyprus should imitate the example of Finnish schools or other countries which cater for students of different religious groups during RE classes.

Teaching Approach
1. It should be more anthropocentric.

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(i)   RE Syllabus and Textbooks

The Greek-Cypriot, Maronite and Latin communities follow the same RE Syllabus (which is developed by the Greek-Cypriot Ministry of Education) and they use the same RE textbooks. On the other hand, Turkish-Cypriots and Armenians use their own RE Syllabus and textbooks in the Turkish and Armenian languages respectively. In all four communities, except the Turkish-Cypriot one, the lesson is called either "Religious Education" or "Religious Instruction" and it is compulsory in both primary and secondary education. In the Turkish-Cypriot community, the lesson is called "Religion and Morals" and is compulsory only in primary education and optional in secondary. In addition, in the Greek-Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot and Maronite communities lessons are taught by teachers, whereas in the Latin and Armenian communities they are taught by Catholic and Armenian priests respectively.

Insofar as the fact that the Maronite community uses the same RE books as the Greek Orthodox community, the Maronite Head-Inspector noted that Maronites are Catholics; and Catholics and Orthodox are almost the same. Therefore, it does not matter if Maronite students are taught the same textbooks as the Greek Orthodox students. Orthodox and Catholics share the same Scriptures, Holy Books, Old and New Testaments; and they also have the same seven Sacraments. The Head Inspector goes on to argue that fortunately Christian Catholics and Orthodox do not have many religious differences between them and for this reason, they can use the same RE textbooks. However, in some instances where there are differences, such as in psalms, liturgies or prayers, the Maronite teachers need to adapt the lesson according to the Maronite doctrine. Nevertheless, the intention is that the Educational Reform should develop separate Syllabuses for all religious communities of Cyprus.

(ii)   The aims of RE

Educators from the five different religious communities of Cyprus have talked about the various aims of RE lessons. According to them, RE should aim to teach children the basic principles of their own religion, the historical events of their religion, their religions' hymns and prayers, religious days, how to pray, how to practice their religious duties effectively and also to visit the mosque or the church, depending on what religion they follow.

Another important aim of RE should be the teaching of world religions, views and traditions and the social and ethical standards of other people. In this way, pupils will be less likely to display selfishness, chauvinism and religious fundamentalism and will be

more likely to respect and accept other people who profess a different religion than them. At the same time, they will become open-minded at an early age and empathetic towards other cultures and people. However, children should not gain only the theoretical knowledge about other religions but should also experience personally the existence of other religions by meeting other children who profess different beliefs. According to the educators, if children learn from a younger age to love and respect, then they will be able in their future everyday life to respect different people to themselves, either different in religion or culture or gender. The Maronite and Turkish-Cypriot inspectors have also added that it is crucially important for children to have a knowledge of their neighboring community's religion and this applies mostly to Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, Greek-Cypriots should also have knowledge of Islam, which is the Turkish-Cypriots' religion; and Turkish-Cypriots should have knowledge of Orthodox Christianity, which is the Greek-Cypriots' religion. According to the Maronite and Turkish-Cypriot inspectors, this is very important for the peaceful coexistence of these two communities.

Moreover, the Greek-Cypriot educator believes that the main teaching purposes of RE in the primary school should be threefold: for knowledgeable, emotional and behavioral purposes. The knowledgeable purposes should aim to transfer knowledge and information to pupils; knowledge about world religions and beliefs and about Orthodox Christianity. The emotional purposes should aim to develop pupils' emotions, compassion and respect towards people who are different to them. Finally, the behavioral ones should teach pupils to behave using their logic and emotions at the same time; they must become able to balance their logic and emotion in their everyday behavior and thoughts.

An additional aim, according to the Maronite Head Inspector, is to teach students to feel like universal citizens; to realize that each person has many identities at the same time. For instance, Maronites have a European, Cypriot and a Maronite identity, all at the same time. Children need to learn to live within this context, i.e. the context of multi-identities. The other educators also noted how important it is for RE to teach them about the different human and universal values such as love, family, respect and equality, and to become universal citizens.

Finally, RE should aim to build children's awareness of ethical issues that may exist in society and personal relationships and should enable them to distinguish between good and bad and to be moral and peaceful. At the same time, it should help them develop their self-respect and enable them to voice their concerns regarding human development, relationships and family.

(iii)   Promotion of mutual understanding and respect

All of the educators believe that mutual understanding and respect can be achieved by teaching children about the different world religions and beliefs, and also by all the communities of Cyprus learning about one another's religion. If they are educated about each other's habits and principles then they will learn how to respect each other. Educators also contend that both schools and families can contribute to shape children's personalities and to promote mutual understanding and respect. It is, however, mainly the job of the school, the teachers and the educational curriculum to promote religious and cultural understanding among pupils; although children's families also play an instrumental role in shaping children's personality - but school has the first and the most important role in achieving this.

At this point, the Turkish Cypriot inspector is convinced that the idea of the peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding between Turkish and Greek Cypriots is being promoted within Turkish-Cypriot schools. Turkish-Cypriot teachers definitely do not teach pupils that Greek-Cypriots are bad; on the contrary, they teach them that Greek-Cypriots are good and that before the 1974 war, all of them, Turkish and Greek Cypriots, used to live and work together peacefully. Teachers also inform children that during the 1974 war all of them were responsible; both Greek or Turkish Cypriots, and many people were killed on both sides. Children usually accept and adopt these open-minded ideas about the peaceful coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. However, it always depends on the family as well; if the family is nationalistic then the children will become nationalists as well. However, the majority of Turkish-Cypriots are not nationalists, and the biggest proof of this is the 2004 Referendum[23] where 65% of the Turkish-Cypriots approved the United Nations' proposal for reuniting Cyprus. As the inspector states, Turkish-Cypriots desire a solution to the problem. The "Annan plan" was the last United Nations attempt for resolving the Cyprus problem and it was proposed by the then United Nation's General Secretary, Kofi Annan (Latif, 2014, p.46). The plan was produced by the United Nations after negotiation between the two communities; Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Latif, 2014, p.46). The final plan was sent to referendum in April 2004 and it failed, as it was rejected by the vast majority of Greek-Cypriots (by 76%). Immediately after the referendum, the Republic of Cyprus (Greek- Cypriots) joined the European

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[23] A referendum on the United Nations proposal, called the Annan Plan, was held in the Republic of Cyprus and the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The two communities, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, were both asked whether they approved the United Nations proposal for reuniting the island (under specific conditions) which had been divided since 1974. While it was approved by the 65% of Turkish Cypriots, it was rejected by 76% of Greek Cypriots (Theodoulou, 2016).

Union (in May 2004), and as it is the only 'legitimate state' of Cyprus, the European Union constitution therefore applies only to the areas governed by the Republic of Cyprus (Greek-Cypriots) and is suspended in the areas governed by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Turkish- Cypriots) (Latif, 2014, p.46).

(iv)   Multiculturalism in Cyprus as a challenge

> "Multiculturalism as well as religious diversity has become an inevitable part of our lives. Cyprus is no exemption to the rule and thus the educational system in Cyprus should consider it as a challenge to modify its RI curriculum. It should ensure that appointed teachers of RI are both knowledgeable and unprejudiced when it comes to other religions, allowing students to learn about each other's beliefs. Cyprus could imitate the example of Finnish schools or some other countries by catering for students of different religious groups during RI class. Each group could be taught about its particular religion for one or two periods a week".
>
> (Armenian Educator)

The above is an abstract from the interview with the Armenian educator who sees the new social phenomenon of multiculturalism in Cyprus as a challenge for the Cypriot educational system. Likewise, all the other educators share the same opinion and they believe that the Cypriot educational system should accept the challenge of cultural and religious diversity within Cypriot society because this is the way to bridge any social gaps between people. Schools have a major role to play in helping pupils understand and respect one another's religion and culture, but in order to achieve this, they have to meet the different religions and cultures. This is very important, especially in Cyprus where multiculturalism is a new social phenomenon.

However, two (out of five) of the educators noted, Cypriots are neither prepared nor socially mature enough to experience and tolerate something different to their own views. For this reason, schools have to train pupils to develop their personality because these pupils are the future citizens of Cyprus. Learning about the religions, traditions, social and ethical standards of other people allows students to develop an open mind at an early age and to become empathetic towards other cultures and people. Therefore, the teaching of other religions and traditions should be introduced at an early stage of schooling. At the same time, the RE syllabus needs to be modified in order to meet the challenge of multiculturalism; and qualified RE teachers, both knowledgeable and unprejudiced, can promote multiculturalism.

Moreover, the Maronite inspector suggested that the only way that RE can promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds

is to teach pupils how to respect other religions. She gave as an example the relationship between Turkish and Greek Cypriots and noted that if Greek-Cypriots had been taught to respect Islam and had knowledge of Turkish-Cypriot religion and culture, then maybe the war between them would not have happened. According to her, by knowing about other religions, people realize that all people have common values and world-views, and these common values bridge the gap of people's differences. A few decades ago, this would have been impossible to achieve because within Cypriot society there was nobody professing different religions. Nowadays, however, there are so many people resident in Cyprus who profess different religions that schools have now become multicultural. Therefore, through these foreign children, Cypriot children can meet and understand their religion, culture and beliefs.

The Turkish-Cypriot inspector believes that whereas in secondary education it is not difficult to teach students about cultural and religious understanding, there are some difficulties in achieving this in primary education. In primary education children are younger and they cannot understand so easily about the different cultures and religions. Therefore, teachers must not teach young children too many details but just focus on basic knowledge and brief information about each religion.

Finally, three (out of five) of the educators complained that, over the years, the Cypriot government has not economically supported the promotion of multicultural education by organizing seminars or by developing educational programs. However, it is necessary for teachers to receive training through seminars, training and tutorials, in order to be able to teach effectively in a multicultural classroom. At the same time, extra Greek language lessons should also be provided to foreign children in order to help them integrate smoothly within Cypriot society.

(v)   Teachers' effectiveness in teaching RE

Most of the educators (three out of five) believe that primary school teachers are not so effective in teaching RE lessons because they do not pay much attention in the teaching of RE; they consider it as a second class lesson and sometimes they even teach other lessons, such as Linguistics, Mathematics or Science, at the expense of RE. Additionally, teachers are neither educated or trained enough to enable them to promote multicultural and multi-religious education. However, only one educator, the Latin one, believes that if teachers are generally good and effective in other lessons, then they will be effective in RE lessons as well.

The Maronite inspector contends that the effectiveness of RE teachers depends on the teaching aims that they have set at the beginning of their lessons, for instance, by indicating whether they are aiming to provide knowledge to students or to improve their attitudes. In her opinion, RE lessons are taught superficially by teachers or by priests and the reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, it is because many RE topics are not fully understandable to the younger generation (for example, the psalms and liturgy are in the Aramaic and Arabic languages so they cannot understand them sufficiently). Secondly, it is because for many years the educational level of the Maronite priests has been quite low, so they could not respond effectively either in their teaching role or in their spiritual role. However, the inspector is currently very positive because the new Maronite Archbishop is very gifted and educated and he is able to respond effectively in his spiritual role. He has already introduced many innovations within the Maronite Church, such as introducing young and educated priests who support young people, and this will have a positive effect on RE lessons within the Maronite community.

(vi)   Difficulties in teaching RE

All educators have identified many difficulties when teaching RE lessons in primary schools. Some of the difficulties they face are the lack of teaching time and the fact that many teaching topics are not understandable for the younger generation, which explains why RE is taught superficially.

Other difficulties teachers face when teaching RE include the religious fundamentalism of some families, which affects their children's views and attitudes, so they do not wish to have any contacts with other cultures or religions. These parents usually do not wish their children to be taught about religious traditions other than Christianity. In addition, some other children, who profess a different religion, do not show any interest in RE lessons. At the same time, there are some families which do not support the value of religion, and therefore do not show any interest at all. Their children are disengaged from religion and neglect RE following their parents' example.

Teachers face other difficulties in teaching RE, because children's behavior and attitudes are influenced by so many other factors such as school, teachers, families, society, internet and media. The family and society are the first schools for young children; so even when teachers try to develop pupils' religious identity, there is nothing that they can do if pupils do not experience their own religion at home as well.

The last difficulty that teachers face when teaching RE is that the Educational Syllabus is not always effectively implemented at classroom and school level; the

syllabus is sometimes non-existent. Therefore, access to education for all children is not always guaranteed in Cypriot schools, even though the new Syllabus promotes the vision of democratic and humane schools.

(vii) Advantages of the current RE Syllabus and Textbooks

The three (out of five) educators (Greek-Cypriot, Maronite and Latin) have identified only a few advantages of the current RE syllabus and textbooks. As they noted, both syllabus and textbooks include the teaching of the basic universal values, such as love, respect, help and understanding; and the textbooks teach Orthodox Christianity effectively and can be quite easily used by teachers.

(viii) Disadvantages of the current RE Syllabus and Textbooks

On the other hand, the educators (all of them apart from the Turkish-Cypriot inspector since he does not live within Greek-Cypriot society) have identified many disadvantages of the RE syllabus and textbooks. As the educators noted, the Greek-Cypriot RE syllabus encourages indoctrination and therefore it cannot promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds. The reason for this is because the RE textbooks focus only on the ritual details of Orthodox Christianity and they marginalize other religious traditions. At the same time, the textbooks include so many religious details that they are not understandable for younger children, and they include teaching topics that have nothing to do with modern Cypriot society and multicultural reality. For instance, they include topics such as holy sacraments and holy liturgies that are not interesting at all for young children. They include neither enough pictures or enough electronic teaching material and hardware which could make the lesson more interesting and attractive for children. An additional disadvantage of the RE textbooks, for the Maronite inspector, is that for many years they were published in Greece, and this was wrong because in Greece there is a different life-style and culture than in Cyprus. For the Maronite inspector, the RE textbooks should follow the Cypriot culture. However, the usage of school textbooks that are been published by 'motherlands' seems to be a common fact. As noted by Karagiorges (1986, p.152), both Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities have looked towards their motherlands, Greece and Turkey respectively, in developing their educational policies. Therefore, the Greek-Cypriot education was focused on the Helleno-Christian Orthodox ideology (Koutsellini, 1997, p.400), whereas the Turkish-Cypriot education had been adamantly secular due to the Kemalist reforms in Turkey (Latif, 2014, p.49). For this reason, the textbooks were often issued and

published by their motherlands, reflecting, in this way, the connection between the Greek-Cypriot community and Greece, on the one side and the Turkish-Cypriot community and Turkey on the other side.

(ix)   Political interference in education

Based on the research data, questionnaires and personal interviews, it would seem that politics influence the educational system of a community considerably. The ruling political parties interfere in the development of the Educational Syllabuses since they want to promote their own worldviews and political philosophies. At the same time, however, teachers', children's and families' political affiliations, either right or left wing, also have an impact on the development of children's views and attitudes.

More specifically, the Turkish-Cypriot inspector believes that the majority of the Greek-Cypriots teachers have far-right and conservative political views, whereas the Turkish-Cypriot teachers have left and more modern political views; they are more open-minded and intellectual. This is indeed a genuine fact, because the majority of the Greek-Cypriot teachers' association supports a right wing party which is more nationalistic and conservative than the left wing party. On the contrary, the Turkish-Cypriot teachers' association is supported mainly by a left wing party, so their teachers are indeed less conservative and they promote the idea of the peaceful coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. It seems that politics play a vital role not only in developing the educational policies and curriculums, but also in the peaceful coexistence between the two communities and their future reconciliation.

Indeed, these left and right wing views seem to play an instrumental role in the peaceful coexistence between the two communities and their future reconciliation. Psaltis (2016, p. 22), during a research project, had explored Greek and Turkish Cypriots adults' views regarding their inter-communal relations. More specifically, during his research, he studied "the amount and the quality of contact between members of the two communities, national identification, trust, forgiveness, threats (realistic, symbolic, distinctiveness threat), intergroup anxiety, perspective taking, intergroup salience, and attitudes towards the other communities" (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22; Psaltis, 2012). After the analysis of the research data, three different identity positions, within both communities, have been identified- "the proreconciliation, the communitarian and the ethnonationalist position" (Psaltis, 2012, Psaltis, 2016, p. 22). These three different identity positions represent either left or right wing political views.

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According to Psaltis (2016, p. 22), in both communities, the people with the proreconciliation identity have positive feelings towards members of the other community; they have frequent contacts between them and they show trust and forgiveness. At the same time, proreconciliation individuals have less intergroup anxiety and feel less stress towards the other community (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22). These proreconciliation people subscribe mainly to the political spectrum of the leftish parties or even to the liberal cosmopolitan right (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22). In fact, they are almost identical in their views to what Bauer and Gaskell (2008) characterize as "peace activists" and "biocommunal non-governmental organizations".

On the other hand, the communitarian individuals show increased attachment to the different ethnonational symbols of their motherland (Greece and Turkey), such as their flag and national anthem (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22). They also display less trust towards the other community, have less contact with them and perceive higher levels of threat (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22). Communitarian individuals represent what Billig (1995) characterizes as "banal nationalists" because their ethical horizon is constrained by the limits of their own community (Turkish or Greek Cypriot) (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22). Communitarian people are mainly sympathetic to either the center parties or patriotic left within the Greek Cypriot community (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22).

Lastly, the third identity position was ethnonationalism, where the individuals, from both communities, expressed ideas of Greek or Turkish ethnonationalism respectively (Psaltis, 2016, p. 22). Ethnonationalists' ethical horizon is their larger ethnic community (Greece or Turkey) which includes the mainland nationals but excludes the other community within Cyprus (Psaltis, 2016, p. 23). This group of individuals scored low levels of intercommunal contact, trust and forgiveness and displayed high levels of prejudice and threat towards the other community (Psaltis, 2016, p. 23). The ethnonationalistic identity position is politically linked to the conservative right and extreme/far-right parties (Psaltis, 2016, p. 23).

According to the above research findings, it would seem that political views, whether from proreconciliation, communitarian or ethnonationalistic positions, considerably influence the way people think and act; and this is especially true if these people are involved in the educational field and syllabus development.

Politics do play an instrumental role in developing the educational syllabuses of every community. Latif (2014), when writing about 'Religion and Ethical Education', notes that RE in North Cyprus is government-controlled and that their aim is to "prevent the misuse of religion through an incorrect interpretation that could lead to social

polarization. Therefore, the Constitution prohibits children from participating in any religious classes that are not authorized by the government" (Latif, 2014, p.60). The Turkish-Cypriot administration, and North Cyprus in general, has clearly been influenced by the Kemalist legacy in Turkey since the 1930s, which has led to the secularization of society as a whole (Latif, 2014, pp.63f). Consequently, RE, or Religious Instruction as it is called, has been largely neglected in North Cyprus (p.64).

Politics also influence the development of the educational syllabuses. According to the Turkish-Cypriot inspector, educational syllabuses and educational reforms should never have been influenced by politics. The inspector noted that every time the government changes, then the school textbooks change as well following the political views of the ruling party. Reforming Educational Syllabuses according to the political views of the ruling party is not something new. Other countries experience similar issues as well. For instance, in the Republic of Cyprus the Educational Reform which started around 2009 has been influenced to some extent by the views of left-wing ruling party of the time. Similar cases have also occurred historically in Greece and Turkey (the motherland countries of Greek and Turkish Cypriots respectively).

A survey contacted by Theodorou et al. (2017) regarding the recent curriculum development in Cyprus showed that many of the educators that have participated in the curriculum development process were members of political parties[24] and this indicates a direct influence of politics in education and politicization of the process (Theodorou et al., 2017, p.228). As one of the educators noted:

> "Do you know what was funny? That of those eight [appointed members] that we had from the beginning, half were from political parties".
> (Interview 11, in Theodorou et al., 2017, p.228)

Another educator, from the same survey, noted that the specific curriculum development was "annoying and despairing" because it ended up becoming "an effort to sustain political balances and political intentions" and was neither pedagogical nor scientific as it should be (p.228). Consequently, many of these educators have "questioned the reasons why they have been called to volunteer in the first place and sensed their being turned into subjects/subjected to political agendas (opposed to pedagogical and scientific ones) served by the Ministry of Education" (Theodorou et al., 2017, p.228).

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[24] Some of the educators that have participated in the curriculum development process where members of the Cyprus' Teachers' Union Association. The members of this association, most of the times, are also members of different political parties and therefore, they are always try to promote their own views, depending on which political party they represent.

(x)   Church interference in education

However, it seems that politics is not the only factor affecting and interfering with educational policies. The Church also appears to influence the development of educational syllabuses. In all four communities of Cyprus, apart from the Turkish-Cypriot community, religion and specifically the Church (either Greek Orthodox, Armenian or Maronite church) influence the educational system.

The most influential role, however, is that of the Greek Orthodox Church since Greek Orthodox are in the majority in Cyprus. As it was mentioned earlier, in a previous chapter of this thesis ("Chapter I: RE in Cyprus and within the European context", p.60), there were many reactions from the Greek Orthodox Church and religious groups and organizations while developing the new RE Syllabus. Based on my own personal experience, while participating in the curriculum development procedure, there were many unofficial and off-the-record reactions, which occurred while the new RE syllabus was under development; but nothing was officially reported. As a member of the group, I heard about the Church's concerns about RE. The Church was worried that the Ministry might decide to exclude RE as a compulsory lesson, and turn it into an optional one. This raised reactions from the Church, which wants the lesson to remain compulsory. Another demand from the Church was for the subject to remain confessional and to focus on Orthodox Christianity. For instance, there were complaints made by some Orthodox priests who believe that secondary education pupils must be taught about the Christian Orthodox liturgies and that it was wrong that to exclude the teaching of the liturgy from the secondary RE syllabus. Therefore, unofficially there were many complaints and reactions, mainly from the Church, about the new format of the RE syllabus.

The role of the Maronite Church would also appear to be influential. The Maronite Head inspector mentioned that the Maronite Archbishop is trying to organize the Maronite community and he is involved actively in the teaching of RE within the Maronite community. Therefore, he founded the Maronite Sunday Schools/Religious Centres, which are operating all over Cyprus. These religious centers are funded by the Ministry of Education of Cyprus, because the Cypriot Government is obliged by the 1960 Constitution to help all religious groups of Cyprus to teach and preserve their culture and religion. The people who teach in these centers are teachers, priests or other people who volunteer and, prior to starting teaching they need to attend some training seminars. Modern teaching material, that is developed in the Archbishop's office, is used in these centers and the teaching of RE is interdisciplinary; RE is combined with other disciplines, such as Art, theatre and creative activities.

Therefore, another type of Church influence on RE is the fact that, both in the Greek-Cypriot and Maronite communities, Sunday-religious schools are operating all over Cyprus, under the guidance of the Greek Orthodox and Maronite Archbishops respectively. These Sunday schools are aiming to enhance the confessional RE already taught every day in schools.

On the contrary, the Turkish-Cypriot educational system has been secular and no Islamic leader plays an instrumental role. Therefore, any influence on the educational system was more political than religious. Apparently, "the Turkish and Greek Cypriot administrations followed completely different paths in terms of religious and ethics education in Cyprus" (Latif, 2014, p.54). Greek and Turkish-Cypriots have looked towards their motherlands, Greece and Turkey respectively, in developing their educational policies (Karagiorges, 1986, p.152). On the one hand, the Greek Cypriot education focused on the Helleno-Christian Orthodox ideology (Koutsellini, 1997, p.400), with the Orthodox Church playing a great role in promoting Greek nationalism (Latif, 2014, p.54). On the other hand, the Turkish-Cypriot educational system had been adamantly secular due to the Kemalist reforms in Turkey (Latif, 2014, p.49). In contrast, neither Islamic leaders nor Islam, in general, play any influential role in promoting Turkish Cypriot nationalism (Latif, 2014, p.54). Religious Islamic leaders have no role in Turkish-Cypriot politics since religion is regarded as a personal issue, mainly relating to tradition and not in shaping national identities (Latif, 2014, p.54).

(xi)   Opinion about the Greek-Cypriots teachers

It is particularly interesting to see the views of the non-Greek Orthodox educators (Turkish-Cypriot, Maronite, Armenian and Latin) who were born, and have grown up, in Cypriot society. It is interesting to listen to their experiences while growing up and about the attitudes of some Greek-Cypriot teachers towards them. It is very disappointing to see that a great number of Greek-Cypriot teachers are not treating children who belong to another religious community in an appropriate way. So if they are treating children from other Cypriot communities in this way, how might they be treating foreign children from another country?

Overall, the three educators, Turkish-Cypriot, Maronite and Armenian, consider the Greek-Cypriot community more nationalistic, conservative and religiously fundamentalist than their own communities. They claim that this nationalism and fundamentalism is something that the Greek-Cypriot community and especially the Ministry of Education need to consider and find ways to address, because it affects

communities' relationships negatively. The Maronite and the Turkish-Cypriot inspectors, alongside the Armenian educator, believe that many Greek-Cypriot teachers have a very negative attitude towards religious and cultural diversity, so they are unwilling to promote multicultural education within their classrooms.

More specifically, the Armenian educator expressed her worries regarding the fact that there is a degree of religious fanaticism among Greek-Cypriot teachers and this often marginalizes non-Greek Orthodox children. I myself, as a primary school teacher with many years' teaching experience, embrace this view as well. In many cases, non-Greek Orthodox students are being marginalized, and mainly by their own teachers. This marginalization usually involves exclusion from some cultural or religious activities (even though on many occasions the children themselves wish to be involved in these activities), or by not giving them sufficient support during lessons.

The Maronite Head inspector also noted that Greek-Cypriot teachers treat children who belong to any Christian denomination other than Orthodox Christianity in a non-appropriate way. If they cannot respect other Christian denominations, then they surely cannot respect other religions either. She argues that the education system in Cyprus has always excluded or marginalized people just because they are different. Based on her own experience, when she was a child, she notes:

> "[...] Maronites many times we are suffering in the Orthodox Cypriot community because we have the feeling that we are not really accepted in a community where Greek Orthodox are in the majority. [...]Education in Cyprus has always excluded people just because they are different. Personally, as a Maronite, I also experienced religious discrimination during my school life. I was always feeling a sense of curiosity towards me. And none of my classmates or teachers has ever asked me: "What are you?", "What do you profess?", "What are your religious beliefs?", "What is your religion?", "What is the difference of your religion from our religion?". Greek-Orthodox have always marginalized us in school. There was always a religious fanaticism and dogmatism and this was causing big gaps between people".

<div align="right">(Maronite Head Inspector)</div>

The Maronite inspector believes that teachers have to be willing themselves to teach and promote multicultural values within the classroom but unfortunately, it is difficult to change some older teachers'narrow-minded views when they oppose multiculturalism. Some of these older teachers belong to Christian Orthodox church organizations and they are very controlling and conservative regarding RE lessons. This brings us back to the oldest Greek-Cypriot teacher who has been interviewed during this research and who had very conservative views regarding the teaching of RE and she was not at all happy about teaching other religions at the expense of Orthodox Christianity.

The Turkish-Cypriot Inspector shares similar opinions to the Maronite and Armenian educators about the Greek-Cypriot teachers being more nationalistic. He claims that the Turkish-Cypriot teachers are less nationalistic than the Greek-Cypriots and the biggest proof for this is the 2004 Referendum in Cyprus, where the majority of the Turkish-Cypriots have approved the United Nation's proposal for reuniting Cyprus, whereas the majority of the Greek-Cyprus have rejected it. He notes that:

> "[…] Most of the Turkish-Cypriot teachers have leftist political views and therefore, they are not nationalists but on the contrary, they are open-minded and intellectual, whereas, most of the Greek-Cypriot teachers' association have right and conservative political views. […] Greek-Cypriot teachers are right-wingers and therefore, they are more nationalists than the Turkish-Cypriot teachers and this makes it difficult to promote the idea of peaceful coexistence between the two communities".
>
> (Turkish-Cypriot Inspector)

Even though the Ministry of Education has developed an educational policy ensuring social justice, it seems that equal access for all children to education has not always been offered by Cypriot schools (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.162). As noted by Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.162), the Ministry's policy for social justice was focused primarily on issues of access and opportunity only:

> "The state is responsible to sustain equal opportunities for access to education at all levels to people who come from minorities".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004, p.8)

> "The MEC[25] aspires to the protection of rights and equal opportunities for access to education for all members of the Cypriot society".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007, p.1)

In other words, the Ministry of Education ensures the access and opportunity to education for "all children", but is this enough? In 2010, the new curriculum was developed, promoting the vision of a "democratic and humane school" (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.163). A "democratic school" is a school that includes and caters for all students despite their differences and prepares them for a common future (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, p.6). It also provides equal opportunities to everybody in order to achieve their goals (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, p.6). The "humane school" respects the human dignity and it does not exclude, censure or scorn any child (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, p.6). On the contrary, it acknowledges that childhood is the most creative and happiest period for every individual (p.6).

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[25] MEC= Ministry of Education and Culture.

The new syllabus aims for a democratic and humane school for all children but it does not refer to any specific group of children, such as immigrants or minority groups, but instead refers to "all students" (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.164, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, p.6). The generalization "all students" might be a bit problematic because it does not specify any group of students and this might give an excuse to some educators to exclude specific groups within these humane and democratic schools, or even to be prejudiced and racist towards them.

Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014) have conducted research regarding the education policy for social justice in Cyprus and the role of stakeholders' values. Their research findings revealed two approaches from head-teachers and teachers; the difference-blind approach and the business-as-usual approach (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, pp.165f).

The first one, the difference-blind approach, refers to school leaders who refuse to acknowledge students' cultural or other diversity (p.166). These head-teachers have argued that that it is not necessary to offer differential treatment in favor of culturally diverse children (p.166). According to them, children with cultural or other differences should not be treated differently from the rest of the children because these kind of differences gradually will eventually disappear, so the school too will be operating smoothly eventually (p.166). These head-teachers fail to acknowledge and take into consideration the students' cultural backgrounds (p.166). For this issue, Banks and McGee Banks (2009) write that these kind of school leaders ignore institutional practices by refusing to recognize the various "problems" caused by diverse students.

The second approach, business-as-usual approach, refers to teachers who believe that their students' "cultural or other characteristics were of minor importance to them and their students" (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.167). These teachers noted that they do not differentiate between any of their students regardless of their color, gender or ethnicity (p.166) and therefore, they continue their teaching approach as usual (business-as-usual). They do not believe that is necessary to change their approach just because there are few different children in the classroom, so they adopt the business-as-usual approach by teaching everybody in the same way. It is interesting that one of the teachers in Hajisoteriou and Angelides' research stated: "all students should acquire equal competencies with their peers to become employable in the Cypriot labor market" (in Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.167).

Overall, Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.168), after analyzing their research data, have concluded that even though the official educational syllabus of Cyprus talks about social justice education, the Ministry of Education and its inspectors fail to

implement it at school or classroom level. Although it is the school inspectors' responsibility to promote the new policy, it seems that they do not inspect as they should and no sanctions are ever taken against anyone, even when social justice policies are not followed (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.168). Apparently, not even the policy-makers themselves value their own policy and for this reason, schools are failing to apply social justice policies effectively (p.168).

However, Banks and McGee Banks (2009) suggest that school leaders and teachers should not follow approaches like difference-blind or business-as-usual, but should be aware of, and acknowledge, the cultural differences of their students. If they were aware of the cultural diversities, then they would be able to "challenge power relations and promote school and social change".

(xii) Communities' educational problems

The three largest Cypriot communities (in terms of population) face the same social problems affecting their educational system as well.

To begin with, Turkish-Cypriot educational system acts separately from the official Republic of Cyprus, because it is under the authority of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Therefore, Turkish-Cypriots have their own syllabus and regulations and the Greek-Cypriot government has no influence on this. It seems that most of the problems that they face are due to the arrival and permanent residency of people from Turkey. The Turkish-Cypriot educational system is not prepared to help children from Turkey to adjust effectively within the schools and society in general. Children originating from Turkey have different a culture and tradition to the Turkish-Cypriots. Most of them come from the Anatolian-Eastern part of Turkey where people are more conservative, more religious and depend a lot on their own cultural principles. Undoubtedly, their religious and cultural principles will significantly affect their everyday lifestyle, not only within Turkish-Cypriot schools but within Turkish-Cypriot society in general, and this causes a lot of problems, according to the inspector. It could therefore offer a solution for the Cyprus problem, then, if the two parts of Cyprus were to be united; Greek and Turkish Cypriot educational systems would follow a common policy, and also a future unification of the island would prevent Turkish immigrants from arriving and residing illegally in Cyprus.

The Turkish-Cypriot inspector also mentioned that another problem for the Turkish-Cypriot community is the fact that RE is taught within another form of teaching as well; that is, the teaching of The Quran. During the last few years, some summer schools in Turkey have provided lessons on The Quran and many children from Cyprus

attend these. This is, however, illegal, as Turkish-Cypriot schools do not include any Quran lessons. However, all of the children who attend these lessons are Turks, and not Turkish-Cypriots. Turkish-Cypriots parents, according to the inspector, would never allow their children to attend these lessons. As the inspector stated, the parents who encourage their children to attend are mainly people from Turkey; fanatical Muslims who are uneducated, and most of whom come from the Eastern part of Turkey where people are very religious. Therefore, the Turkish-Cypriot teachers' union are strongly opposed to the teaching of Quran lessons by educated imams, because they believe they try to brainwash young people.

This specific school inspector is left wing and non-religious, and his generation has been significantly influenced by Kemalalistic[26] ideas and the exclusion of any religious teaching in schools and within the social sphere in general. He views with skepticism and suspicion any teaching about Islam and especially the teaching of The Quran by educated imams. Besides, as noted by the inspector, while teaching this lesson, most of the teachers prefer to teach only the part about morals, and exclude the part on religion from their teaching. However, they sometimes teach verses from The Quran, as well as the basic values of Islam, and visit the mosque about five times during the school year. At this point, the primary school inspector claimed that the development of Kemalism in Turkey in previous years might be the reason for excluding RE from the schools and for teachers of being skeptical towards this lesson.

The last problem that inspector sees is the fact that a great number of young Turkish Cypriot people are university educated and facing extremely high unemployment. Since they cannot find any job, are forced to emigrate; mainly to the United Kingdom and other European countries or even further, to Canada and Australia.

Regarding the Greek-Cypriot community, its problems are mainly focused on the new social phenomenon of multiculturalism in Cyprus, and it seems that Greek-Cypriots are neither prepared nor socially mature enough to experience and tolerate something different to their own views. For instance, some Greek-Cypriot teachers believe that their students' cultural or other characteristics are of minor importance to them and their students; also, some Greek-Cypriot school leaders refuse to acknowledge students' cultural or other diversity.

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[26] The ideas and principles of Mustafa Kemal (Kemalism) Ataturk. See footnote 10 in page 110.

Finally, the Maronite inspector identified four main educational problems that her own community faces. Firstly, Maronites are spread all over Cyprus and not just in one specific area; and for this reason, their cultural identity is in danger of being subsumed. Secondly, there are many mixed marriages between Maronites and Greek-Cypriots. Thirdly, in some instances there is a serious religious fundamentalism within the community. Religious fundamentalism has developed over the years because it was a way to boost the Maronite community and to help it survive culturally. Lastly, the foundation of a Maronite school, which is homogeneous since only Maronite students enroll, ended up presenting a problem. The purpose of that school, primarily, was to promote multicultural education, and for Maronite children to learn their own religion, culture and language; but it unfortunately has ended up becoming a Maronite ghetto.

(xiii) Suggestions on how to improve RE

Finally, the five educators have recommended some suggestions on how to improve RE lessons. Their suggestions were focused mainly on the aims of RE, the use of textbooks, teaching approaches and the teachers', inspectors' and government's roles.

Firstly, the educators have suggested that some of the teaching aims of RE need to change in order to improve the lessons. For instance, educators suggested that RE should aim to teach children the principles of being good, moral and peaceful individuals. It is also necessary to teach them about the basic principles and religious days of their own religion: Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism or Islam.

However, above all else the five educators believe that in order to promote understanding among people it is necessary to teach children about the different religious traditions and worldviews of other people. They have suggested that the RE syllabus should include the teaching of other religions and to also teach common ethical issues of the different religions, particularly the ones which are almost the same in every religion. In this way, students will realize that diverse does not necessarily mean different in every aspect. The Latin head teacher noted that it is the role of the school to help pupils to understand and respect each other's culture and religion. The school is the place where children will learn, during their lessons, about other religions, but at the same time, they will have the opportunity to interact with other children who profess a different religion or culture. Therefore, at school, children not only gain the theoretical knowledge about other religions but they also experience in reality too the existence of other religions by meeting children who profess alternative beliefs. Undoubtedly, they cannot have this

multicultural experience within their houses and families; only school provides this opportunity to them.

In addition, two (out of five) of the educators, the Turkish-Cypriot and Maronite ones, suggested that it is necessary, especially for the Turkish and Greek Cypriots, to know about each other's religion, since they are "neighbors" and there is political conflict between them. This might be a way to bridge the gap and reduce the hatred between them.

As the educators have suggested, the Cypriot educational system must face the cultural and religious diversity as a challenge. Firstly, the Educational curriculum and textbooks should be revised and upgraded and include topics that promote multicultural and multi-religious education. Secondly, teachers should be trained in order to become able to teach effectively in a multicultural classroom, where children with various cultures and religions attend. Thirdly, additional Greek language lessons should be provided to foreign children in order to help them integrate smoothly within Cypriot society. Finally, the Ministry of Education must sponsor more educational programs, seminars and tutorials about intercultural dialogue.

Regarding the RE textbooks, the educators have suggested that new teaching topics that promote multicultural and multi-religious education should be added. At the same time, new and modern teaching topics must be added to the Syllabus, such as everyday social problems, environmental and controversial issues such as human relationships, racial and gender equality. It is necessary for the books to be more anthropocentric and for them to aim to transform children's universal values; and to use examples from everyday life in order to be meaningful and understandable for young people. They should relate the Holy Scriptures to everyday topics. For instance, the parable of the Good Samaritan can be related with charity in a modern context. In addition, the books should teach children how to respect and accept people different to themselves, because by learning about "others", they can surely enhance their own cultural and religious identity.

Moreover, the five educators noted that all teachers needed to take the teaching of RE more seriously and not to teach other lessons at the expense of RE lesson. At the same time, it is vital to attend special seminars or to complete postgraduate studies in order to improve their effectiveness in teaching RE. In this way, they would be more effectively trained, and thus be able to teach in a multicultural classroom.

However, school inspectors also have a vital role to play in improving the delivery of RE lessons. It is necessary that school inspectors inspect more robustly, and that they provide teachers with useful guidance regarding the teaching of RE lessons. They

should also ensure that the official curriculum is implemented effectively, because in some instances, at both classroom and curriculum level, is not adhered to as it should be by teachers or head teachers.

Arguably, the most important role is that of the government (the Ministry of Education) because it is the government which sets the educational policies. The educators have suggested that the Ministry of Education of Cyprus should sponsor far more education programs and seminars for promoting intercultural dialogue within the schools. One of the educators has also suggested that Cyprus should imitate the example of Finnish schools, or that of some other countries, that cater for students of different religious groups during RE classes. Finally, the educators have firmly indicated that educational reforms should not be influenced at all by politics or by the political interests of any party in government.

Apparently, educators' views are similar to those of the Greek-Cypriot teachers, i.e. the ones interviewed and presented earlier in this chapter. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the RE syllabus and textbooks are not appropriate for promoting multicultural education and that they need to be revised so that different and more interesting topics should are added. Furthermore, it can be concluded that primary school teachers, mainly younger ones, desire a change in the way that RE is taught and they agree to promote multicultural education within their classrooms. In order to achieve this, they have suggested that Ministry of Education needs to support them in different ways, such as with seminars, training and tutorials. Undoubtedly, both the teachers' and educators' views are very positive; and it is encouraging that they are prepared for large-scale reform. However, how easy is to put all these views into practice?

Summary

To sum up, this chapter has presented the findings of this PhD research regarding teachers', educators' and students' knowledge, views and attitudes towards RE as a subject in Cyprus. The research data, as drawn from questionnaires and interviews, have revealed that in some occasions students' knowledge, views and attitudes regarding different social, cultural, spiritual and moral issues have been changed, in some way, after being taught from the RE Booklet. Their knowledge has been enriched and their attitudes have been changed, in some way, regarding the five religious communities of Cyprus and the world religions. Most of their original misconceptions and false knowledge have also been changed, in some way. However, their views and attitudes towards Turkish-Cypriots have not been changed and this reveals that a systematic effort needs to be made in order

to change well- embedded confessional views. In addition, their knowledge and views about environmental and social issues, universal values, peace, war and racism have also been successfully enriched, since they are now more able to answer critical thinking questions and provide their own personal suggestions about these issues. Also, it seems that students' interest in RE lessons changes as they grow older; younger students find it interesting to draw, color pictures, listen to Bible stories, miracles and parables, whereas the older ones prefer to be taught about more intellectually advanced topics such as human personality, the relationship between God and the environment, and other controversial issues. There were also some differences when comparing children's knowledge, views and attitudes in the town's school against those of the children who attended the village's school. It seems that students in the town school are more open-minded regarding the teaching of different religions and faith systems compared with the students in the village. At the same time, there was a significant difference between the research and the control groups' findings. Generally, control group children's knowledge, views and attitudes have not been changed from the beginning of the school year, whereas, the research group's ones have been enriched and changed, in some way. Regarding teachers' views about the teaching of RE in primary school, these vary according to their age. The older teacher has more conservative ideas/views regarding the teaching of RE, whereas younger teachers seem to be more open-minded and more confident in teaching world religions and beliefs. The interviews with the educators from the five different religious communities of Cyprus have also revealed important findings. Specifically, the Maronite, Armenian and Turkish-Cypriot educators believe that many Greek-Cypriot teachers have very negative attitudes towards religious and cultural diversity, so they are unwilling to promote multicultural education within their classrooms. They also consider that the Greek-Cypriot community to be more nationalistic and religiously fundamentalist than their own communities. In addition, the educators have suggested some important changes that need to be instigated in order for RE lessons to be improved, such as the educational reforms not being influenced by politics, the RE syllabus to include the teaching of other religions, the teaching of common ethical issues of the different religions and the addition of new modern teaching topics.

The next and final chapter, *Discussion and Conclusions: Promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*, it will provide some suggestions on how RE in Cyprus can balance the existing confessional RE model with multicultural RE.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS:
PROMOTING PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL,
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter summarizes the key findings of this PhD research, but it also provides some suggestions about how RE in Cyprus can develop the interreligious and intercultural dialogue between pupils and how it can contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. More specifically, it primarily recapitulates the research findings of this research and subsequently discusses the importance of combining RE and citizenship education. The chapter further considers the balance between Confessional and Multicultural Education and the importance of assessment for learning. Finally, it discusses the role of Ministry of Education of Cyprus and provides some ideas for further development of this PhD research.

Summary of the research findings

After conducting this PhD research, and subsequently analyzing the data from the introductory, diagnostic and evaluative questionnaires, comparing data from town and village schools, research and control groups, examining teachers' and students' views about RE, studying educators' views from the five official communities of Cyprus, and finally after developing, piloting and teaching the RE Booklet (see Table 2, page 114 for a detail Research Timeline), a variety of findings were revealed. These findings were presented and discussed in detail earlier in the previous chapter and are now summarized and compiled.

Initially, primary school students (age six to twelve years old) have many questions and doubts; they are suspicious and skeptical of the Christian doctrine and the way RE is taught. Before they were taught from the RE Booklet, their preliminary knowledge, RE vocabulary and expectations were focused mainly on Orthodox Christianity. They had no knowledge of the religious communities of Cyprus or about other world religions. At the same time, they had negative attitudes towards Turkish-Cypriots because of the political situation in Cyprus. Students had also many misconceptions; they were prejudiced and biased against world religions and especially towards the Turkish-Cypriot community and Muslims. These misconceptions and incorrect knowledge seem to develop gradually into bias and racism. This lack of

knowledge also seems to affect their attitudes towards "other" religious groups. On some occasions, there is a difference between students' theoretical and practical views; for example, on the one hand they believe that different communities can coexist peacefully and they love having a good friend who professes a different religion, but on the other hand, they do not really mix with people professing different religions and neither do they feel safe walking in areas where another community is in the majority. It seems that there is a difference between what students believe in theory and how they are really prepared to act in practice. On the abstract level, they are more positive towards different people, but the closer the scenario comes to a real situation, the more nervous or reluctant they become. In other words, students might have multicultural views but they do not wish to put them into practice. Another research finding is that voluntarism is not very popular among Greek-Cypriot students since they do not wish to engage in any voluntary activities. The school itself would also appear not to encourage them enough to become involved in these kind of activities. What is more, they have conservative views regarding some controversial issues such as euthanasia, life after death and the creation of the universe. The majority of them are strongly convinced that only God can make decisions about human life and that He is the one who created the universe; and they believe that there is definitely life after death.

The final/evaluative questionnaires revealed that, in some cases, pupils' attitudes, knowledge and views regarding different social, cultural, spiritual and moral issues have been changed, in some way, after being taught from the RE booklet. More specifically, after being taught from the booklet, students' knowledge has been enriched and their attitudes have been changed, in some way, regarding the five religious communities of Cyprus and about world religions. Many of their original misconceptions and incorrect knowledge have been revised successfully. The majority of them now believe that it is good that there are so many different religions around the world and that all religions have something to teach us. Also, most of them believe that all the religious communities of Cyprus can coexist peacefully. Their knowledge and views about environmental and social issues, about universal values, peace, war and racism have also been enriched. They are now more able to answer critical thinking questions and provide their own personal suggestions about these issues.

However, their views and attitudes towards Turkish-Cypriots have not been changed and this reveals that the teaching of just a few lessons cannot perform miracles, as it is not enough to significantly change pupils' views and attitudes. A more systematic effort needs to be made in order to change deeply embedded views. Knowledge can be

enriched easier than attitudes can, as the latter are much harder to reform. Strongly embedded confessional views and attitudes take time to change, particularly in the case of Cyprus where there is an ongoing political conflict, making change harder to effect. The Greek-Cypriot children's hate towards Turkish-Cypriots is apparent, as is the fact that they have so many cultural misconceptions and are biased against Turks and Turkish Cypriots. Children most probably feel this way because of the ongoing political conflicts between the two communities (Greek and Turkish Cypriots), because of the current division of the island and also because of the constant school propaganda against Turks and Turkey in general, since nationalistic historical narratives are used in order to enhance prejudice and distrust towards the 'enemy community'. This applies also to the Turkish-Cypriot community, which also uses nationalistic historical narratives in order to enhance prejudice and distrust towards the Greek-Cypriot community. From the current research, but also from the research of other scholars, it seems that children's feelings of victimization, hate, threat, distrust and prejudice stem from a very early age.

However, despite this, a few of them responded that they wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend and others even stated that they already have one. Despite the fact that the number of students who wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend is small, it is still encouraging that there are at least a few Greek-Cypriot children who want to be friends with Turkish-Cypriots. Undoubtedly, it must be difficult for these children to hold such positive views towards Turkish-Cypriots when the majority of their peers hold more negative views. It is also encouraging for the future of Cyprus that the vast majority of the children who participated in the research have visited, and wish to revisit, the other part of Cyprus, which is something they do not often have the chance to do because of the border.

Furthermore, their views regarding the controversial issues of euthanasia, life after death and the creation of the universe have not been changed either. Even though they have been taught about these issues during the year, they still believe in the strong and powerful will of God. They cannot or do not want to think critically regarding these issues. In order to achieve any change, it is necessary for students to be taught more frequently and consistently about these issues throughout their school life. Changes to core views tend not to happen rapidly, but they can be challenged and begin to change through education and experience. Of course, it must also be acknowledged that children's young age might affect their ability to understand moral and controversial issues, such as euthanasia, life after death or the creation of the universe. According to Kohlberg's stages of moral development, children of this age (6-12 years old) have either

pre-conventional or conventional morality, which means that their views and reasoning are mainly influenced by other people's (mainly adults and people surrounding them) rules and way of thinking (McLeod, 2013). Kohlberg's stages of moral development, and how these are related to the current research, will be discussed in a more detail in the following pages (see page 305).

In addition, students found the topics included in the RE Booklet very interesting and they also stated that the most interesting teaching topics were included within the extra teaching material that the teacher (i.e. the researcher of this PhD thesis) had provided for them, and not within the original RE textbooks. They reported that they had enjoyed and found very interesting all the additional teaching topics and they even wished to be taught more, different and new topics.

Students' interest in RE lessons changes as they get older. On the one hand, younger students find RE lessons very interesting because they offer very enjoyable activities for their age, such as drawing and coloring pictures and listening to stories about Saints. On the other hand, older students appear to criticize the way RE lessons are taught and therefore do not find them very interesting. They find the subject confusing and not well structured, and feel that the RE textbooks are theoretical and boring. As children grow up and mature, they become more demanding about their school lessons and they are able to criticize and comment when they do not like something. Students' preferences about RE topics also change as they grow older. Whereas younger children seem to prefer to be taught about Jesus' parables and miracles, the older ones prefer more intellectually advanced topics, rather than religious ones. Therefore, they prefer to be taught about human characteristics, about the relationship between God and the environment and some other students even expressed their skepticism and doubts about the Christian doctrine and their wish to investigate different religious issues further in order to find out whether they are true or false. Older students wish to be given the opportunity to doubt, to be skeptical; to investigate and search in order to gain knowledge. Most of them, both younger and older students, wish to be taught about world religions and traditions because they like learning about different customs, ethics, religious celebrations and traditions, religious symbols and dietary habits. Finally, many of them, particularly the older ones, like RE lessons because they find it to be a relaxing school subject compared to other subjects such as Mathematics, Greek or Science. The main reason is because they do not usually have to take a test or exam on RE and most of the time do not even have homework to do.

An additional finding is that Cyprus' RE Syllabus does not seem to take into consideration the existence of non-Orthodox children within Cypriot classrooms. It does

not take into consideration their religious and cultural background or their interests, and it certainly does not give these children equal opportunities to talk about their own religious beliefs. RE books in Cyprus approach other religions in a skeptical way, particularly in the secondary education syllabus where RE aims to inform students about the main para-religious movements and phenomena and how these movements differ from Orthodox Christianity (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2000, p.3). At the same time, it encourages students to criticize and reject the other religions by using Christian Orthodox arguments against them (Philippou, 2010, p.22). Apparently, the way other religions are presented in the RE Syllabus contributes to the sense of "us" (Greek Orthodox) and "them" (non-Greek-Orthodox) (Latif, 2014, p.57). Regarding the different religious communities of Cyprus, the new RE Syllabus includes only few chapters about them, and only in the third year of primary school. They are given one-off coverage which appears randomly in only the third year.

The new curriculum of Cyprus has adopted the rhetoric 'human' and 'democratic' schools as important aims of Cyprus' education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010). This approach espouses a democratic and human school that provides "equal opportunities for access, participation and success for all students" (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.158). However, equal opportunities and social justice are often ignored at both whole school and classroom levels in Cyprus (Angelides and Karras, 2009; Zembylas, 2010). As Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.158) note, the micro-politics within the classroom and school should always be acknowledged because in many cases, specific policies or agendas are not implemented as they should be at whole school and classroom levels. In the same way, the official curriculum might talk about social justice and equal opportunities for everybody, but at classroom level there is neither social justice nor equal opportunities. This can be related to the Maronite chief inspector's interview where she mentioned her own personal experience as a student within Greek-Cypriot schools. She claimed that while studying within the Greek-Cypriot schools, she experienced religious discrimination throughout her school life; she felt that she was marginalized and never accepted within the Greek-Orthodox community; she always felt that she was an object of curiosity. Later on, as a head school inspector, working for the Ministry of Education, she again noticed this discrimination within Greek-Cypriot schools. This time, the discrimination was not towards her, but towards children that belonged to any Christian denomination other than Orthodox Christianity. She observed that parents belonging to Christian denominations other than Orthodox often visit her office at the Ministry of Education in order to complain about Greek-Cypriot teachers

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who treat their children in a non-appropriate way. She argued that the education system in Cyprus has always excluded or marginalized people just for being different. Specifically, she claimed that some older Greek-Cypriot teachers belonging to Christian Orthodox church organizations are very controlling and conservative regarding RE lessons, and treat non-Orthodox children in a non-appropriate way.

What is more, this research has revealed that there is a strong connection between the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus and the development of the RE syllabus. It seems that the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus plays an instrumental role, and influences the educational system considerably. At the same time, it is evident that a strong link exists between Orthodox Christianity and the Greek national identity (Latif, 2014, p.57).

Additionally, neither the Syllabus' development nor the educational reforms in Cyprus are independent of political interests and motivations. Other surveys have shown that during the recent curriculum development many of the educators that participated in the process were also members of political parties, and this indicates a direct influence of politics on education and the politicization of the process (Theodorou et al., 2017, p.228). This politicization of curriculum development is something that I have also noticed myself while participating in the educational working groups for reforming the RE Syllabus (see page 51 of this thesis). Many of the members of these educational groups were also members of political parties and were consequently aiming to promote the views of the party that they were representing. For instance, if the members were representatives of a right wing party, they tended to promote more nationalistic ideas and a more confessional model of RE, whereas the representatives from left wing parties tried to promote a more multicultural RE with less confessional influence.

What is more, there was some difference when comparing the knowledge, views and attitudes of children who attended the school in town as opposed to those who attended the school in the village. It seems that students in town are more open-minded regarding the teaching of different religions and faith systems than the students in the village. Even though geographical distances in Cyprus are quite small and therefore villages and towns are relatively near to each other and cannot be considered as isolated from one another, there was still a noticeable difference in children's knowledge, views and attitudes when comparing rural and urban areas. Most probably, these differences are due to combination of reasons such as the 'halo effect', national media influences and socioeconomic marginalization. On the one hand, there may be a 'halo effect', i.e. the condition where people living in rural areas with low immigrant concentrations, but near large cities with high immigrant concentrations, tend to vote for radical right (Rydgren &

Ruth, 2013, p.711). People living in villages do not mix a lot with foreign people and this usually makes them less tolerant towards them because they do not have the chance to meet them. On the other hand, national media often produces anxieties about immigration (Herbert, 2018, p.10) especially when it is focusing on its negative aspects and disadvantages. People living in rural areas mainly rely on what the media presents and therefore form an opinion based solely on media views since they do not have many opportunities to meet foreign people in person. Socioeconomic marginalization might be a third reason why students in the village are less open-minded regarding the teaching of different religions and faith systems. People living in rural areas sometimes face socioeconomic difficulties due to fewer job opportunities and this might affect their way of thinking about immigrants or foreign people in general. According to Rydgren & Ruth (2013, p.726), "socioeconomic factors are potentially very important for understanding macro-level variance in the electoral support for radical right-wing populist parties".

Another finding was that families' political beliefs and preferences seem to affect their children's views and attitudes. Whether they are left or right wing influences their views and attitudes, mainly towards Turkish-Cypriots. For instance, most of the students living in the village, where the majority of people have left wing political views, are more open-minded in any kind of relationship with the Turkish-Cypriots. This is based on the recent presidential election results in Cyprus, where the majority of citizens in that village voted for the candidate supported by the left wing political party.

An additional outcome from this research relates to the beneficial role of citizenship education, which when combined with RE, plays an important role. One basic aspect of combining citizenship and religious education is the promotion of "intercultural dialogue", which means that within a society the various cultural groups have to coexist, cooperate, respect and mutually understand each other.

Finally, there was a significant difference between the research group and the control group findings. Generally, the control group children's knowledge, views and attitudes had not been changed from the beginning of the school year. When comparing questionnaires at the beginning of the year with the evaluative questionnaires at the end of the year, their knowledge and views remained roughly the same without any significant change. The control group's students were taught from the usual textbooks and therefore it was not expected that their knowledge and views would be changed in any way. This is more obvious when comparing and observing the differences between the research group's answers in the evaluative questionnaires and the control group's answers in the same questionnaires. There was a significant difference between the research and the

control group regarding children's knowledge and attitudes about the religious communities of Cyprus, environmental issues, social issues, universal values and world religions, and this difference is due to the fact that the research groups were taught for two years using the RE Booklet. At the same time, however, there was not any significant difference between the two groups regarding their views on peaceful coexistence, peace and war, racism, creation of the universe and life after death. The interdisciplinary teaching topics of the Booklet have changed the children's views to a certain extent. In some cases, their knowledge has been enriched and their views have been changed, in some way; but in some other cases, such as in regard to their views about Turkish Cypriots, these have remained the same.

Regarding teachers' views about the teaching of RE in the primary school, these vary according to their age. The older teacher has more conservative views regarding the teaching of RE and therefore she believes that RE should teach students love towards God and encourage them to worship God and to participate in the Holy Sacraments of Orthodox Christianity, whereas the younger teachers consider that the aims of RE should be the teaching of universal values such as love, friendship, appreciation, equality, antiracism, teaching of other religions and beliefs, in addition to different social issues and contemporary problems. Younger teachers seem to be more open-minded and confident in teaching world religions and beliefs and they are supportive of change in RE.

At the same time, however, they stated that they face many difficulties and problems when teaching RE. For the oldest teacher, the fact that nowadays there are so many children in schools professing different religions other than Christian Orthodox, and that there are also other children whose families follow different sects such as Jehovah witnesses, presents a problem when teaching RE. The 60-year-old teacher sees the existence of different religions and sects as a difficulty in teaching RE. On the other hand, younger teachers believe that there is not enough effective or sufficient training for teachers during their university studies regarding the teaching of RE, nor enough supportive seminars made available by the Ministry of Education. They also believe that the RE curriculum and textbooks are not appropriate because they focus mainly on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity and on topics that are not very interesting for children. Lastly, they claim that that the teaching time for RE lesson is insufficient and that they (teachers) often teach other lessons such as Linguistics, Mathematics or Science at the expense of RE.

The interviewees have suggested some important changes for improving the teaching of RE lesson in the primary schools of Cyprus. They have suggested that all

teachers need to respect children's individuality regardless of their color, ethnicity and religion. In addition, teachers during their university studies should be taught strategies and methods for teaching RE, and the Ministry of Education should organize seminars regarding the teaching of this subject. Teachers and the Ministry of Education should also be aware of how RE is taught in other European countries. Finally, the RE syllabus and textbooks should be reformed and enriched with new teaching topics, such as the teaching of world religions, about different social issues (i.e. divorce, alcoholism, smoking, drugs, gender relationships, racism, peace and war, xenophobia), environmental issues, controversial issues and universal values.

However, the youngest teacher expressed his worries about changes in RE because he is a new and inexperienced teacher who feels insecure about applying anything new in his lessons. Therefore, he feels safer following the official textbooks which are approved by the Ministry of Education. He believes that religious issues in Cyprus are sensitive and many people might be opposed to teaching something different. He argues that some people believe that the priority should be the teaching of Greek History and Orthodox Christianity and that anything new might antagonize them.

The teachers also suggested ways to promote multicultural education; for instance, children could be taught about the different religious traditions, and the students who profess different religions from Orthodox Christianity should talk about their own religions during RE lessons. They also felt that the RE textbooks need to focus on the teaching of universal values and that teachers need to treat all children the same regardless of their religious beliefs. All teachers agreed that Cyprus has become multicultural with people professing different religious traditions so it is important for children to be taught about different religions. In this way, they will become less prejudiced as well. Generally, most teachers are willing to teach non-Christian religions and they find this to be a fruitful and interesting topic during the teaching of RE lessons. Only the oldest teacher seems to be more skeptical and doubtful regarding the teaching of other religions apart from Christianity. She is willing to teach them, but on the proviso: 'as long as it is not at the expense of Orthodox Christianity'.

Teachers' views are very important and need to be taken into consideration when reforming and developing the Educational Syllabus. But how much is the Ministry of Education really taking teachers' views into consideration? A recent research (Theodorou et al., 2017, p.217) revealed that teachers' participation in the new Syllabus development was limited and not particularly influential, because they (teachers) were subjected to both the academics' and the ministry officials' "authority" and "power" (Theodorou et al.,

2017, p.217). Therefore, teachers were unable to either participate in, or influence significantly, the development of the syllabus since their teaching experience and knowledge were marginalized (Theodorou et al., 2017). I personally had a similar experience when participating in the new syllabus' development. Although we have participated in the new RE syllabus' development, we have had a limited influence on the new syllabus. Any suggestions or recommendations that we offered during the syllabus' development were taken into limited consideration, since the academics were the ones who had the main role in formatting and finalizing the new syllabus (For more details see in Chapter I: "RE in Cyprus and within the European Context", "My experience in developing the new RE Syllabus in Cyprus", p.51).

The interviews with the educators from the five different religious communities of Cyprus have also revealed many important findings. More specifically, the educators mentioned a variety of different aims regarding the teaching of RE. Some of these aims are confessional, such as RE should teach students the basic principles of their religion-doctrine and teach them how to practice their religious duties effectively. Some other aims involve the teaching of a more multicultural RE, such as lessons should aim to teach students about other religions, traditions, the social and ethical standards of other people, how to be empathetic and tolerant towards other cultures, and to build their awareness of ethical issues that may exist in society and in personal relationships. In addition, RE should teach pupils about different human and universal values such as love, family, respect and equality, and help them to abolish their selfishness, chauvinism and religious fundamentalism.

The educators from the five different religious communities also believe that RE can promote mutual understanding and respect between Greek and Turkish Cypriots by teaching them about the one another's religion; Greek-Cypriots should be taught about Islam which is the Turkish-Cypriots' religion, and Turkish-Cypriots should be taught about Christianity which is the Greek-Cypriots' religion. At the same time, they noted that the Ministry of Education should see multiculturalism in Cyprus as a challenge and that the school has a major role to play in helping pupils to understand and respect one another's religion and culture. For this reason, the RE syllabus needs to be modified in order to meet the challenge of multiculturalism; and qualified RE teachers, both knowledgeable and unprejudiced, can promote multiculturalism. Unfortunately however, the Cypriot government has not, over the years, supported effectively and economically the promotion of multicultural education by organizing seminars or by developing

educational programs. Teachers should be trained through seminars, training and tutorials, in order to be enabled to teach effectively in a multicultural classroom.

The Maronite, Armenian, Latin, Greek and Turkish Cypriot educators have also identified many difficulties while teaching RE lessons. They noted that many primary school teachers are not very effective in teaching RE because they are neither educated nor trained enough and they often use the RE teaching time to teach other lessons such as Linguistics, Mathematics and Science. Another problem is that some parents do not wish their children to be taught about religious traditions other than Christianity, and the religious fundamentalism of some families affects their children's views and attitudes so they do not wish to have any contact with other cultures or religions. Regarding the educational syllabus, they claimed that is not always implemented effectively at classroom or whole school level; the syllabus is sometimes not followed as it should be. Therefore, even though the new Syllabus promotes the vision of a democratic and humane school, equal access to education for all children has not been always granted within the Cypriot schools. Finally, children's behavior and attitudes are influenced by many aspects such as school, teachers, families, society, internet, media; and this makes the teachers' job even harder.

The five educators have also considered the advantages and disadvantages of the RE Syllabus and textbooks. On the one hand they have identified some advantages; the Syllabus and textbooks are quite easy to use for teachers; they teach Orthodox Christianity effectively and they include the teaching of basic universal values, such as love, respect, help and understanding. On the other hand, the educators have identified many more disadvantages; RE in the Greek-Cypriot syllabus looks like indoctrination and therefore cannot promote understanding among people of different cultural and religious backgrounds. The textbooks are mainly focused on the ritual details of Orthodox Christianity and they marginalize other religious traditions. Neither the RE Syllabus or the textbooks are appropriate because they include teaching topics that have nothing to do with modern Cypriot society and its multicultural reality. Finally, the textbooks do not include enough pictures or electronic teaching material and hardware, which could make the lesson more interesting and attractive for children.

The Maronite, Armenian and Turkish-Cypriot educators believe that many Greek-Cypriot teachers have very negative attitudes towards religious and cultural diversity, so they are unwilling to promote multicultural education within their classrooms. They also consider the Greek-Cypriot community more nationalistic, conservative and religiously fundamentalist than their own communities and in many cases, this religious fanaticism

makes children who are not Greek-Orthodox feel marginalized. The Maronite inspector claimed that education in Cyprus has always excluded or marginalized people just because they are different and there was always a religious fanaticism and dogmatism within the Greek Cypriot education system. She notes:

> […] teachers marginalize them just because they belong in a different Christian denomination. If they can't respect other Christian denominations, they surely can't respect other religions. […] Education in Cyprus has always been excluded people just because they are different. Personally, as a Maronite, I also experienced religious discrimination during my school life. I was always feeling a complex of curiosity towards me. […] Greek-Orthodox have always marginalized us in school. There was always a religious fanaticism and dogmatism and this was causing big gaps between people.
>
> (Extract from the interview with Maronite Head Inspector)

Additionally, the Maronite inspector mentioned that there are some older teachers who belong to Christian Orthodox Church organizations and who are very controlling and conservative regarding RE teaching. For all these reasons, the educators believe that this nationalism and fundamentalism is something that the Greek-Cypriot community, and especially the Ministry of Education, need to consider and find ways to tackle the issue, because it affects Cypriot communities' relationships negatively.

Another important finding from the educators' interviews was that both politics and religion influence the educational system significantly. On the one hand, politics seem to play an instrumental role in developing the educational syllabuses and also affect the peaceful coexistence between the two communities (Greek and Turkish Cypriots) and their future reconciliation. At the same time, the role of religion also appears to be influential in the cases of Greek-Cypriot, Armenian, Maronite and Latin communities. In all communities, apart from the Turkish-Cypriot ones, the Church (Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Maronite and Latin respectively) plays an important role in shaping the educational system.

Finally, the five educators have suggested many important changes that need to be made in order for RE teaching to be improved. For instance, they suggest that teachers need to take the teaching of RE seriously and should not teach other lessons at the expense of RE lessons; they should attend special seminars in order to improve their effectiveness in teaching RE, and school inspectors should evaluate teaching more rigorously, and also provide teachers with useful guidance regarding the teaching of RE. Furthermore, the educational reforms should not be influenced by politics, and the RE syllabus should include the teaching of other religions as well as the teaching of ethical issues common to many religions and should incorporate new modern teaching topics (such as everyday

social problems, controversial issues and environmental issues). Finally, RE lessons should seek to teach students not just knowledge, but should also aim to help them improve their personal attitudes and to develop their faith and spirituality as well.

The next part of this chapter will provide some suggestions as to how RE subject teaching in Cyprus can be improved in order to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The suggestions are focused on four aspects: on the emerging relationships between religious and citizenship education, on achieving a balance between confessional and multicultural Education, on assessment for learning and on the role of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus.

Emerging relationships between Religious and Citizenship Education in Cyprus

Few studies have investigated teachers' perceptions of the relationship between RE and citizenship education within specific cultural and political contexts. One of these studies is Zembylas' and Loukaidis' (2016), where the authors recently explored Greek-Cypriots teachers' perceptions and political dilemmas regarding the emerging relationships between RE and citizenship education. According to them, Cyprus was an interesting case to study the relationship between RE and citizenship education, mainly because there are two important political dilemmas that teachers face (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.2). The first dilemma is how the current confessional RE may prevent forms of citizenship education that encourage multicultural education; and the second dilemma is, again, how this confessional RE might have a detrimental effect on addressing the ongoing political conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.2). These two dilemmas indicate that the confessional RE in Cyprus might have a negative effect on multicultural education and on the relationship between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Indeed, there are some debates about whether, and how, RE can promote citizenship values such as integration, mutual understanding and tolerance between people (Conroy et al., 2013; Davis and Miroshnikova, 2012; Willems et al., 2010). More specifically, there are two main viewpoints regarding the relationship between RE and citizenship education. On the one hand, the first viewpoint supports that RE and Citizenship Education cannot easily be related because RE offers religious and celestial visions, whereas Citizenship Education offers worldly visions (Papastephanou, 2008). Sometimes conservative religion is even opposed to some citizenship issues such as women's rights and equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual people (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.3). For this reason, it is often argued that religion might promote intolerance, sectarianism and violation of the human rights (Zembylas and Loukaidis,

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2016, p.3). If this is the case, then confessional RE might conflict with forms of citizenship education that promote mutual understanding and tolerance among people (Maxwell et al., 2012). Alternatively, the second viewpoint supports that there are possible connections between the two of them because RE does not always offer metaphysical visions and therefore RE and Citizenship education can be linked if they serve similar values (Conroy et al., 2013; Jackson, 2015). For instance, there is sometimes a convergence between some civic values and religious values found within a religion, such as compassion, tolerance, intercultural understanding and empathy (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.3; Armstrong, 2011; Hansen, 2011; Willems et al., 2010, Roebben, 2008).

Regarding the connection between Religious and Citizenship Education, some scholars have proposed the term "religious citizenship education" or "educating for religious citizenship" (Miedema and Bertram-Troost, 2008; Miedema and ter Avest, 2011). For Miedema and his colleagues, "religious citizenship education" is based on the idea that the development of children's identity requires them to accept the perspective of 'others' (i.e. people, different to themselves) and integrate this perspective into their own actions and personality (in Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.3). Miedema and Bertram-Troost (2008, p.131), go on to argue that religious education and development is an integral and a necessary element of citizenship education and it should never be considered as a facultative element. Therefore, as Miedema and Bertram-Troost suggest, RE is an inseparable and structural part of Citizenship Education and the two elements cannot be detached from each other.

At this point though, some political dilemmas arise: 'What does it mean to be a citizen in a conflict society?' or 'How are citizens prepared to live in such a society?' (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.3). Undoubtedly, these dilemmas apply in the case of Cyprus, where its citizens (Turkish and Greek Cypriots) are required to live in a divided and conflicted society.

As it was mentioned earlier, Zembylas' and Loukaidis' (2016) have studied Greek Cypriot teachers' perceptions of the relationship between RE and citizenship education within the specific cultural and political contexts of the divided Cyprus. Thus, it is interesting to view teachers' opinions resulting from the interviews of Zembylas' and Loukaidis' (2016) research. More specifically, regarding the aims of citizenship education, many of the teachers believe that citizenship education should prepare students to integrate within society as 'future citizens' and they do not mention anything about students' current lives (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.6). Some other teachers

supported that citizenship education should promote multicultural values, such as mutual respect, acceptance and openness, and should teach children to coexist with other ideas, other cultures and principles (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.7).

In the same research by Zembylas' and Loukaidis' (2016), Greek Cypriot teachers were also asked their opinion about the relationship between Religious and Citizenship Education (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, pp.8f). Many of them mentioned that Religious and Citizenship Education complement each other because they share same values, for instance "love, togetherness, solidarity, forgiveness and coexistence" (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.8). Other teachers supported that both of these school subjects involve within their teaching content moral dilemmas and behavioral codes, and therefore they overlapped (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9). However, a few teachers claimed that Citizenship Education in Cyprus was dominated by RE and by Greek Orthodox Church involvement in both society and the educational system (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9). Therefore, according to these teachers, the combined aims of Religious and Citizenship Education seek "to formulate Greek Orthodox people who were knowledgeable of the history of Greece and Cyprus" (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9).

Combining RE and Citizenship Education in practice

The teachers that participated in Zembylas' and Loukaidis' (2016) research were also asked how they combine RE and Citizenship Education in practice within their classrooms (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9). They mentioned that they usually use religious texts, such as Bible stories, in order to initiate discussion on citizenship topics, because as they said, many citizenship values and attitudes (for instance, 'love, forgiveness, patience and humility') derive from religion (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9). Some other teachers said that they also use religious teachings to initiate discussion on citizenship issues; but at the same time, they exclude the religious meaning from these teachings and they focus only on citizenship topics such as 'antiracism, solidarity, philanthropy, sharing, disabilities and children's rights' (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9). As they claimed, they employ this method because the above values are universal and not only religious (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9).

Undoubtedly, the combination of Religious and Citizenship education can be very beneficial, not only for students but for teachers as well. There are some practical methods that can be used in order to achieve this. Some of those methods can include the organization of seminars for teachers in order to educate and train them about intercultural

education and also, seminars for pupils in order to inform and educate them about the importance of intercultural dialogue in people's lives. Another method is the organization of one-day workshops within the school where children who come from different foreign countries can present their own culture, tradition, religion, music, dance, traditional costumes and food. In addition, pupils should be encouraged to participate actively within the community, especially in local associations and bodies that are multicultural in nature. At the same time, they should be encouraged to participate actively in European and national associations that have multicultural aims. Some of these European associations are the educational programs of Comenius and Socrates, where pupils and teachers have the chance to visit other European schools. Finally, pupils should be encouraged to take part in international educational contests, such as essay-writing, science, mathematics, music, dance, art and theatre contests.

The meaning of intercultural dialogue is strongly related to citizenship and culture. On the one hand, citizenship is related with respect, tolerance and peace. However, on the other hand culture is related mainly to five aspects: geography, history, religion, language and art. These five aspects are school subjects which are taught on a frequent basis to children and therefore, there are some activities that can embed citizenship values. For instance, during Geography lessons, the children could be taught how the geographical location of a country affects the development of its culture. During History lessons, the historical events, such as wars, economic problems and industrial development, also affect the shaping of a culture. In Religious Education lessons they could be taught about the basic principles and traditions of a religion, and in Language lessons, to realize that the official language and literature of a country comprise an important part of its culture; in Art lessons, to be introduced to traditional art, music and dance from different countries.

These five aspects influence the development of a culture. Therefore, RE and citizenship education teachers should promote intercultural education through different subjects within the curriculum. There are two ways to achieve this. Religious and citizenship education can either be integrated into other subjects, or they can be taught as cross-curricular subjects. Some examples of how this idea might work are demonstrated below.

In Geography and Environmental studies, pupils could be taught about the different geographical aspects that affect one country's culture, such as the geographical location, climate, human population and economic situation. Moreover, they could to be taught about the countries where foreign children have arrived from, and spot these

countries on the world map. In addition, they could be informed about foreign and Cypriot immigrants and compare the two groups in order to find similarities and to discuss the main reasons and problems of immigration. Undoubtedly, the teaching of the above topics will enable pupils to appreciate foreigners better because if they know where foreign pupils originate from, it would be easier to understand them. Moreover, if they are taught about the reasons behind, and problems of, immigration, they will develop empathetic attitudes towards foreign immigrants.

In History lessons the pupils could be taught about the history of many countries, especially European, and not just about Greek and Cypriot history. What is more, they could learn about the different kinds of regimes: democratic, oligarchic, monarchic and others. They could study specific examples of countries with established oligarchic or monarchic regimes and then compare and contrast them with other countries (especially European ones) which have had democratic regimes for many years. The teaching about the different kinds of regimes will help children to realize the importance of democracy and freedom of speech. They (pupils) will understand how the different political regimes affect people's lives, their economic situation and educational systems. Also, it is very important for children to be taught about the history of other countries because this will give them the opportunity to learn about the accomplishments and problems of each country throughout their history. This will also help pupils to develop empathetic attitudes towards foreigners.

In Religious Education, pupils should be taught about some religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism. RE should also aim to encourage the development of pupils' critical thinking and to help them realize that people have the right to believe in any religion they wish. The teaching of additional religious traditions will enable children to spot some similarities and differences between the different religions and hopefully they will then become more tolerant towards people who profess other religions than their own. During RE lessons it might be useful to familiarize children with the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, focusing mainly on the second and eighteenth article of the declaration, in order to realize that that all individuals have rights and freedoms despite their "race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (United Nations, 1948, article 2 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

> "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made

on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty".

(United Nations, 1948, article 2 of
Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance".

(United Nations, 1948, article 18 of
Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

In addition, the subject of Art gives pupils the opportunity to observe the different physical characteristics of other human races; for instance, white, black, yellow, red skin color. Children should be taught not to use just one color for people's faces but must understand that every person has a different face color. For foreign pupils, and especially for those who do not speak Greek, Art is probably the only way to communicate with others.

During Music and Dance lessons, pupils from foreign countries should present their traditional songs and music, traditional dances and costumes. Also, pupils should be taught simple traditional song and dances from other countries and meet the most popular music instruments of other countries. Art, music and dancing are three artistic subjects which can promote multiculturalism in a different, pleasant and enjoyable way and these subjects give the opportunity to children to express themselves spontaneously and naturally.

During Language lessons, children should be taught some simple words in other languages, particularly the first languages of their foreign classmates. In this way, they will be able to communicate better. Also, they will realize how difficult it is for foreign children to learn a new language, and will appreciate the effort they have to make to do so. Teachers should also encourage pupils to read children's books that are written by foreign writers (translated into their own language). The teaching of the English language in primary school is also very important. Primary school teachers in the Greek-Cypriots schools have learnt the English language from their early years, but teaching needs to be more consistent and more frequent.

Obviously, the integration of citizenship education and religious education can promote the idea of the intercultural dialogue. Intercultural dialogue will enable young people to live and cooperate peacefully with foreign people and develop a spirit of mutual

respect and understanding. Pupils should meet each other's culture, language, religion and traditions in order to understand each other better. At the same time, teachers should give foreign pupils the opportunity to present their own cultures, which is the meaning of intercultural dialogue; to learn about each other's culture in order to understand each other better. Intercultural dialogue also means that different cultural groups can coexist, cooperate, understand and mutually respect each other. In this way, citizens will be enabled to fight three important social obstacles: xenophobia, racism and stereotypes.

Another term which is also closely related, both to religious and citizenship education, is that of volunteerism. This research has indicated that volunteerism is not very popular among Greek-Cypriot students since they do not really participate in any voluntary organizations' activities. However, in Cyprus, there are some volunteering organizations for children and young people which they can join. For instance, the non-profit organization, "Young Volunteers", which children with their parents can join, aims to develop volunteerism from a young age, and to encourage young people to put volunteerism into practice and to strengthen the relationships between parents and their children. Therefore, children are offered the opportunity to become involved actively with volunteerism. It is also possible, however, that the school itself does not sufficiently encourage them to become involved in such activities. But school can be considered as a miniature version of society and therefore teaching children about the importance of voluntarism is a way of preparing future adult citizens to become volunteers in the society. As Bekerman and Zembylas (2017, p.127) note, the "effective participation in a society is directly relevant to ideals about equity, social justice, power relations, and the common good". Again, here, it might be useful to refer to the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights and especially to article 25:

> "(1)Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control".

> "(2)Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection".
>
> (United Nations, 1948, article 25 of
> Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

It is possible that if children are given a knowledge and understanding of universal human rights, they then appreciate the necessity of voluntarism and contributing to society; they

come to realize that, on some occasions, the right to a standard of living, to health, food, clothing, housing and medical care, is not always accessible to everybody - and that it is therefore necessary, on those occasions, for people to volunteer or contribute in order to make some less privileged people's lives better.

Constraints in implementing 'Religious Citizenship Education' within the Greek-Cypriot schools

Implementing Religious Citizenship Education within Greek-Cypriot schools is definitely not a straightforward procedure and it has some implications. Zembylas' and Loukaidis' (2016, p.10) research findings highlight two important constraints, sociological-cultural and political, when implementing Religious Citizenship Education within the context of Cyprus. The first one, the sociological-cultural constraint, refers to the concerns and objections from the "powerful Greek Orthodox Church" (p.10). The Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus often objects to and criticizes any attempt to introduce non-religious topics or the teaching of other religions (p.10). The other constraint, the political one, involves again the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, which also has a powerful political role and which will object to any possible "inter-religious non-confessional teaching" (p.11).

The Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus has a powerful political and economic role in the public sphere and this is demonstrated with its various actions. Firstly, it influences elections' results by supporting openly specific political candidates (Ioannou, 2013, p.8). For instance, in the last presidential elections, the Church supported openly a specific politician who finally was elected and additionally, it influenced the election of another politician as a head of Cyprus' parliament (Ioannou, 2013, p.8f). Secondly, it has a great influence over the Cypriot Media, since Church controls, by being a shareholder, a part of the TV station 'Mega', which is one of the biggest TV stations in Cyprus (Psyllides, 2019). The intervention of Orthodox Church of Cyprus is also obvious in the economy as well. Apart from its real estate wealth, the Church is the main shareholder in one of the biggest breweries in Cyprus and in the Hellenic Bank, the country's third-largest bank (Nodé-Langlois, 2013). As noted by Nodé-Langlois (2013):

> 'Archbishop Chrysostomos II, leader of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, behaves like a head of a wealthy business empire and wields considerable influence in public policy'.
>
> (Nodé-Langlois, 2013)

Nodé-Langlois (2013) also adds that the Church of Cyprus has privileged links with Russia; one of the most powerful countries. Nodé-Langlois (2013), explains that 'for

€1.5m a year, the Church has leased 50,000 square meters to Russian investors who plan to build a hotel. The Church is said to enjoy privileged ties with Russia, and Chrysostomos II makes no secret of it'. Therefore, the Church is a powerful force driving and influencing not only domestic but foreign policies as well (Jianu, 2008, p.2). Consequently, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus is politically, economically and socially powerful and hence, its objections to any public issue, such as Educational Reform, matters a lot, so policy makers are taken them seriously into consideration.

A sudden shift from a confessional RE to a more multicultural, inter-religious and non-confessional one will provoke reaction from the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, religious organizations and other conservative groups. As Zembylas and Loukaidis (2016, p.10) note "it is highly unlikely that given the current political conditions in Cyprus and its unresolved political problem, a shift from confessional to non-confessional teaching will happen without tensions". Therefore, in order to avoid these tensions and reactions it might be better "to orient RE to multiculturalism rather than to change completely the orientation of the current RE" (Papastephanou, 2002, 2005). For all these reasons, it is more sensible to orient RE to intercultural and antiracist education rather than to shift suddenly to a non-confessional teaching of the lesson (Zembylas, 2014).

Policy makers and teachers need to have all the above in mind when developing the RE curriculum or when they integrate religious citizenship education and teachers definitely need guidance on how to combine religious and citizenship education (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.11).

Balancing between Confessional and Multicultural Education
Multicultural Education

During the 21st century, the number of immigrants has been rapidly increasing around the world, as has the gap between wealthy and poor individuals (Ramsey, 2009, p.231). Therefore, teachers need to be aware, flexible and creative in order to respond to the complex social, political and economic challenges of the current climate, and they have to be able to support children who are victims of racial and economic discrimination (Ramsey, 2009, p.231). Alongside multiculturalism, the social phenomena of neo-racism, cultural racism and xenophobia have also emerged in many western societies, as a reaction to 'other cultures'. For instance, Hervik (2012, p.211), discussed the "crisis of multiculturalism" within Danish society by presenting a radical right party's (the Danish People's Party) views regarding immigrants and foreigners (Hervik, 2012, p.211). According to this party, Denmark's "cohesion is threatened by immigration and the

arrival of refugees from countries outside the western cultural sphere" (Danish People's Party, 2007, p.5 in Hervik, 2012, p.212). They also claim that most of the refugees in Denmark have a significantly different culture than that of the Danish and Western ones (Danish People's Party, 2007, p.6 in Hervik, 2012, p.212). They go on to argue that these refugees come from developing poor countries and they are poor simply because they deny "progress, innovative thinking, science, freedom and work" (Mogens Camre, Member of the European Parliament, Danish People's Party, Berlingske Tidende, 14 June 2004 in Hervik, 2012, p.212). They also believe that these developing countries will never improve or succeed unless they follow the western countries' example (Mogens Camre, Member of the European Parliament, Danish People's Party, Berlingske Tidende, 14 June 2004 in Hervik, 2012, p.212). Therefore, from the above example, it seems that in some western societies, immigrants and refugees face cultural racism and for these reasons, the promotion of multicultural education is important, especially for younger children who seem to readily absorb racially prejudiced views (Clark and Clark, 1947).

Promoting multiculturalism in RE, however, is not always the easiest thing to achieve and some educators even oppose it, citing many disadvantages of multiculturalism. However, in the introductory chapter of this thesis, both the advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism were broadly discussed (see page 10 of this thesis) and it seems that in the case of Cyprus, multiculturalism could benefit society because, in a multicultural society, minority communities would have the right to maintain their own ethnic, religious and cultural identity and therefore would not encounter any kind of oppression. Especially in the case of Cyprus, where there is the current division and the ongoing political conflict between the two communities (Greek and Turkish Cypriots), there is a high necessity for a more multicultural RE. The necessity for a multicultural teaching is also revealed throughout this research's results. More specifically, the majority of the Greek-Cypriot students, participated in this research, do not wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend for several reasons. According to the students, they do not like Turkish-Cypriots because they are bad and they hate them (Table 64, p.473), because they are dangerous, they do not know their language or religion, they do not trust them, neither like them and because they have captured half Cyprus (Table 65, p.473). The majority of the students most probably gave these answers because of the constant school propaganda against Turks and Turkey in general. Therefore, the promotion of a multicultural RE is significant in order to promote the peaceful coexistence in Cyprus.

The teachers that participated in this PhD research have suggested some ways to achieve this, such as teaching about world religions and universal values. But promoting

multiculturalism in RE involves more than teaching about world religions and universal values. Multiculturalism in RE requires a more interdisciplinary approach. It requires an "all-round" (holistic) development of children. All-round development requires a focus not only on students' academic development but also on their social, emotional, cognitive, artistic and character development as well. From an early age, i.e. from nursery school, RE lessons need to be taught in an interdisciplinary way, and aim for the all-round development of children. This means teaching RE using not only religious topics, but other topics as well (such as social, environmental, cultural, moral and spiritual dimensions) in order to enrich children's knowledge and develop their personality. When an individual has developed an all-round personality then he or she is more capable of adjusting in a multicultural society. In Cyprus, where things are more challenging because of the ongoing conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, it is especially necessary for individuals to be able to accept each other in order to contribute to the reconciliation of the island. An all-round education and development equip them with the necessary skills to be successful as future citizens.

Ramsey (2011, p.226) argues that the purposes and practices of multicultural education vary across the different schools and communities, but the main purpose, for all communities, should be to ensure that all children, from all backgrounds to "have a successful start in school and a strengthened sense of themselves and their abilities". For this reason, she suggests five goals that can promote an effective multicultural RE for young children (Ramsey, 2011, p.227): to develop culturally responsive teaching practices, to encourage children to develop positive and realistic identities, to broaden children's perspectives and develop a sense of solidarity with all people, to challenge their critical thinking and to engage children in social activism.

The first goal, to develop culturally responsive teaching practices, is very important because many countries currently have an increasing number of immigrant children who are struggling to bridge the gap between their own home culture and language and those of their schools (Ramsey, 2011, p.227). At the same time, the immigrant families are trying to cope with temporary or chronic poverty (Ramsey, 2011, p.227) and therefore, because of all this, it is clear that culturally responsive education can play a crucial role in the academic success of these immigrant children (Espinosa, 2005). Some scholars have documented specific teaching techniques in order to develop culturally responsive education. For instance, Igoa (1995) made filmstrips and used photographs and artefacts in order to create a familiar space for the immigrant children in her classroom, and this helped them to adjust within the school. Also, Quintero (2004)

reported that using storybooks, conversations and investigations is also helpful for young refugee children. Likewise, Purnell, Ali, Begum and Carter (2007) suggest that literacy and arts activities can bridge the culture and language gaps between children's home and school. Early childhood centers can also contribute to make schooling more accessible for immigrant children. Ramsey (2011, p.228) proposes that some early childhood centers offer useful services for parenting support, such as family literacy centers, health screening and weekend activities for families. However, Ramsey (2011, p.227) emphasizes that teachers who have outdated and static views cannot develop culturally responsive education within their classrooms. If they wish to be responsive, teachers need to be aware that their own personal backgrounds and history might bias their perceptions and expectations from their students (Adler, 2001; Ramsey, 2004).

The second goal is to encourage children to develop comprehensive and realistic identities and to construct a knowledgeable, confident self and a group identity (Ramsey, 2011, p.228). In order to achieve this, it is first necessary to encourage them to strengthen their ties within their own families and communities and learn to appreciate their own personal and unique characteristics (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey, 2009, p.137). There are different activities which can help to meet this goal, such as teachers displaying photographs of children and their families and encouraging them through talking, writing, singing and drawing to share their ideas, experiences and feelings (Ramsey, 2011, p.228). Wasson-Ellam and Li (1999, p.30) also suggested that teachers should use "culturally conscious books that aim to open children's minds and hearts so that they learn to understand and value both themselves and others' perspectives". In this way, they will become able to appreciate not only their own cultural background but also those of others (Wasson-Ellam and Li, 1999, p.30).

The third goal is to broaden perspectives and develop a sense of solidarity with all people and the natural world (Ramsey, 2011, p.228). This is a very challenging goal because young children are usually cautious towards unfamiliar languages, people and behaviors and therefore they will often draw prejudiced and polarized conclusions (Ramsey, 2011, p.228). In addition, young children usually believe that others are completely different to them and that they do not feel any connection to them (MacNaughton and Davis, 2001). Children who live in a homogeneous environment are especially at risk of developing negative attitudes towards "unfamiliar groups", simply because they have not had interactions with these groups (McGlothlin and Killen, 2005, 2006). On the contrary, children who grow up in heterogeneous environments are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards "others" (Rutland, Cameron, Bennett and

Ferrell, 2005). For this reason, in order to raise children with less bias, there should be interaction with people from different racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Aboud, 2011). Teachers have a vital role to play in achieving this goal. More specifically, teachers should provide activities, images and objects that present a variety of human appearances and activities in order to expand students' perspectives (Barrera, 2005; Swiniarski, 2006). It is important to expand students' perspectives from an early age because studies have shown that "young children are well aware of racial, gender, and cultural differences" (Ramsey, 2011, p.229). For instance, children notice racial cues during infancy (Kelly et al., 2007 in Ramsey, 2011, p.229) and by the age of three or four most of them have a primary concept of race (Ramsey, 2011, p.229). Mendoza and Reese (2001) have suggested that story books are very helpful because they can have a dual role. Firstly, they can be used as "mirrors" where children can see themselves and their own family reflected, and secondly, they can be used as "windows" through which they can watch and learn about the rest of the world (Mendoza and Reese, 2001). Some other researchers (Brown, 2001; Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Pelo and Davidson, 2000; Whitney, 1999) have used "persona dolls" in order to encourage children to think and care about individuals from unfamiliar backgrounds. More specifically, the teacher can use life-sized cloth dolls where each of the dolls represents a different racial group (Ramsey, 2011, p.230). The teacher introduces each time a new doll which "talks" to the children about his/her life story (Ramsey, 2011, p.230). Through these ongoing dolls' stories, children are introduced to, and begin to explore, aspects of racial diversity (Ramsey, 2011, p.230). For example, the teacher can present to children a doll who "lives" with her family in a homeless shelter and for this reason, has been rejected by people. The teacher can then ask the children to discuss this issue, how they feel and what can they do about it (Ramsey, 2011, p.230). Finally, another way to broaden children's perspectives and develop a sense of solidarity with all people is by emphasizing the common elements between all people, such as the fact that we all live on the same planet, breathe the same air and drink the same water (Ramsey, 2011, p.230).

Critical thinking is the fourth goal of multicultural education (Ramsey, 2011, p.230). It is very important to promote young children's critical thinking because they often feel helpless in a society which is largely determined by the adults (Ramsey, 2011, p.230). Critical thinking will enable them to identify any injustices within their own world, for instance, biased beliefs or attitudes in their classmates, stereotyped messages in their textbooks or in electronic media, and any school or community policies that might be unfair or environmentally inappropriate (Pelo and Davidson, 2000 in Ramsey, 2011,

p.230). Skattebol (2003) suggests that teachers should not simply respond to children's questions in a neutral way but that they need to challenge their thoughts about different groups and positions of power. In addition, some educators and researchers (Aboud and Doyle, 1996; Reeder, Douzenis and Bergin, 1997) have found that children with high levels of prejudice have moderated their views and attitudes after interacting with less prejudiced classmates or after discussing racial similarities and differences. These "children felt more comfortable with different-race classmates and were less likely to make racially biased comments" (Ramsey, 2011, p.231). Therefore, it seems that talking about racial issues reduces prejudice and fosters tolerance in children. Children from a very young age can think critically, and under appropriate conditions, they can even understand and discuss complex issues (Marquez, 2002 in Ramsey, 2011, p.231). For example, Marsh (1992) explained how some kindergarten children, in a racially mixed classroom, had participated in anti-bias activities and as a result felt able to take action against different injustices. For instance, they protested about the lack of African American crossing guards at their school (Marsh, 1992).

Finally, the last goal is to engage children in social activism (Ramsey, 2011, p.231). Different studies have shown that children from the age of four can be effectively involved in social activism (Ramsey, 2011, p.231). It is important, though, that any activism issues emerge from real life circumstances, that they are simple to understand, have a clear target and are related to children's experiences (Ramsey, 2011, 231). These activities should not be aiming to change the adults' world but rather aiming to make the children's world a little fairer (Cowhey, 2006; Derman-Sparks and Ramsey, 2006; Hoffman, 2004; Pelo and Davidson, 2000). For example, Vasquez (2004) notes how her kindergarten children identified injustices and protested about them; and in this way, they managed to change several unfair school policies, such as the fact that kindergarten children could not participate in the bookmark competition, and that at the school barbecue there were no vegetarian dishes. Pelo and Davidson (2000) also refer to some examples of young children's involvement in social activism regarding issues of gender stereotypes among their classmates, vandalism of trees in the park, homeless people in their area and racist pictures in books.

The Cyprus reality and multicultural education

Despite the recent educational reform, RE in Cyprus has remained confessional with just a few multicultural aims within the curriculum. Multicultural RE would appear to act as a panacea, an ideal form of education which can promote mutual understanding and

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cooperation in modern societies. But how ready is Cypriot society to move from a confessional form of RE to a multicultural one in reality? Certainly any transition from a confessional to a multicultural RE should be undertaken with care, especially in societies such as Cyprus, because a sudden change from one form of RE to another could cause complications rather than benefits. Therefore, the teaching of RE should achieve a balance between the secular and the religious, between multicultural and confessional influences. In other words, it should not change immediately from confessional RE to the teaching of different religions because children, parents, different stakeholders and society in general, would not accept it easily. As Barnes (2002, 2006) writes, referring to the example of post-conflict Northern Ireland, a change from a denominational teaching to a multi-faith RE needs to be made with caution. He argues that, at least for a short term, it is better to retain a balance between secular and religious influences mainly for strategic, political and pragmatic reasons (Barnes, 2002, 2006). Papastephanou (2002) also shares a similar opinion, since she suggests not moving to a non-denominational and multi-faith RE, simply in order to promote multiculturalism and reconciliation in Cyprus. Rather she proposes that RE and citizenship education should consider how the different historical and political issues of conflict affect the right balance between religious and citizenship influences (Papastephanou, 2002).

For the Greek-Cypriot community, a better option initially would be to combine confessional and multicultural RE. In other words, as mentioned earlier, to orient RE to multiculturalism rather than change completely the way that RE is taught at the moment (Papastephanou, 2002, 2005). It is possible that in few decades the Cypriot population will become more multicultural because of the increasing numbers of immigrants, so people will become more willing to accept the new situation. Maybe then people will become 'multicultural mature' and ready to accept any change in RE from a confessional to multicultural one. At the same time, it will allow some time for a possible solution of the Cyprus' problem and the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities to be united.

In the meantime, a lot can be done to improve Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities' relationships. This PhD research has revealed that Greek Cypriot pupils have expressed the desire to live with others peacefully, even though their attitudes and views towards Turkish Cypriots have not been changed after the teaching of the RE booklet. This reveals that the teaching of only a few lessons is not enough to change well embedded views and attitudes. A systematic effort needs to be made regarding the teaching of the religious communities of Cyprus. A systematic effort would involve more lessons, more visiting and more interactions with other communities.

One particular form of integrated education can play an instrumental role in promoting the interactions between all Cypriot communities. Zembylas and Bekerman (2013) have studied the role of integrated education in conflicted societies. "Integrated school" is an alternative educational model where students who are normally educated apart from each other are, in this model of teaching, educated together (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013, p.403). This type of school originated in Northern Ireland but have recently been introduced in other European conflicted countries, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Croatia and also in Israel (p.403). Integrated schools can contribute to the healing of the wounds of conflicted societies by encouraging peace, reconciliation and integration (Bekerman, 2004, 2005; McGlynn et al, 2004; McGlynn, 2007; Ben-Nun, 2013). However, integrated education cannot be fully applied in the case of Cyprus, mainly because of political and language barriers. Whereas children from the Greek-Cypriot, Maronite, Armenian and Latin communities are native Greek speakers because they live alongside each other on the South part of the island, the children from the Turkish-Cypriot communities do not speak Greek, as Cyprus is divided and they do not interact together at all. Therefore, integrated education can only be applied effectively in the case of Greek-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins, but at the same time schools should follow some basic values and principles of integrated education in order to encourage positive attitudes towards the Turkish-Cypriot community, even though Greek and Turkish-Cypriots do not live together and cannot share the same schools. For instance, as Zembylas and Bekerman (2013, p.405) note, "many integrated schools avoid addressing divisive issues such as religion and politics; as it is pointed out, this avoidance reinforces the psychological barriers which sustain division and group differences" (Donnelly, 2004; Hughes & Donnelly, 2007; McGlynn & London, 2011). In the same way, schools in Cyprus should avoid teaching any divisive issues that might promote nationalism and division between the two main ethnic groups (Greek and Turkish Cypriots). In the case of Cyprus, divisive issues include the constant teaching about the 1974 war, or comparing Islam to Christianity. These kind of issues are definitely divisive and they do not encourage peace, reconciliation and integration between the two communities.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education should organize some activities between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities in order to encourage positive attitudes between them. These activities can be group skypes on weekly basis, summer camping where children from both communities can attend, joined excursions, day trips and outings. These kinds of activities are currently organized by non-profit youth

organizations, which are usually guided and funded by left wing parties or the United Nations; so perhaps a more organized and official effort needs to be made by the Ministry of Education.

Empirical evidence from some countries has shown that integrated education has many advantages. For instance, in the USA it has been indicated that integrated education has many positive results on students such as good school performance, cross-racial friendships, acceptance of cultural differences and reduced racial fear and prejudices (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013, p.405). In another example, in Northern Ireland, research has shown that integrated schools have positive effects on identity, out-group attitudes and forgiveness; things that are valuable in conflict societies (McGlynn et al, 2004 in Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013, p.405).

As was noted earlier, multicultural RE does not represent a 'magic panacea' for all communities, but it should be introduced as one model of RE which is appropriate and suitable for the context of this specific community (the Cypriot community). The teaching topics play an instrumental role in achieving this. The RE topics should be carefully chosen according to the children's age group; so perhaps younger pupils should be taught more simple and easy-to-understand topics, and the older ones more controversial and intellectually challenging issues. All students should be given the opportunity to doubt, to be sceptical, to investigate and search in order to gain knowledge. They should learn how to gain new knowledge independently. For this reason, RE lessons should promote these skills rather than just providing knowledge to them through telling stories and parables. RE lessons, especially for older students, should be interesting and challenging and encourage them to search themselves for the new knowledge. It is encouraging that most of the children who participated in this research wished to be taught about world religions for various personal reasons. The majority of them want to enrich their knowledge regarding the different religions and only a few of them were sceptical towards the teaching of world religions. It is important for both the Syllabus and teachers to take into consideration pupils' age and interests while teaching about world religions. They should be cautious, especially in younger ages, not to teach too much detail because children might get confused. Younger children should be taught generally about the world religions; just the basic facts, and teachers need to use mainly visual materials such as pictures, videos, music and others, to engage their interest. For older children, it is also important to use visual materials, but also to deliver lessons that encourage their critical thinking skills.

Assessment for Learning

A vital part of teaching any subject is the assessment method used by teachers. Teachers need to choose carefully the right methods of assessment when teaching a lesson, because not all assessment methods are appropriate for all lessons and all students. Depending on the lesson, but also on the students themselves, a suitable assessment method needs to be chosen and used. Sometimes the lesson might be practical, so it is necessary for the teacher to use a more practical assessment method rather than a theoretical one. Or perhaps if the children in a specific class are not able to memorize details or too much information, it is necessary to use a more flexible assessment method, such as an oral examination. It is important, however, that teachers use a variety of methods of assessment in order to promote pupils' learning and understanding.

This part of the thesis is mainly based on my Master's Dissertation research (Krasia, 2005) "Assessment in Religious Education: A study of how teachers assess religious education in the primary schools of Cyprus", where interviews with primary school teachers were conducted regarding the assessment in RE lesson. My dissertation was an attempt to demonstrate the importance and beneficial role of assessment for learning/formative assessment in the case of the RE lesson.

Methods of assessment in RE

It is necessary for teachers to use various methods of assessment in order to promote pupils' learning and understanding in RE. Wadman (1996, p.305), notes that "a variety of assessment approaches must be used if all pupils are to show their full potential". Without doubt, pupils' abilities, learning styles, knowledge, skills, difficulties, conceptions and attitudes vary (Lambert and Lines, 2000, p.175) and for this reason, teachers must use a wide range of assessment techniques in order to ensure fairness for all pupils (Lambert and Lines, 2000, p.175). For example, some pupils may perform better in written tests; others may perform better in oral and performance assessments. Thus, by using various assessment practices, teachers provide the opportunity to all pupils to reach their potential (Lambert and Lines, 2000, p.175). Teachers should use a variety of assessment methods such as diagnostic, formal-written, oral and informal-written assessment in order to assess pupils' knowledge and attitudes in RE lessons. At the same time, they should also use modern methods of assessment such as observation, interviews, portfolios, journals, practical tests and performance assessment. It is important for teachers to combine different methods of assessment because the use of only one assessment method cannot raise pupils' learning standards.

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Overall, whatever assessment tasks are used, they should always be challenging for pupils. They should challenge them to discover things for themselves and give them the opportunity to act, 'not just to listen, read or write' (Torrance and Pryor, 1998, pp.60f). An assessment task is challenging if it requires pupils to analyze material, apply previous knowledge, or to think and solve problems (Wintersgill, 2000, p.11). Teachers can increase the level of challenge if they provide pupils with controversial questions where there are no agreed answers and where there are many sources of evidence about the specific questions (Wintersgill, 2000, p.11). Also, the pupils' level of challenge is increased if they have to evaluate the reliability of these sources (Wintersgill, 2000, p.11). Finally, pupils are challenged when they have to take into consideration a variety of viewpoints in order to reach a balanced decision (Wintersgill, 2000, p.11).

RE teachers must use the different methods according to the specific context, but they have to bear in mind that an effective assessment practice involves a "carefully balanced combination" of many assessment techniques (Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 1991, p.13). RE teachers should be mainly concerned about assessing not only pupils' knowledge and understanding, but their behavior, attitudes, values and emotions as well. Therefore, they have to be able to choose and apply the appropriate assessment method. Above all, assessment tasks in RE should not encourage "mere rote memorization" but should encourage pupils' authentic learning and "their spiritual, moral, cultural and intellectual development" (Rudge, 2000, p.110).

The importance of Assessment for Learning – Formative Assessment

Formative is probably the most important type of assessment because it promotes pupils' learning (Black, et al, 2003, p.2) and for this reason, it is commonly known as 'assessment for learning'. In particular, 'assessment for learning' (formative assessment) is:

> "The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there".
> (Assessment Reform Group, 2002, in Department for Education and Skills, 2004b, p.5)

> "Assessment for learning is more than marking and feeding back grades. It involves teachers in identifying the next steps for learning as well as responding to the errors pupils make and the difficulties they experience".
> (Department for Education and Skills, 2004b, p.9)

The above quote is from the Department for Education and Skills of the United Kingdom; RE in Cyprus should also be focused on formative assessment/assessment for learning,

mainly because of its beneficial role on students' learning, but also because United Kingdom and Cyprus share similar educational values as European states and member countries of the Commonwealth. Assessment for learning is founded upon ten principles; "it is part of effective planning, focuses on how pupils learn, it is central to classroom practice, it is a key professional skill, it is sensitive and constructive, it fosters motivation, it promotes understanding of goals and criteria, helps learners know how to improve, it develops the capacity for self and peer-assessment and it recognizes all educational achievement" (Assessment Reform Group, 2002, in Department for Education and Skills, 2004b, p.5).

At the same time, the Assessment Reform Group (1999 in Department for Education and Skills, 2004j, pp.2f) identified seven key characteristics of assessment for learning. Firstly, it aims to provide pupils with the appropriate skills and strategies that can help them raise their learning standards. Secondly, assessment for learning involves sharing the learning objectives with pupils and in this way, when pupils are informed about the learning objectives and are thus more likely to achieve them. Thirdly, it enables pupils to recognize the standards that they are aiming for; in other words, pupils should be informed about the assessment criteria that will be used to judge their work. Thus, they will become able to produce better and more successful work. Fourthly, assessment for learning is concerned with effective feedback; it provides pupils with effective written or oral feedback, which will help them to recognize the next steps in their learning. It also involves learners in peer and self-assessment and in this way, encourages them to become actively involved in the educational process and to take the responsibility for their own learning. In addition, formative assessment involves teachers and pupils "in reviewing and reflecting on assessment data"; it gives pupils the opportunity to review and understand the feedback they are given. Finally, it promotes the confidence that all pupils can improve and raise their learning standards (Assessment Reform Group, 1999 in Department for Education and Skills, 2004j, pp.2f).

Formative assessment/assessment for learning can raise pupils' learning standards in RE. However, in order to support assessment for learning, RE should adopt some specific teaching strategies, such as sharing the learning objectives with pupils, providing effective feedback, involving pupils in peer and self-assessment and providing them with motives to learn (Department for Education and Skills, 2004j, pp.3f). According to Sadler (1989, in Black et al, 2003, p.14), effective formative assessment is based on two actions. The first action refers to the perception in pupils of the gap between a desired educational goal and their present state of knowledge, understanding and abilities. The second action

refers to the effort made by pupils to close this gap in order to attain the desired educational goal (Sadler, 1989, in Black et al, 2003, p.14). The teacher must guide the pupils to achieve the desired goal but the learning has to be done by pupils (Sadler, 1989, in Black et al, 2003, p.14). In other words, pupils should not be passive recipients but active learners who are fully involved in the educational process (Sadler, 1989 in Black et al, 2003, p.14).

Finally, the Ministry of Education should 'support teachers' assessments by "producing general guides to procedures and by publishing examples of pupils' work with guidance on how these concrete examples would be assessed" (Black and Wiliam, 1998, pp.7f). Teachers, school inspectors, the Ministry of Education, universities and other educational authorities must cooperate in order to develop a common assessment policy, based on the principles of formative assessment that will promote learning and understanding.

The role of the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education of Cyprus has a vital role to play in improving RE and there are important aspects to take on board in order to reform RE and assist teachers in improving their lessons. There are some crucial actions that the Ministry of Education should take in order to improve RE standards in Cyprus. For instance, it should follow the international and European standards for RE, it needs to organize educational seminars and it needs to ensure that the RE Syllabus is specific and not general. In addition, it is necessary for it to seriously take into consideration the non-Orthodox children attending Greek-Cypriot schools and to correct students' misconceptions and so combat their social and religious prejudices. Finally, it is essential for the Ministry to focus on teaching pupils about the different religious communities of Cyprus, to aim for the unification of Cyprus and the development of mutual understanding between all Cypriot communities and to ensure that education is free of political interests and Church influences.

In some occasions, however, the European standards for RE are not followed by the Ministry of Education as it should. For instance, when looking at Article 9 of the European Court of Human Rights, about 'Freedom of thought, conscience and religion', it seems that many aspects of this article are not implemented properly within the Greek-Cypriot classrooms and schools:

1) "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief

and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance".

2) "Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others".

(European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe, 2010, p.11)

Even though, in theory, the above human right is active in Cyprus, in practice, is not implemented as it should in a classroom and school level. For example, the article proclaims that an individual has the right to 'manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance', but in practice, this is not applied in schools, simply because the schools do not give students, that professing different religion than Orthodox Christianity, the opportunity to worship, teach, practice and observe their religion. Instead of this, the students who profess a different religion simply are not participating in RE lessons and they are not taught about Orthodox Christianity. They neither worship nor practice their religion, simply because there is not the appropriate space to do so, i.e. pray rooms or multifaith spaces. The fact that the schools do not give the chance to these children to worship, teach, practice and observe their religion is a violation of their human rights and this is something that the Ministry of Education needs to take it into consideration.

The Cypriot educational system provides the right to non-Orthodox children to be exempted from the RE lesson. More specifically, Cyprus' Ministry of Education in one of its announcements in its official website, proclaimed the following regarding students' exemption from the RE course:

"Application for an exemption from the RE course,
in the case of non-Christian Orthodox students:
Each application will be examined separately by the school's Headteacher/Headmistress in order to confirm that there is a strong reason for the exemption. If the parents wish their children to exit the classroom during the specific course, they have to note this on their exemption application. In that case, the Headteacher/Headmistress will arrange for the student to attend another course during the RE lesson. This arrangement will be valid for one school year and the Headteacher/Headmistress needs to inform the parents for these arrangements or any other changes. A new exemption application need to be submitted for every school year".
(Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, The Republic of Cyprus, 2018, p.2)

The above announcement reveals that only non-Christian Orthodox children can be exempted from the RE lesson and only after the Headteacher's/Headmistress' decision

whether is a strong reason or not. The announcement though, does not refer to any other group of students that might not wish to attend the RE lesson. For instance, it does not mention what is happening if one student is a Christian Orthodox but do not wish to attend the specific course.

Similarly, in Greece, RE is confessional and only students of a minority faith can be exempted from the course (Fokas, 2018). However, two sets of parents (Papageorgiou and Others) of students, even though they do not belong to a minority faith, they still wish their children to be exempted from RE (Fokas, 2018). This issue was addressed, as urgent, to the Council of State in September 2017 in order to allow the specific students an exception from the course that current school year (Fokas, 2018). The applicants complained that the compulsory RE in Greece violates the Articles 8 and 14 in combination and 9 and 14 in combination because, according to them, the exemption from the RE class, developed by the government, stigmatizes the students and their parents since it makes it obvious that they are not followers of the "dominant religion" in Greece (Strasbourg Consortium, 2018). The applicants also complained that the students are disadvantaged of hours in their class because of their religious and philosophical beliefs (Strasbourg Consortium, 2018). The case was postponed several times, so the parents decided to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), 'since the highest court in Greece would not address the case early enough to make any difference for the students in question' (Fokas, 2018). In April 2018 the ECtHR formally accepted to hear the case of Papageorgiou and Others and according to Fokas (2018), this case 'will make history in the domain of religious education. It will also send shockwaves through Greece'. Fokas (2018), goes on to argue that the forthcoming ECtHR case of Papageorgiou and Others v. Greece is worth paying attention to because 'it bears the potential to radically shake up the domain of religious education in the Greek context' and the 'popular perceptions of the Court'. It is also 'likely to be seen as a threat both to links between religion and national identity, and between church and state' (Fokas, 2018).

The European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 14.3, "provides parents the right to ensure that the education and teaching of their children conforms to their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions" (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017). The Committee on the Rights of the Child has proclaimed that educational institutions should respect students' right to freedom of religion and therefore, they should provide a choice over the attendance of RE lessons (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017). In the majority of EU member countries, RE is either compulsory or an optional subject, but in most cases, there is the option for

students to withdraw from the subject after a written parental consent (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017).

But what happens to the students who opt to withdraw from the RE lesson and/or collective worship? In Cyprus, the students who are been exempted usually remain in their classrooms during the RE lesson, either doing nothing, drawing, reading a book or doing their homework. Some of them choose to exit the classroom and attend another lesson in another classroom, becoming, in this way, a kind of a 'target'; the student who is a non-Christian Orthodox and do not wish to attend the RE lessons.

In the United Kingdom, schools have the responsibility to supervise the children who are exempted from the RE lessons and/or collective worship but they are not obliged to provide them additional teaching or to incur extra costs (Catholic Education Service, 2019, p.2). Therefore, the withdrawn students can be moved to another school venue (under supervision), such as the library, but if the school has not got a library, then the students can remain within the classroom without participating in the RE lesson (Catholic Education Service, 2019, p.2). Nevertheless, the children have the right to receive an 'off-site' RE and/or collective worship; RE and collective worship that the parents desire and that is not provided at the school during the periods of withdrawal (Catholic Education Service, 2019, p.3). The 'off-site' RE and collective worship can take place off the school's premises under some circumstances; if the school's local authority is satisfied with the alternative arrangements and it will not interfere with children's attendance at school (Catholic Education Service, 2019, p.3). Once the children have left the school, it is their parents' responsibility to supervise them (Catholic Education Service, 2019, p.4). If arrangements cannot be made and the withdrawn children cannot receive the RE that their parents' prefer, then it is their parents' responsibility to provide the necessary educational materials for their children which are connected to their own faith, philosophy or world view (Catholic Education Service, 2019, p.2).

Apparently, these options are not available in the Cypriot schools, so the withdrawn students are left with not much options when withdrawing from the RE lessons; they will either remain in their classroom doing mainly nothing or attending another lesson in another classroom, becoming, in this way, 'a target'.

As it was mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Education of Cyprus has a vital role to play in improving RE and there are important aspects to take on board in order to achieve this. To start with, setting international and European standards for RE is particularly important because Cyprus is a member of the European Union. During the last few years there has been a debate among religious educators about setting

international standards for RE (Schreiner, 2005, p.14). As noted by Schreiner (2005, p.14) there is debate around setting common criteria and standards for RE, especially among European Union countries. These standards and criteria should be focused on "what should be considered quality religious education" (Schreiner, 2005, p.14). In order to set common standards and criteria, European Union countries should develop a mutual critical dialogue and exchange thoughts, ideas, experiences, requirements and needs regarding religious education (Schreiner, 2005, p.14). Schweitzer (2002) suggests some examples of international standards regarding religious education. Firstly, Religious Education must be taught following the criteria of general education and educational quality and it should aim to contribute productively to a general education. In addition, RE should be focused on interdenominational and interreligious learning, it should take into consideration the pluralism in many countries and it should contribute to peace and tolerance. RE should also follow the child-centered approach and be based on children's right to religion. Finally, RE teachers must be professionals and demonstrate self-reflexivity during their lessons. The Ministry of Education needs to be informed about these standards and criteria before developing any syllabus or new textbooks. European countries are also multicultural, even more so than Cyprus, and therefore when it develops the educational syllabus the Ministry should take this into consideration. All members of the Council of Europe are supposed to share the same educational vision, and thus it would be fruitful to have knowledge of how they teach RE. In this way, teachers will enrich their knowledge and improve their teaching as well. This educational vision should be based on the European Convention on Human Rights and all European countries ought to follow it:

> "Being resolved, as the governments of European countries which are like-minded and have a common heritage of political traditions, ideals, freedom and the rule of law, to take the first steps for the collective enforcement of certain of the rights stated in the Universal Declaration, […] have agreed […] obligation to respect Human Rights".
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> (Council of Europe, 1950, pp.6f)

In addition, the Ministry of Education should organize frequent seminars regarding the teaching of RE, where teachers (especially older ones) could update themselves about new methods and teaching techniques. The Ministry of Education should also include in its website a variety of online teaching material and lesson plans for RE teaching. This would be very helpful, not only for young and inexperienced teachers, but for all teachers who want to update their RE lesson content and their teaching

techniques. As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, older teachers' views seem to be more conservative, so perhaps the Ministry of Education should organize seminars or introduce mentoring in Education for the support of older generation teachers, in order to reform and update their views. A mentor is a guide who helps less experienced colleagues to find the right direction and help them develop solutions to career issues. A mentor is an experienced and knowledgeable advisor who has a certain area of expertise. For example, more knowledgeable and qualified teachers can guide and advise less qualified ones. They can help them enrich their knowledge and teaching techniques in RE lessons. The RE mentor can be a teacher who has postgraduate studies in RE or has participated in relevant seminars or even someone who has a particular interest on teaching RE in the primary school. Seminars and mentoring are necessary not only for older teachers but for young and inexperienced ones as well. Young teachers often seek reassurance about their teaching methods and it is the Ministry of Education's and school inspectors' job to guide young and inexperienced teachers. For this purpose it is important that the Ministry of Education provides an expert inspector exclusively for RE in primary schools, who will focus his/her effort on advising, guiding and inspecting only in RE lessons. At the same time, however, the subject of RE should be included in primary teachers' university studies and it should be mainly focused on how to teach RE, and to provide techniques and practical guidelines rather than just subject knowledge.

Furthermore, the RE Syllabus needs to be specific and not general. In other words, it needs to be clear and not give rise to any misunderstanding. For instance, as mentioned by Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.164), when the Cypriot curriculum states that is aiming for a humane and a democratic school for 'all' students, this is too general. The word 'all' does not explain specifically to which students is referring and that might give the opportunity for some teachers to exclude specific groups of students from the 'humane and democratic' school. Therefore, in order to avoid these kinds of incidents, it is necessary for the curriculum to refer to specific groups of students such as immigrants or minority groups and to clearly name these groups (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.164). In this way, it will not be possible for anybody to exclude them in any way. Modood (2007), Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.164), believe that the curriculum and the Ministry of Education should both recognize students' affiliations with their communities and also the relationship between these communities and public life.

Even though the 2010 curriculum aims for a democratic and humane school that will provide social justice and equal opportunities to all students, the Ministry of Education needs to ensure the implementation of this curriculum at classroom level

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(Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.164). In other words, the curriculum might be aiming for social justice and equality in theory, but all these principles need to be put into practice within everyday classroom life. "A curriculum reinforcing social justice can exist, but without the reinforcement of policy statements into practice and the monitoring of its implementation, the curriculum may also be non-existent" (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.164). Thus, school inspectors have an instrumental role to play in implementing any new syllabus (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.164). School inspectors are the ones who should monitor the implementation of the syllabus and ensure that there is social justice and equality within schools (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.164). They should also be careful to identify the 'hidden curriculum'; that is, what is actually happening unofficially within classrooms and schools (p.164). There might be a curriculum, an official policy, but in classrooms teachers might act differently and this is the "hidden curriculum". Therefore, inspectors need to be cautious about this and make sure that teachers follow the official policy. It is school inspectors' responsibility to promote social justice in the school, and therefore, they should inspect sufficiently and, if necessary, apply sanctions when social justice policies have been violated. Policy-makers, who are basically the Ministry of Education and the school inspectors, should be the first to evaluate their own policy, and in this way, schools will apply social justice policies more effectively too.

Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.168) go on to argue that in order to achieve the implementation of social justice education, two steps should be followed. Firstly, to present and make the new policy clear to all people involved - and this includes inspectors, head-teachers and teachers - and secondly, to prepare these people by training them in the philosophy and practice of social justice education (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.168). According to Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.168) a long-term plan on social justice education should be developed; but as they claim, this is neither an easy task nor a straightforward one. To achieve this, "profound changes in the traditional and rigid organizational arrangements of the Ministry of Education" need to be made, even though these changes might provoke animosity and problems between the people involved (Hajisoteriou and Angelides, 2014, p.168). However, as Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014, p.168) suggest, radical changes are necessary if the Ministry of Education genuinely desires improvement and transformation in the existing educational system.

Another important action the Ministry of Education needs to take on board is to seriously consider the needs of the non-Orthodox children attending Greek-Cypriot schools. In the development of the RE Syllabus, it must take into consideration the

existence of non-Orthodox children - their religious and cultural backgrounds, their interests – and consider how it can develop interesting lessons for non-Orthodox children; and how it can give these children the chance to talk about their own religious beliefs. The RE lessons should be designed in a way that will provide equal opportunities to everybody; Orthodox and non-Orthodox pupils should be able to learn. Again, the Ministry of Education has an instrumental role to play in this issue. The RE syllabus, the textbooks and the seminars all need to support teachers and prepare them to teach RE in a multicultural classroom and to help them reform their views regarding the "existence" of non-Orthodox children within the classroom. This can be achieved with the appropriate Syllabus, textbooks, seminars, training and tutoring. For this reason, RE teaching should not be based only on traditional forms of teaching, such as books and pictures, but should also introduce modern teaching techniques such online technology, presentations, school trips, interviews with people professing different religions or belonging to other religious communities within Cyprus.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education should perform scientific research to investigate non-Orthodox children's and parents' views about Greek-Cypriot teachers' behavior towards them. Afterwards, depending on the results, the Ministry of Education needs to take action and develop a new policy regarding this sensitive issue. Again, to achieve this, the Ministry of Education, school inspectors and head teachers need to monitor teachers' actions and behavior towards non-Greek Orthodox pupils and draw up a common policy regarding this issue for use in all schools across Cyprus. It is also the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and school inspectors to monitor any racist attitudes on the part of the teachers, and to protect these children from the ill-effects of such attitudes.

The non-Orthodox children in Cyprus are mainly immigrant children who came to Cyprus with their families. The Ministry of Education must be aware of the various scientific research that have been conducted across the world regarding peoples' views and attitudes towards immigrant populations. They must be aware that different research have revealed that people living in rural areas (with low immigrant populations), but near the big cities (with high immigrant concentrations), tend to be less tolerant towards immigrants and towards foreigners in general (Rydgren & Ruth, 2013, p.711). On the contrary, the attitudes of people living in big cities with high immigrant concentrations tend to be more tolerant. In Cyprus the distances between rural and urban areas are small and this means that people will often work in, and frequently visit, towns. However, young children are less likely to mix with people in towns as often as adults, so their opportunities

for contact with foreigners will be fewer and they may, therefore, develop a less tolerant attitude towards them. Taking all of this into account, the Ministry of Education should be aware of racial behaviors, especially in rural areas, and monitor teachers' and students' attitudes towards foreigners. They must be careful that in rural areas racial attitudes might develop, so school inspectors should monitor those schools regarding this issue and be ready to combat any antisocial behavior. Also, the Ministry of Education can provide some seminars or other activities in order to educate children living in rural areas regarding immigration and foreign people.

However, Rydgren & Ruth (2013, p.726) have also noted that socioeconomic marginalization is another important factor that affects individuals' views and attitudes. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should be mindful again, particularly with schools in areas where there is a low socioeconomic level and marginalization. It must be admitted that the Ministry of Education already supports these schools to some extent by providing extra educational and financial benefits to them such as additional teaching hours, food, sport activities and others, but maybe more needs to be done and the Ministry could provide extra support for these less advantaged schools.

On this issue, Hewstone, a professor at Oxford University, suggests that governments should encourage the different groups to mix with each other, because in this way, social prejudices will be reduced, not only among individuals but also in entire neighbourhoods. Social interaction between groups will help to establish more tolerant social norms within the society and in the long term, this will eventually lead to more harmonious neighbourhoods (University of Oxford, 2014). The Cypriot government should consider this too, and try to encourage the different groups-neighbourhoods to mix with each other. For instance, neighbourhoods with low immigrant populations should be encouraged to mix with areas with high immigrant populations; and in the same way, areas with a high socioeconomic level should be encouraged to mix with areas with a low socioeconomic level. One way to achieve this contact between the different areas is, for example, to arrange athletic events, such as a football day or a basketball day, so children can interact with each other.

One of the most important actions that the Ministry of Education should aim for is the development of mutual understanding between all the Cypriot communities and at the same time, to correct students' misconceptions and combat their social and religious prejudices. From the analysis of the data, it is obvious children's feelings of victimization, hate, threat, distrust and prejudice towards Turks and Turkish Cypriots start from a very early age. The education system, media and families are responsible for the development

of the children's negative feelings. Undoubtedly, the role of the family and the school is vital in order to reform these students' views, misconceptions and prejudice. But in order to achieve this, is necessary to develop an educational system which aims for the unification of Cyprus and the development of mutual understanding between all Cypriot communities and particularly between Greek and Turkish-Cypriots. An educational system which provides valid and correct knowledge about all Cypriot communities will, in this way, address and reform students' misconceptions and prejudices. For this purpose, teaching about the different religious communities of Cyprus should start from a younger age, in a more simple way, and continue consistently into later education. The Maronite inspector has a point when saying that it is important, especially for the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, to know each other's religion and culture. Having a knowledge of others people's religion, tradition and culture is a way to bridge the gap between them.

Although the number of students (who have participated in this PhD research) who wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend is small, it is still encouraging that there are even a few Greek-Cypriot children who want to be friends with Turkish-Cypriots, and who want to love each other and meet each other's culture and customs. Undoubtedly, it is difficult for these children to hold such positive views towards Turkish-Cypriots when the majority of their peers hold such negative views. Therefore, the role of the educational system is to enhance these children's positive wishes and views. The Ministry of Education can arrange meetings between students from other Cypriot communities (Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins) so they can meet each other and hopefully become less prejudiced towards each other. Of course, this is sometimes difficult to achieve, especially in the case of the Turkish-Cypriot community which lives on the other side of the island, and also when people require passports, special visas and parents' permission to visit the other side of the island. Therefore, interaction it is not always practical, but with good organization and communication it can be successfully achieved, at least for those who want their children to meet the 'other' community. With this in mind, the Ministry of Education should fund educational excursions and visits to different religious sites (not only Greek Orthodox but other religions as well) and to cultural places, museums and schools that belong to another religious community of Cyprus.

The role of the school and the educational system, in general, is to help children overcome their misconceptions and gain the correct knowledge regarding world religions. Undoubtedly, misconceptions and incorrect knowledge can lead gradually to bias and racism. If children have incorrect knowledge about one world religion, then they will turn

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to racism. For instance, some mentioned that if a Muslim kills many people, then he or she will go directly to heaven. If the students do not correct this knowledge, then eventually they will be biased against Muslims and Islam. Therefore, curriculum developers need to first investigate the students' misconceptions and then design and develop the appropriate syllabus and textbooks that will assist students to correct their misconceptions.

Curriculum developers, and the Ministry of Education in general, need to take seriously into consideration the different age groups and to develop the appropriate teaching material for each age group. As has been revealed in this research, as children grow up and mature, they become more demanding about their school lessons and are able to criticize and comment when they do not like something. Younger children are easier to please than older ones. Younger ones enjoy simple activities like drawing and listening to stories, whereas older ones prefer more challenging and exciting activities. During this research all students mentioned that they have enjoyed and found really interesting the additional teaching topics, and they even wished to be taught more, different and new topics. This reveals that children love to be taught about something new and different than the usual. They found new topics exciting and they enjoyed investigating and searching for new knowledge. Maybe the RE syllabus should include different topics every year; topics that are interesting for young people. However, it seems that Ministry of Education is not taking into account children's preferences on RE topics.

In addition to all of the above, curriculum developers also need to take into consideration, and to be informed about, children's stages of development and their intellectual and moral development. This means bearing in mind the basic theories of educational psychology and how these affect children's learning and views. Children's understanding changes as they grow up and therefore, curriculum developers need to consider these changes when developing any curriculum. Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that children's young age might affect their ability to understand moral and controversial issues, such as euthanasia, life after death or creation of the universe. According to Kohlberg's stages of moral development, children of this age (6-12 years old) have either pre-conventional or conventional morality, which means that their views and reasoning are mainly influenced by other people's (mainly adults and people surrounding them) rules and way of thinking (McLeod, 2013). Again, here, Ministry of Education is not taking into account children's stages of moral development.

According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, children age 6-9 year old are in the pre-conventional level and that means that their views about morality are shaped

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by adults' standards and the consequences that might ensue if they break their (the adults') rules (McLeod, 2013). Therefore, these children's reasoning is based "on the physical consequences of actions" (McLeod, 2013) and probably, that is the reason why they believe in the strong and powerful will of God. Children of that age are aware that the dominant view of the majority of the adults surrounding them is that God has the power over issues of life and death or the creation of the universe. Thus, they adopt and follow these dominant views because of the fear of the consequences if they do not follow them (McLeod, 2013). It seems that the dominant views of the majority of Greek-Cypriots are quite confessional regarding different religious and social issues. This is also confirmed by World Values Survey. More specifically, World Values Survey 2010-2014 revealed that 51,1% (the average was 23,2%) of the Cypriots consider religion as a very important part of their lives and this bring them up to first position among seven other European counties (Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden) (Inglehart et al., 2014). Similarly, 37,4% (the average was 22,7%) of them consider as an important child's quality the religious faith, which brings them up to the third position among the other countries (Inglehart et al., 2014). Other interesting view of Cypriots, is that 69,7% (the average was 76%) of them consider tolerance and respect towards other people as important child's qualities and this leads Cyprus to sixth position out of eight (Inglehart et al., 2014). However, it seems that the majority of Cypriots have lack of trust towards other people because only 7,5% (the average was 34,4%) of them believe that most people can be trusted and this takes them down to last position (Inglehart et al., 2014). Finally, the majority of them, 80,1% (the average was 51,8%) believe that employers should give priority to natives over immigrants, which takes them up to first position of all eight countries (Inglehart et al., 2014). Even though, the World Values Survey 2010-2014 had examined adults' views and values, these views and values have a significant impact on their young children and as Kohlberg pointed out, children age 6-9 year old are in the pre-conventional level and their views are shaped by adults' standards (McLeod, 2013).

The older children, age 9-12, are usually in the conventional level of morality, which means that their reasoning "is based on the norms of the group in which the person belongs" (McLeod, 2013). Hence, the children of this age group wish to be seen by others as "good people" and they always seek the approval of those around them (McLeod, 2013). Also, they are aware of the rules of the society in which they live, so they want to obey the rules of that society in order to support the law and to avoid any possible blame (McLeod, 2013). For this reason, again, the older students who have participated in this research supported the great will of God over issues of life and death and the creation of

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the universe, because the society which they live in is, in the majority, Greek Orthodox which holds confessional views over these controversial issues. This was also confirmed by World Values Survey 2010-2014, as mentioned above (Inglehart et al., 2014).

It seems that, in order to achieve a more critical thinking regarding the different controversial issues, children need to be more mature both morally and intellectually. This is where Kohlberg's third level of moral development comes in - the post-conventional morality, where the persons' judgement, views and moral reasoning are based on self-chosen principles and not on other people's regulations (McLeod, 2013). In this higher level of moral development, individuals' thinking is more abstract and critical and they are able to think through their own personal and ethical principles (McLeod, 2013). However, according to Kohlberg, only a few people are capable of reaching this level and it seems that the majority of people remain in the second level, that one of the conventional morality, which means that "they take their moral views from those around them" (McLeod, 2013).

Therefore, perhaps the role of the RE Syllabus is to encourage children to reach this very last level of moral development, the post-conventional morality; to equip them with the ability to develop their own set of moral and universal principles (McLeod, 2013) and not to be influenced by people around them; to think and act independently. As McLeod (2013) notes, if individuals follow their own personal principles, then they need to be prepared to defend these principles even if that means going against the rest of the society or having to face the consequences or disapproval of the society. However, it seems that the Ministry of Education of Cyprus does not take into account the different theories of moral development when developing a new syllabus.

Finally, the Ministry of Education needs to ensure that education is free of political interests and motivations. As mentioned earlier, in the previous chapter, 'Findings and Analysis', politics have considerably influenced the development of the new Syllabus in Cyprus since many educators who participated were members of political parties as well: "Do you know what was funny? That of those eight [appointed members] that we had from the beginning, half were from political parties" (Interview 11, in Theodorou et al., 2017, p.228). Furthermore, politics also influence students' views and attitudes since their parents' political preferences, whether left or right wing, have an impact on their views. Indeed, it is a difficult task for Ministry of Education to exclude any political influence, simply because the Minister of Education is a political position in itself. However, Ministry of Education should try to eliminate the political influences within the educational system. For instance, it should exclude from future curriculum

development the participation of teachers that are officially members of political parties. Instead of this, it should encourage the participation of active teachers that do not belong to any particular political party (they might have their personal political views but at least not to be official members of political parties) and they have some qualifications in curriculum development. If teachers have some qualifications in curriculum development, then it is more likely that they will act more scientifically, when developing the curriculum, and less politically. In this way, it will eliminate, up to some point, any political influence.

Apart from political influences, education has to contend as well with the powerful influence of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. The youngest teacher interviewed during this research expressed his concern that Cypriot society might not be ready for a big change in RE and that some groups of people might disagree with a focus on topics other than Orthodox Christianity. Especially those groups of people who are more attached to the Orthodox Church are more likely to oppose to multicultural teaching topics. Head teachers, school inspectors and the Ministry of Education all need to be prepared to cope with potentially negative reactions, especially from the Greek-Cypriot Church which is deeply involved in the Educational System. As it was mentioned earlier in this thesis, the role of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus in the educational system is very influential. Archbishop of Cyprus himself had declared the necessity of Church's involvement in the educational issues: "The Christian Orthodox Church of Cyprus must have an opinion on the important issues of Cyprus' and it must play an instrumental role in the development of the Educational Syllabuses" (Archbishop Chrysostomos II, Fileleftheros Newspaper, 16th October 2016). Therefore, the Ministry of Education needs to be prepared, but also, to consider setting some limits on the involvement of the Church and politics in the education system of Cyprus.

Thesis' contribution to the fields of religious education, sociology of religion and multiculturalism.

This PhD study was based on previous available knowledge regarding the teaching of RE in Cyprus, and through research, it concluded to some important and new results, by making, in this way, a contribution to knowledge and specifically, a contribution to the fields of religious education, sociology of religion and multiculturalism.

Contribution to religious education

To begin with, this thesis has contributed, primarily, to the fields of RE. Especially the RE Booklet, which was developed and used for this thesis, contains supplementary teaching material for primary school teachers, so it can be shared among them to use it in their lessons as an additional teaching resource. The Booklet includes a variety of teaching topics, different than the official RE textbooks. For instance, it includes topics about world religions, religious communities of Cyprus and contemporary social topics which are interesting for young children. In addition, the suggestions about how to assess in RE and specifically, the guidelines about assessment for learning, are significant as well for teachers and curriculum developers. Teachers, school inspectors and Ministry of Education should cooperate in order to develop a common assessment policy based on the principles of formative assessment. Formative assessment, 'assessment for learning, is more than marking and feeding back grades. It involves teachers in identifying the next steps for learning as well as responding to the errors pupils make and the difficulties they experience' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004b, p.9).

In addition, the results of this research inform the policy makers and curriculum developers, about primary school students' and teachers' preferences regarding the RE lesson, about teachers' difficulties in teaching the lesson and about teachers' suggestions of how to improve the RE subject. At the same time, the research results inform the policy makers and curriculum developers about the educators', from the five communities of Cyprus, personal experiences within the Cypriot society and their views and suggestions about RE. The research's findings of the current PhD thesis can be taken into account by policy makers and curriculum developers when developing a new educational policy and RE Syllabus. It is vital for them to be aware of these significant issues (students', teachers' and educators' experiences, preferences, difficulties and suggestions) before developing a new syllabus and textbooks.

Contribution to sociology of religion

Regarding the thesis' contribution to the fields of sociology of religion; the thesis revealed important findings about the religious beliefs of primary school students and how these beliefs affect their attitudes towards different social and cultural issues. It seems that most of the primary school students and Greek-Cypriots, in general, have strong religious beliefs. This is also confirmed by the World Values Survey 2010-2014 which it revealed that 51,1% of the Greek-Cypriots consider religion as a very important part of their lives

and similarly, 37,4% of them consider as an important child's quality the religious faith (Inglehart et al., 2014).

Moreover, this research shown how the Orthodox Church of Cyprus influence individuals' views about a variety of social and political issues. Also, it revealed how the Church involves directly or indirectly in the educational, economic and political system of Cyprus. Besides, Archbishop of Cyprus himself declares openly his intension to involve in Cyprus' educational issues (Archbishop Chrysostomos II, 2016). He declared that the Orthodox Church of Cyprus must have an opinion on the important issues of Cyprus' and it must play an important role in the Educational Syllabuses' development (Archbishop Chrysostomos II, 2016).

Furthermore, the thesis provides some practical suggestions for combining citizenship and religious education and this is another contribution to sociology of religion, because the combination of RE and citizenship education has an impact on individuals' attitudes and relationships within the society. Religious and Citizenship Education complement each other because they share same values, for instance "love, togetherness, solidarity, forgiveness and coexistence" (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.8). Some scholars also have proposed the term "religious citizenship education" or "educating for religious citizenship" (Miedema and Bertram-Troost, 2008; Miedema and ter Avest, 2011). For Miedema and his colleagues, "religious citizenship education" is based on the idea that the development of children's identity requires them to accept the perspective of 'others' (i.e. people, different to themselves) and integrate this perspective into their own actions and personality (in Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.3). These values are important within a society in order for individuals to live and coexist peacefully. Especially for the case of Cyprus, which is a divided society with an ongoing political problem, the development of the above citizenship values is significant. By developing to students the values of love, togetherness, acceptance, solidarity, forgiveness and coexistence, it contributes to future responsible citizens.

Contribution to multiculturalism

Finally, this PhD thesis has contributed to the fields of multiculturalism. It provides some useful ideas and guidelines on how to promote multicultural education through the teaching of RE and how to respond to the increasingly multicultural character Cyprus. It suggests how to balance multicultural and confessional RE which it seems to be more appropriate for the case of Cyprus. As noted earlier in this thesis, any transition from a confessional to a multicultural RE should be undertaken with care, especially in societies

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such as Cyprus, because a sudden change from one form of RE to another could cause complications rather than benefits. Therefore, the teaching of RE should achieve a balance between the secular and the religious, between multicultural and confessional influences. In other words, it should not change immediately from confessional RE to the teaching of different religions because children, parents, different stakeholders and society in general, would not accept it easily. As Barnes (2002, 2006) writes, referring to the example of post-conflict Northern Ireland, a change from a denominational teaching to a multi-faith RE needs to be made with caution. He argues that, at least for a short term, it is better to retain a balance between secular and religious influences mainly for strategic, political and pragmatic reasons (Barnes, 2002, 2006). Papastephanou (2002) also shares a similar opinion, since she suggests not moving to a non-denominational and multi-faith RE, simply in order to promote multiculturalism and reconciliation in Cyprus. Rather she proposes that RE and citizenship education should consider how the different historical and political issues of conflict affect the right balance between religious and citizenship influences (Papastephanou, 2002).

In conclusion, this PhD thesis has made both specific (in the field of RE) and general (in the fields of sociology of religion and multiculturalism) contribution to knowledge because it suggested ways on how the teaching of RE can be improved; how it can be more effective by encouraging students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In this way, students can become more tolerant, non-racist, open-minded, intercultural, more critical and to respect equality, diversity and mutual understanding. All these, will be beneficial for the Cypriot society because young students are the future citizens and therefore, they need to be educated and prepared for their future role. A more multicultural RE and if combined with citizenship values, can enable individuals to effectively confront racism, xenophobia and religious, social and national inequality. At the same time, these future citizens will learn how to respect the values of democracy, social justice, global responsibility and respect of human rights. All things considered, this thesis has a specific and general contribution to knowledge. It contributes to the specific knowledge of the primary school students and also primary school teachers (since it provides them with guidelines on how to teach RE - through the RE Booklet) and eventually, it also has a general contribution to the society as a whole.

Conclusion

The aim of this PhD thesis was to assess the implications of changes in Greek-Cypriot society (since 1960, and especially since 2000) for the provision of RE in Greek-Cypriot

primary schools, and to identify ways of addressing the challenges posed by these changes, and furthermore, to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of the island. At the same time, it aimed to provide some suggestions as to how RE can be reformed, along the lines of multiculturalism, in order to promote the reconciliation of Cyprus which is been divided since 1974.

This PhD project looked at how the RE curriculum in Cyprus could more effectively respond to the changing demography of Cyprus and to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the multicultural society of Cyprus. More specifically, this chapter has provided some suggestions on how RE subject delivery in Cyprus can be improved in order to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The suggestions were focused on four aspects: on the emerging relationships between Religious and Citizenship Education, on achieving a balance between confessional and multicultural education, on assessment for learning and on the instrumental role of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus.

The first aspect considered was the beneficial role of citizenship education and specifically "religious citizenship education". As Miedema and Bertram-Troost (2008, p.131) suggest, RE is an inseparable and structural part of citizenship education and they cannot be detached from each other, since many citizenship values, such as love, forgiveness, patience and humility are also related to religion (Zembylas and Loukaidis, 2016, p.9). The combination of RE and citizenship education can be very beneficial and it can be achieved with some practical activities such as seminars for teachers about intercultural education, foreign students delivering presentations about their own culture, tradition and religion, and school activities that promote multicultural education and volunteerism. The integration of citizenship and religious education can promote intercultural dialogue and this will help individuals to coexist, cooperate, understand and respect each other.

The second suggestion was about balancing between confessional and multicultural RE. As it was mentioned earlier, a sudden shift from a confessional RE to a more multicultural, inter-religious and non-confessional one will cause reactions from the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, religious organizations and other conservative groups. Therefore, it is a better option, initially, to combine confessional and multicultural RE; to orient RE to multiculturalism and not to change completely the way that RE is taught at the moment (Papastephanou, 2002, 2005).

Assessment for learning was the third suggestion on how to improve RE in Cyprus. Assessing the subject of RE is not easy at all; it has many implications, since it

seems to be one of the most complex subjects of the curriculum. The most important purpose of RE is the improvement of pupils' attitudes and behaviour towards other people. RE aims primarily to reform children's attitudes rather than enrich their knowledge and for this reason, teachers must observe continuously and frequently pupils' attitudes and behaviour. It is necessary, therefore, for teachers to use various methods of assessment in order to promote pupils' learning and understanding in RE. Wadman (1996, p.305), notes that "a variety of assessment approaches must be used if all pupils are to show their full potential". Without doubt, pupils' abilities, learning styles, knowledge, skills, difficulties, conceptions and attitudes vary (Lambert and Lines, 2000, p.175) and for this reason, teachers must use a wide range of assessment techniques in order to ensure fairness for all pupils (Lambert and Lines, 2000, p.175). Formative assessment/assessment for learning can raise pupils' learning standards in RE. However, in order to support assessment for learning, RE should adopt some specific teaching strategies, such as sharing the learning objectives with pupils, providing effective feedback, involving pupils in peer and self-assessment and providing them with motives to learn (Department for Education and Skills, 2004j, pp.3f).

Lastly, the Ministry of Education of Cyprus has an instrumental role to play in improving RE and there are important aspects to consider in order to reform the subject and assist teachers in improving their lessons. There are some crucial actions that the Ministry of Education should take at this point in order to improve RE standards in Cyprus. For instance, the Ministry of Education should: follow the international and European standards for RE, organize educational seminars, take seriously into consideration the presence of non-Orthodox children attending Greek-Cypriot schools, correct students' misconceptions and combat their social and religious prejudices. It is also important to focus on the teaching of the religious communities of Cyprus, aiming for the unification of Cyprus and the development of mutual understanding between all the Cypriot communities; and it is also important to ensure that education is free of political interests and Church influences.

Ideas for developing further the research

Any PhD research findings can be very useful for further research. They can be either used by the same researcher or by other scholars in order to develop further the existing research or even by conducting another one based on the findings. In every scientific area it is necessary to build on an existing knowledge in order to create a new one. The useful findings of a research can be used effectively to conduct another research and to develop,

in this way, the existing knowledge. In the current PhD, the research findings can be very useful for Cyprus' educational system because they offer some ideas of how these findings can be fruitful, not only for the subject of RE, but for Cyprus' educational system in general.

To start with, the research findings of the current PhD thesis can be used by the policy makers in order to develop a new educational policy. It might be useful, before developing another Syllabus or educational policy, to conduct a larger survey about children's views and attitudes towards immigrants and world religions, because it would appear from this survey that people's views differ depending on whether they live in rural or urban areas. Perhaps it is necessary to study a larger sample before drawing safer results in order to develop any official educational policy. It is apparent that there is some kind of political polarization in the different areas across Cyprus but at the same time, there is also some difference between rural and urban areas. In some specific areas people support left wing parties and in some others right wing ones and this political polarization influences their views and attitudes towards issues of immigration, world religions, multiculturalism and Turkish-Cypriots. Therefore, it is vital for the policy makers to be aware about these issues before developing any new Syllabus.

The Educational Syllabus in Cyprus is same all over the island and that means that all public schools follow the same Syllabus and textbooks apart from the private schools which follow their own ones. However, even if the Syllabus is common for all schools, it is still important to know about these differences in those areas, because this will affect how the Syllabus will be implemented. In other words, the Syllabus needs to be adjusted in the different areas taking into consideration the specific conditions existing in the area. The RE syllabus will be implemented differently in a rural area than it would be in an urban area, and different again in areas where left or right wing parties are in the majority.

Moreover, this research could be developed further by conducting another research exclusively on the new RE syllabus, i.e. the one developed recently during the educational reform in Cyprus. The new research should aim to investigate teachers' and students' views about the new RE textbooks and way RE is taught using these textbooks and following the new Syllabus. Older teachers would then be able to compare the old and the new Syllabus, and in this way, assess how happy they are with the new syllabus.

In addition, the RE Booklet which was developed and used for this thesis could be shared among teachers to use in their classrooms as an additional teaching resource.

The teaching material and guidelines included in the RE Booklet could be very useful for the teaching of RE.

Finally, I intend to draw on the knowledge, experience and the important findings of this PhD thesis in order to improve myself professionally, not only as a RE teacher but as an educator in general. I am planning to continue teaching in the Greek-Cypriot primary schools of Cyprus, teaching mainly RE to all ages of primary education; six to twelve-year-old children. At the same time, I intend to participate in the educational groups of the Ministry of Education for developing RE material, and to provide guidance, as a mentor, for the teaching of RE to other teachers; and I will participate in educational seminars organized by the Ministry or other educational organizations.

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Appendices

Appendix A

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOOKLET

Maria Krasia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEVELOPING THE BOOKLET

THE BOOKLET'S PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS

The booklet will be a supplementary material for teaching religious education. It will be based on two aspects: The religious one and the social one. The reason for focusing on these two aspects is because the main purpose of the thesis is the development of interreligious and intercultural dialogue between the pupils.

The most important aims of the booklet are presented in detail below:

Firstly, the *informational aim*. Pupils should be informed about the different religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions. Pupils should be taught about the basic aspects of each religion: their way of worshipping, places of worship, holy objects, prophets, important people, pilgrimages, holy places, religious art and music, ceremonies, symbols and religious celebrations. Pupils should be informed and have knowledge of the basic aspects of each religion in order become able to understand, appreciate and respect them. Learning from and about different religions, children learn to be tolerant to other people, whose religion is different from their own. In other words, children become able to suspend their social and religious prejudices. As noted by Davies (1999, p.76), learning about other cultures and religions, prepare children for adult life. "Harmonious relationships between different religious and ethnic groups are more likely if world religions have been taught in an open and respectful manner" (Davies, 1999, p.76). "Children have the right to know about the beliefs and practices of others as well as their own" (Cole and Evans-Lowndes, 1991, p.51). In other words, learning about other religious traditions, will help children to understand their own religious beliefs better (Cole and Evans-Lowndes, 1991, p.51).

Secondly, the *comparative aim*. To help pupils compare objectively the different religious traditions and spot the similarities and differences between them. Especially, focusing on the comparison of other religions with Christianity. This comparison does not aim to prove that Christianity is better than other religions, but to indicate that there are many similarities between the different world religions. This comparison also seeks to develop a dialogue between the different world religions (an interreligious dialogue). Pupils should realize that there is always another version of religious truth and understanding, different than their own. They must be taught to recognize and respect this different version of religious truth and understanding.

As it was mentioned above, the booklet aims to find common bonds between the different religions and to bridge the gaps between them. Some examples regarding the comparison of religions can be:

a) According to the Islamic religion, Allah Himself revealed to Mohammed everything that is written in the Koran. In the same way, according to the Christian religion, God Himself revealed to John everything that is written in the 'Apocalypse'. Obviously, this is a similarity between the two religions: God Himself has revealed the truth to two mortal people (Mohammed and John) and this truth is written down into two holy books (Bible and Koran).

b) Another example of comparing religions it can be detected on the issue of 'life after death'. Almost all religions support the idea that life and human soul do not die after the biological death. On the contrary, the religions 'promise' life after the biological death, they promise a supernatural life. Some religions support the idea of the paradise or hell; some others support the idea of reincarnation.

c) The third example can be detected on the decoration of the temples. For instance, Orthodox churches are decorated with icons that present Jesus and Saints. On the contrary, in Islamic tradition is prohibited the decoration of the mosques with icons or any other pictures. However, mosques have their own unique decoration (i.e. carpets, arabesques).

Thirdly, the *critical aim*. To help pupils develop their critical thinking. This can be achieved through different tasks that help pupils to judge, question and doubt. Pupils should be enabled not to take everything for granted and accept easily something that somebody else has told them.

Fourthly, the *behavioral-attitudinal aim*. To improve pupils' behavior and attitudes towards other people who profess different religion or come from a different culture. This can be achieved with case studies. Through the case studies children can think critically about a problem and they can put themselves in somebody else's place. For instance, an example of a case study can be about euthanasia: "What will you do if a relative of yours wants to use euthanasia in order to put an end to her pain?".

Fifthly, the *research aim*. To develop pupils' research skills. To help them discover the knowledge by themselves.

The philosophy of the booklet is going to be based on the assessment method of *Portfolio*. Portfolio is a modern method of educational assessment and it has to do with the collection of pupils' work that 'tells a story' about their efforts, progress and

achievement in a specific subject (Arter and Spandel, 1992, p.36). In particular, Arter and Spandel offered the following definition for portfolio:

> "…a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s). The collection must include student participation in selection of portfolio content; the guidelines of selection; the criteria for judging merit; and evidence of student self-reflection".

(Arter and Spandel, 1992, p.36)

The method of portfolio helps pupils to gain important cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, such as monitoring, organizing, planning, reflecting, managing and self-evaluation (Klenowski, 2002, pp.4f). Finally, it must be mentioned that this assessment method serves all the purposes of assessment: summative, evaluative, formative (Klenowski, 2002, pp.10f).

For instance, pupils can be requested to create a personal portfolio about world religions. Thus, they must collect material about this topic and try to analyze it. For this reason, they can use the information technology, such as the World Wide Web. This material it will be kept in a portfolio. Pupils can also keep a diary in order to write down their thoughts about the religious education lessons. So, by the end of the year, each pupil will have his/her own religious education portfolio. In this way, the educator can easily assess the work that is done during the school year. Obviously, the method of portfolio develops pupils' cognitive and metacognitive skills, such as organizing, planning, reflecting, managing and self-evaluation (Klenowski, 2002, pp.4f).

TEACHING TOPICS INCLUDED WITHIN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOOKLET

The teaching topics that they will be included within the religious education booklet are divided into eight categories:

1. Teaching about world religions and beliefs.
2. Meeting the religious minorities – communities of Cyprus.
3. Teaching about religious issues.
4. Teaching about spiritual issues.
5. Teaching about social issues.
6. Teaching about cultural issues.
7. Teaching about moral issues.
8. Teaching about health issues.

The most of the teaching topics and activities which are presented below are inspired from the non-statutory national framework for religious education U.K. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004).

The booklet's teaching topics are presented in detail below:

Category I: Teaching about world religions and beliefs

Religions and Beliefs	Countries[27] which are related to each religion
1. Buddhism	Sri Lanka
2. Christianity	Philippines, Russia and Germany
3. Hinduism	India
4. Islam	Syria
5. Judaism	Israel
6. Sikhism	India
7. Agnosticism	-
8. Atheism	-

Category II: Meeting the religious minorities - communities of Cyprus

– Turkish-Cypriots

– Armenians

– Maronites

– Latins

Category III: Teaching about scientific issues

1. Religion and Science: issues of truth, prove and explanation.

Category IV: Teaching about religious issues

1. Origins of the universe.

2. Life after death.

3. Good and evil.

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[27] The specific countries were chosen because many pupils, who attend in the Cypriot schools, come from these countries. Thus, it is an opportunity to meet these pupils' culture.

Category V: Teaching about social issues

1. Peace and war.

2. Poverty and wealth.

Category VI: Teaching about cultural issues

1. Xenophobia and racism.

Category VII: Teaching about moral issues

1. Universal human values: racial and religious respect, justice, honesty, truth, trust, cooperation, understanding.

Category VIII: Teaching about health issues

1. Global and environmental issues: animal rights and environment.

2. Promoting health education: What are the different religions beliefs and teachings about drug use, food, drink, leisure, relationship, gabling, suicide?

All the above teaching topics that are going to be included within the religious education booklet, are aiming to promote pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and moral development.

SOME GENERAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDED WITHIN

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOOKLET

➢ Visiting worship places.

➢ Interviewing people: Listening and responding to visitors from local faith communities.

➢ Study a religion community with a significant local presence (i.e. the Muslim (Turkish-Cypriot) community of Cyprus) – A social anthropology study.

➢ Pupils can use their senses and have times of quite reflection.

➢ Expressive arts from different cultures should be used: Art and design, music, dance and drama.

➢ Pupils should share with others their personal beliefs, ideas, values, feelings and experiences.

➢ Use the ICT in order to explore about the different religions and beliefs.

➢ Use of other forms of technology: videoconference, email, CD-ROMS, digital cameras.

➢ Role plays: For instance, children through role plays can show love and concern for others.

➢ Debating method: Two groups are debating on a specific topic using arguments to support their opinion (i.e. a controversial issue).

➢ Study few basic points of some Sacred Writings (Holy Books).

➢ The development of a religious education website by the teacher. This website can be a way of communication between the teacher and the pupils. On the one hand, the teacher can publish in the website all the necessary material and instructions in order to help pupils do their assignments. On the other hand, the pupils can publish their assignments or any questions or suggestions about the course. For instance, if children have an assignment on Islam, the teacher can publish in the website some useful web pages or links on Islam. This will help pupils to find useful material. When pupils finish their assignments can publish them on the website.

PILOTING THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOOKLET

➢ Before piloting the booklet, the experimental team of the children is going to be interviewed. Firstly, in order to discover the level of pupils' knowledge regarding the teaching topics and secondly, in order to ascertain the booklet's impact on pupils' attitudes during the school year.

➢ At the end of the piloting school year, the same children will be interviewed again in order to discover the booklet's impact on pupils' attitudes and knowledge.

➢ During the piloting activities, digital photos and films will be taken.

➢ All pupils will have their personal portfolio where they will keep their work.

LESSON PLAN 1:

AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

During the first lesson, the teacher asks from children to think the following question: "What do you think when you hear the words Religious Education"? It is expected to relate religious education with "religion" and religion with "faith". The teacher then asks them again whether all people on earth have the same faith. It is expected to answer that not all people on earth have the same faith, so there are different religions. The pupils then are asked to think within their groups some world religions that they know: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

Pupils are requested to write down a paragraph about "Religion". What does religion mean to them? They should give their own terminology of "religion".

Pupils are also given a small questionnaire. This questionnaire includes the following questions:

− What is Religious Education?

− What do you think when you hear the words Religious Education?

− In general, what have you taught during Religious Education lessons all these school years?

− What do you expect to be taught this year?

At this time, pupils are informed that this year, are going to be taught about some other additional teaching topics:

− World religions and beliefs.

− Religious minorities in Cyprus.

− Religious issues.

− Spiritual issues.

− Social issues

− Cultural issues.

− Moral issues.

− Health issues.

LESSON PLAN 2:
LEARNING ABOUT BUDDHISM

Introduction

A Buddhist person, from Sri Lanka, who lives in Cyprus, can be invited in our classroom to do the introduction lesson for Buddhism. He/she will bring with him/her some photos from Sri Lanka. The Buddhist person and the Sri Lanka photos will be the introduction to the lesson about Buddhism.

Part I: Informational - Knowledge aim

Before the visiting of the Buddhist in the classroom, the pupils, along with the teacher, prepare some questions to ask the visitor. Those questions can be prepared by the pupils. Pupils are cooperating within their groups (groups of four) and prepare the questions. After finishing them, each group announces its questions. The teacher writes down every question that is announced and helps pupils to improve them. A sample of these questions can be:

1) What is your name?

2) Where are you from?

3) What is your religion?

4) Who was Buddha? Tell us something about his life.

5) What does the name Buddha mean?

6) Why Buddha is so important to you?

7) Apart from Buddha, are there any other important people in your religion? Who are those?

8) What are the main beliefs of Buddhism?

9) When the religion of Buddhism created and developed? Which year and where?

10) Who were the first followers of Buddhism? In which country?

11) Which are the Buddhist holy texts?

12) How do you worship and where?

13) How do you pray?

14) How does a Buddhist temple looks like? How is it decorated? What is special about it?

15) Do you have any religious ceremonies? Can you please describe us one of it?

16) Are there any holy objects, statues or pictures within the Buddhist temple? Which are these?

17) What is your most religious / holy place in the world? What is the most important place in the world for a Buddhist?

18) Does your worship accompanied with some kind of music or psalms?

19) Which are your religious symbols? What is the most important Buddhist religious symbol?

20) Which are your religious celebrations? What do you celebrate during these and how do you celebrate it?

21) Which are the two major Buddhist traditions?

22) In which countries do Buddhists live?

23) What is the role of Buddhist monks and nuns?

24) What is Karma?

25) What is rebirth?

26) What is Nirvana?

27) What is Wesak?

28) Which are the four noble truths of Buddhism?

29) What do you like about being a Buddhist?

30) What is your favorite story from your religion?

Through these questions and answers, pupils gain the authentic knowledge and information about Buddhism. This is an old method, called maieutic method and it was inspired by Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher. Pupils develop their own questions and they gain knowledge by themselves. Instead of reading in a textbook the information about Buddhism that somebody else has written for them, they search and discover the knowledge by themselves. In this way, they feel constructors of their own knowledge.

Part II: Informational - Knowledge aim

Pupils are requested to do a research about "Theravada" which is the oldest Buddhist school. It was founded in India and for many centuries has been the predominant religion in Southeast India.

Part III: Comparative aim

During the second lesson, pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to gather all their data-answers from the interview. Each group is responsible for different questions. So, when they finish, each group announce to the rest of the class, its work. After that, each group is requested to compare Christianity with Buddhism and to find the

similarities and differences. This comparison will be based on many aspects: worship, places of worship, holy objects, important people, pilgrims, holy places, religious art and music, ceremonies, symbols and religious celebrations. Each group will be responsible for different aspects.

Part IV: Research skills

For homework, pupils are requested to do a research about the Buddhist teaching on suffering (liberation from suffering). In the next lesson, they will do a short presentation. Pupils will be encouraged to search on the Internet, in encyclopedias, books, magazines. In order to help pupils with their research, the teacher should give them some suggested bibliography, including some websites. Alternatively, pupils can do a research about the Buddhist teaching on generosity – giving, which is a more ordinary topic for Buddhists.

Part V: Impact on pupils' attitudes

Undoubtedly, by interviewing and meeting a Buddhist person, pupils' behavior and stances towards Buddhists will be improved. This is because when somebody meets and speaks with somebody else from a different country, he/she understands and appreciates him/her better.

Part VI: Promoting pupils' empathy

Think how Buddhists pray, worship and what they eat. How would you felt if you were a Buddhist?

Part VII: Development of pupils' critical thinking (1-3)

Development of pupils' critical thinking (1)

Pupils are given a topic for discussion: "One of the main teachings of Buddha is to have compassion for others. How can we show our compassion to others in our everyday life?"

Development of pupils' critical thinking (2)

Pupils are given a second topic for discussion: 'Do a research and find out in which countries have as an official religion Buddhism. Spot these countries on the world map. How Buddhism, as a religion, is adapted to the social, geographical, traditional, climatologic conditions of these specific countries? Why do you think Buddhism has

more response and followers in those countries? In your own opinion, what factors had contributed to the spreading of Buddhism in those countries?'

Development of pupils' critical thinking (3)

Pupils are requested to write an essay about the topic: "The five Precepts (Pansil) are five guidelines that must be followed by all Buddhists. The five precepts are: not harming or killing living beings, not stealing, not use intoxicants, not immoral relationships and no wrong speech. What can these five percepts offer to our world? "

LESSON PLAN 3:
THE DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

Introduction

The lesson on Christianity begins with three visits at three different Christian churches. Firstly, a visit to a Christian Orthodox church, secondly, a visit to a Protestant church and thirdly to a Catholic church. It is very important to have a guide in each church. Our guides can be the priests of each church.

Part I: Informational – Knowledge aims (1-2)

Informational – Knowledge aim (1)

Preparing for visiting the Orthodox – Catholic – Protestant churches

Before visiting the churches, an Orthodox, Catholic and a Protestant child from our class are requested to bring few photos of an Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant church. The Orthodox child comes from Russia, the Catholic from Philippines and the Protestant comes from Germany. The churches photos are placed on the board, where everybody can see and the pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to spot the basic architectural characteristics of the churches.

After finishing this work within their groups, each group announces its comments. Some basic aspects are:

1. Size
2. Shape
3. Colors
4. Symbols
5. Yard
6. Icons
7. Interior decoration

After a short conversation about the basic architectural characteristics, one child from each group is requested to note down the above points (points 1-7). During the visit within the churches, each group has to take some notes about these points. Also they are requested to take notes for other important points as well (i.e. something that made them impression).

Informational – Knowledge aim (2) – Visiting the three churches[28]

During the guidance, all the priests can mainly focus on the following:

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

By the 4th century AD, Christianity has become the dominant religion in the Roman Empire.

TEACHINGS AND BELIEFS:

a) Christianity is a monotheistic religion.

a) It is based on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

b) It is mainly based on the teachings of the New Testament.

c) Jesus is the son of God and He is the Messiah.

d) Jesus was born, suffered, died and resurrected.

e) Jesus, having become fully human, suffered the pain and temptation of a mortal man, yet did not sin.

SCRIPTURES:

a) Bible: Old and New Testament.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP:

a) Holy day: Sunday

b) Prayer

c) Church

HOLY SACRAMENTS:

a) Baptism

b) Confirmation

c) Eucharist

d) Holy orders

e) Reconciliation of a Penitent

f) Anointing of the sick

g) Matrimony

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[28] It is requested three lessons to visit those three churches.

CEREMONIES AND LITURGIES

CHRISTIAN COUNTRIES:

For instance, Cyprus, Greece, England, Argentina, Philippines, Denmark, Malta, Italy, Norway etc.

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS :

(A reference to the East West schism)

a) Anglicanism

b) Eastern Orthodoxy

c) Oriental Orthodoxy

d) Protestantism

e) Restorationism

f) Roman Catholicism

RELIGIOUS MELODIES:

a) Ecclesiastical instruments

b) Psalms

c) Hymns

Part II: Research skills – Use of technology

For homework, pupils are requested to do a research on the Internet in order to find additional information about the different Christian denominations. Each group is responsible for a different denomination. When they return back to school each group present a different denomination.

Part III: Promoting pupils' empathy

− Think how Catholics pray, worship and what they eat. How would you felt if you were a Catholic?

− Think how Protestants pray, worship and what they eat. How would you felt if you were a Protestant?

Part IV: Comparative aim – Use of technology

Development of pupils' critical thinking

Pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to compare the different Christian denominations and find some similarities and differences between them. This comparison will be based on many aspects: teachings and beliefs, Holy Scriptures, way and places of worshipping, holy sacraments, religious celebrations, liturgies. They are asked to work within their groups and do a short presentation on power-point regarding the different Christian denominations

Part V: Learning about Russia, Philippines and Germany

As it was mentioned above, the Catholic child in our classroom comes from Philippines and the Protestant comes from Germany. Also, there is a Russian child in our classroom who is Orthodox. So, taking this opportunity we can learn about the Russian, Philippine and German cultures. These three children brought interesting things from their countries: traditional uniforms, cakes, photos with historical sights. All these are presented and explained by them.

After that, the above countries are spotted on the world map. We also spot on the map some other Christian countries.

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LESSON PLAN 4:

HINDUISM: A DIVERSE SYSTEM OF THOUGHT

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Introduction

During the first lesson on Hinduism, pupils watch a short film (about 30 minutes) about India and especially about Hinduism. Pupils watch Hindus' worship, places of worship, holy places, Hinduistic ceremonies and symbols. After they watch the film, the pupils are requested to do some comments (orally). While the pupils tell their comments, the teacher takes some notes on the board. These comments can be about:

1) Worship

2) Places of worship

3) Temples

4) Gods

5) Holy places

6) Religious ceremonies and celebrations

7) Religious symbols

8) Yoga

9) Rituals

Part I: Informational - Knowledge aim –

Religious, social and cultural knowledge

Many Hindu people live and work in Cyprus, so, during the second lesson two Hindus are invited in our classroom in order to present us their religion and culture. They are also asked to bring with them some objects, pictures and traditional costumes from their country.

Before Hindus visit our classroom, pupils are asked to work within their groups in order to prepare some questions to ask the visitors. These questions are mainly inspired by the film that they watched previously. After preparing the questions, each group announces its questions. The teacher writes the questions on the board and helps pupils to improve them. Some of these questions are:

– What is your religion?

– Where are you from?

– What does the word Hindu mean?

– When the religion of Hinduism created and developed? Which year and where?

– Has Hinduism got many followers? Is it a large religious tradition?

– Where Hindus live? In which countries?

– What is the name of Hinduism's Holy Scriptures? What are these scriptures discuss about?

– What are the main religious traditions of Hinduism?

– What are the main beliefs of Hinduism?

– What are the Hindus' concepts of God? What is God for you?

– What is Yoga?

– How do you worship God in your religion?

– What are your holy symbols?

– Do you use icons in your religious tradition?

– Do you have religious hymns?

– Do you have temples?

– Why do you pray at the bank of a river?

– Why do you consider the cow as a holy animal?

– Do you do some special ceremonies for birth, wedding, death etc.?

– Do you do pilgrimages?

– Which are your holy cities?

– What are your most important religious festivals?

– Is your society divided into social classes?

– Do you have priests or monks?

– What are your food habits?

– What are the main religious practices in your religion?

Through these questions and answers, pupils gain the authentic knowledge about Hinduism. Pupils develop their own questions and they gain knowledge by themselves. They gain not only religious knowledge about Hinduism but they also gain social knowledge, about the Indian society. If the Hindu visitors are not able to answer some of the above questions, then they can mainly focus on religious practices. For instance:

1) Hindu celebrations

2) Food habits

3) Pray

4) Hindu – Traditional clothes

5) Ceremonies – Customs

More specifically, the most important points about Hinduism are:

1. THE HISTORY OF HINDUISM:

   – "Hindu" is the Persian name of the Indus river.

   – Hinduism is originated in India in 5500-2600 BCE.

   – It is the oldest religious tradition.

   – It is the third largest religion, following Christianity and Islam.

   – The majority of Hindus live in India and Nepal.

2. HOLY SCRIPTURES OF HINDUISM:

   – Sruti (revealed)

   – Smriti (remembered)

3. HINDUISM'S TRADITIONS:

   – Hindu folk religion.

   – Vedic Hinduism.

   – Vedantic Hinduism.

   – Dharmic Hinduism.

   – Bhakti or devotionalism Hinduism.

4. HINDUS' BELIEFS:

   – Dharma (ethics and duties).

   – Samsara (The continuing cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth).

   – Karma (action and subsequent reaction).

   – Moksha (liberation from Samsara).

   – Yoga (paths and practices).

5. THE HINDUS' CONCEPT OF GOD:

   – Hinduism is a diverse religion: monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, monism, pantheism and atheism.

   – The human soul is eternal.

6. THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF LIFE:

   Moksha, Nirvana or Samadhis:

   – Union with God.

- Relationship with God.

- Unity of all existence.

- Unselfishness.

- Knowledge of the self.

- Mental peace.

- Detachment from worldly desires.

7. THE GOALS OF LIFE:

- Kama: sensual pleasure and enjoyment.

- Artha: material prosperity and success.

- Dharma: correct action.

- Moksha: liberation from the cycle of Samsara.

8. YOGA:

- Bhakti Yoga (the path of love and devotion).

- Karma Yoga (the path of right action).

- Raja Yoga (the path of meditation).

- Jnana Yoga (the path of wisdom).

9. WORSHIP:

- Worship can be either at home or at a temple.

- Use of God's icons.

- Visiting temples especially during religious festivals.

- Symbolism.

- Iconography.

- Perform morning ablutions at the bank of a sacred river.

- Hymns.

10. INDIAN HOLY CITIES AND TEMPLE CITIES:

- Allahabad

- Haridwar

- Varanasi

- Vrindavan

- Puri

11. A HINDU LIFE IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR STAGES:

    – Brahmacharya – stage as a student.

    – Grihastha – householder's stage.

    – Vanaprastha – retirement stage.

    – Sannyasa – stage of ascetiasm.

12. HINDU SOCIETY:

    – The Brahmins (teachers and parents).

    – The Kshatriyas (warriors, nobles and kings).

    – The Vaishyas (farmers, merchants and businessmen).

    – The Shudras (servants and laborers).

13. HINDUS' FOOD HABITS:

    – Vegetables.

    – Sea food.

    – Abstain from beef. The cow is the symbol of unselfishness giving. The cow-slaughter is legally banned.

Part II: Research skills

For homework, pupils are requested to do a research in order to find some information about "Samsara": The continuing cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. Pupils are requested to search on the Internet, encyclopedias, books and magazines.

Part III: Comparative aim

During the third lesson, pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to compare Christianity with Hinduism and find some similarities and differences. This comparison will be based on many aspects: worship, places of worship, holy objects, prophets, important people, pilgrims, holy places, religious art and music, ceremonies, symbols and religious celebrations. Each group will be responsible for different aspects.

Part IV: Promoting pupils' empathy

Think how Hindus pray, worship and what they eat. How would you felt if you were a Hindu?

Part V: Development of pupils' critical thinking

For the third lesson, pupils bring back to class all the information about "Samsara" and they are requested to talk about it within their groups. Then is given to them a topic to think about it and write down their thoughts: "Why do you think that one of Hindus' goals of life is the "Moksha": the liberation from the cycle of Samsara"?

Part VI: Impact on pupils' behavior and attitudes

For the fourth lesson, the two people from India are invited again to our school in order to cook with the children a traditional Indian food. The Indian visitors, along with pupils, spend about an hour in the school's kitchen and prepare a traditional Indian meal. This gives pupils the opportunity to meet better not only the Hindu cuisine, but Hindu people as well.

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LESSON PLAN 5:

VISITING A MOSQUE - LEARNING ABOUT ISLAM

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Introduction

All over Cyprus there are many mosques, so a visit to a mosque can be easily arranged. It is a good idea to have a guide within the mosque (for instance a person who works in the mosque). Also, three children in our classroom come from Syria and they are Muslims, so they can be our guides as well.

Part I: Informational – Knowledge aims (1-4)

Informational – Knowledge aim (1) – Preparing for visiting the nearest mosque.

Before visiting the nearest mosque, the three Syrian children of our classroom are requested to bring few photos of mosques. The photos can be placed on the board, where everybody can see, and the pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to spot the basic architectural characteristics of the mosques.

After finishing this work within their groups, each group announces its comments. These comments should regard: The mosques':

1. Size
2. Shape
3. Colors
4. Minarets
5. Yard
6. Carpets
7. Pray rooms
8. Interior design

After a short conversation about the basic architectural characteristics, one child from each group is requested to note down the above points (points 1-8). During the visit within the mosque, each group has to take some notes about these points. Also, they are requested to take notes for other important points as well (i.e. something that made them impression).

Informational – Knowledge aim (2) – Visiting the nearest mosque.

Before entering the mosque, our guide guides us, firstly, in the mosque's yard which plays an important role for Muslims' pray. All Muslims are washed before entering the mosque for praying. Also, the yard is decorated with trees and flowers, especially palm trees.

Before entering the mosque, the three Syrian children, informed us that all of us have to take off our shoes. The guidance within the mosque begins. The guide focuses on the most important aspects of the mosque:

1) Mosque's size and shape.
2) Minarets' symbolism.
3) The carpets within the pray room.
4) The Arabesque which decorate the mosque's walls.
5) The lack of pictures and icons.
6) The Mihrab.
7) The use of the pulpit by the imam.
8) The role of the imam.
9) The Islamic art.
10) The Islamic pray.

For the second lesson about Islam, the three Syrian children of our classroom are requested to bring some pictures or objects inspired by the Islamic art. They are also requested to bring their holy book, the Koran and objects, photos or even food that come from their country, Syria.

Informational – Knowledge aim (3) – Learning about the teachings of Islam.

During the second lesson about Islam, the three Syrian children present, shortly, all the objects and pictures that have brought. After that, they read to us few lines, in Arabic, from the Koran and explain us what they mean. They also explain us that the Koran is originally written in Arabic and it can be only read from the right to the left, from the end to the beginning. They can also inform us that the content of Koran had revealed to Mohammed by Allah Himself.

At this point, the Syrian children can tell us some information about Mohammed, Allah and the content of Koran. So, the teacher notes on the board few key words in order to help the three children:

1) Islamic celebrations (i.e. Ramadan)
2) Fasting

3) Pray

4) Islamic – Traditional clothes

5) Ceremonies – Customs

6) Islamic countries

The children from Syria are requested to speak to us about these six topics.

Informational – Knowledge aim (4) – Learning about Syria.

As it was mentioned above, the three Muslim children in our classroom come from Syria. So, taking this opportunity we can learn about the Syrian culture. The Syrian children brought interesting things: traditional Syrian dresses, Syrian cakes, photos with Syrian historical sights. All these are presented and explained by them.

After that, Syria is spotted on the world map and all children realized that it is very close to Cyprus. We also spot on the map some other Islamic countries.

Part II: Comparative aim

During the third lesson, pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to gather all data from their visit to the mosque and from the Syrian children presentation. Each group should focus on different topic. For instance:

1) Mosque's architectural style.

2) Mosque's internal decoration.

3) Muslims' pray and the role of imam.

4) Islamic ceremonies and customs.

5) The Koran.

When they finish, each group announces to the rest of the class, its work. After that, each group is requested to compare Christianity with Islam and to find similarities and differences. This comparison will be based on many aspects: worship, places of worship, holy objects, prophets, important people, pilgrimage, holy places, religious art and music, ceremonies, symbols and religious celebrations. Each group will be responsible for different aspects.

Part III: Research skills – Use of the technology

For homework, pupils are requested to do a research on the Internet in order to find some pictures about the Islamic art. They are also required to find Islamic or Arabic music. In order to help pupils with their research, the teacher should give them some suggested websites.

Part IV: Promoting pupils' empathy

Think how Muslims pray, worship and what they eat. How would you felt if you were a Muslim?

Part V: Development of pupils' critical thinking – Emotional aims – Impact on pupils' attitudes

Pupils are requested to listen to Arabic music for a while in order to relax. After a while, pupils are given a topic for personal thinking: "Imagine that you come from Syria. It is your first day at school. All the children around you speak in a different language that you do and they are dressed in different clothes. How do you feel? What do you expect from the children around you?". Pupils are left again to relax listening to the Arabic music and to think carefully the question. After five minutes all children are expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Part VI: Artistic and Emotional aim

Each group is requested to create its own work of art inspired by the Islamic art. Some pictures and paintings are placed on the board in order to help the pupils.

LESSON PLAN 6:
A MEETING WITH JUDAISM

Introduction - Part I: Informational - Knowledge aim

In Cyprus, it is very difficult to find a Jew in order be interviewed about his/her religion. Also, it is very difficult to find a Synagogue that can provide us with some information about Judaism. For this reason, the teacher can provide pupils with some material about Judaism. Thus, during the first lesson about Judaism, the teacher gives to each group material (articles, texts, pictures) about Judaism. Each group is given material with different topic:

1. The history of Judaism.
2. Philosophy and teachings of Judaism.
3. Important people in Judaism.
4. Holy Scriptures of Judaism.
5. Jewish celebrations.
6. Jewish customs and ceremonies.
7. The role of the Rabbi.
8. The different denominations of Judaism.

Pupils read carefully, within their groups, the material given by the teacher. They focus on the most important aspects and they prepare on the computer a short presentation about the above topics.

During the second lesson, each group presents in front of all class its topic. In this way, each group "teaches" the rest of the class about a specific aspect of Judaism and everybody is informed about the general aspects of Judaism. More specifically, some key points for each topic are:

I. THE HISTORY OF JUDAISM:
 – The oldest monotheistic religion – 1900 BCE.
 – Time of Abraham.
 – The Holocaust.

II. PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHINGS OF JUDAISM:
 – Monotheistic religion.
 – God is the creator.

- Jews are the chosen ones. God has chosen them to be the people of Israel.

- The Ten Commandments.

- Saturday is Jewish holy day.

III.   IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN JUDAISM:

- God

- Abraham

- Moses

IV.   HOLY SCRIPTURES OF JUDAISM:

- The Torah: the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Writings, the Talmud, the Mishnah, the Gemara, the TeNaKh.

V.   JEWISH CELEBRATIONS

VI.   JEWISH CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES

VII.   THE ROLE OF THE RABBI:

- Rabbi= teacher

- Synagogue.

- Leader in a Jewish community.

- Reads the Torah.

VIII.   THE DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS OF JUDAISM:

- Orthodox Jews.

- Hasidic Jews

- Progressive Jews

- Masorti (Conservative Jews)

Part II: Comparative aim

During the third lesson, pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to compare Christianity with Judaism and find some similarities and differences. This comparison will be based on many aspects: worship, places of worship, holy objects,

prophets, important people, pilgrims, holy places, religious art and music, ceremonies, symbols and religious celebrations. Each group will be responsible for different aspects.

Part III: Research skills

For homework, pupils are requested to do a research in order to find some information about "Torah" and "Holocaust". Pupils are encouraged to search on the Internet, in encyclopedias, books, magazines.

Part IV: Promoting pupils' empathy

Think how Jews pray, worship and what they eat. How would you felt if you were a Jew?

Part V: Impact on pupils' attitudes and development of their critical thinking - Artistic and Emotional aim (1)

During the fourth lesson, pupils bring to school all the information that they found about Torah and they discuss about it within the class. The children realize that the Jewish Torah includes the **Ten Commandments**, so the teacher notes them on the board:

1. Put God first in your life.
2. Do not love anything more than you love God.
3. Give respect to everything that is holy, especially the name of God.
4. Keep one day every week free for rest and for worshipping God.
5. Have respect for your parents or those who care for you.
6. Do not take anyone's life.
7. Be faithful to the person you are married to.
8. Do not take what belongs to other people.
9. Do not spread lies or say bad things about people.
10. Do not be jealous about what other people have.

Pupils are requested to choose one of these Ten Commandments and write a short essay about it. They should also draw something about it. After they finish, they can read their essays to the rest of the classroom.

Impact on pupils' attitudes and development of their critical thinking - Artistic and Emotional aim (2)

Pupils are given a topic for discussion: "Racism and prejudice were the basic reasons for the Holocaust during the second world war. Express your feelings about the Holocaust. You can also do a drawing to express your feelings".

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LESSON PLAN 7:

A MEETING WITH SIKHISM

Introduction - Part I: Informational - Knowledge aim

In Cyprus, it is very difficult to find a Sikh person in order be interviewed about his/her religion. Also, there is not any Sikh temple that can provide us with some information about Sikhism. For this reason, the teacher can provide pupils with some material about Sikhism. Thus, during the first lesson about Sikhism, the teacher gives to each group material (articles, texts, pictures) about Sikhism. Each group is given material with different topic:

1. The history of Sikhism.
2. Philosophy and teachings of Sikhism.
3. The ten Gurus.
4. Holy Scriptures of Sikhism.
5. Sikh customs and ceremonies.
6. Sikhs practices – service, called "Sewa".

Pupils read carefully, within their groups, the material given by the teacher. They focus on the most important aspects and they prepare on the computer a short presentation about the above topics.

Pupils are requested to focus on Sikhs practices – service, called "Sewa". Service is a very important concept for Sikhs.

During the second lesson, each group presents in front of all class its topic. In this way, each group "teaches" the rest of the class about a specific aspect of Sikhism and everybody is informed about the general aspects of Sikhism. More specifically, some key points for each topic are:

THE HISTORY OF SIKHISM:

−Sikh means a disciple or a learner.

−Nanak was the founder of Sikhism.

−It was founded in the 15ᵗʰ century in Northern India.

−The growth of the Sikh community.

−The 146 Apostles who managed the rapid expansion of Sikhism.

PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHINGS OF SIKHISM:

- Monotheistic religion.

- The universality of God.

- God is non-anthropomorphic, is formless, eternal, unobserved, omnipresent, infinite.

- God has no gender.

- God has created the universe.

- There are five evils that prevent humans' salvation: ego, anger, greed, attachment and last.

THE TEN GURUS:

- Guru means enlighten leader-teacher.

- The ten gurus are: Nanak Dev, Angad Dev, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjan Dev, Har Gobind, Har Rai, Har Krishan, Tegh Bahadur, and Gobind Singh.

HOLY SCRIPTURES OF SIKHISM:

- Guru Granth Sahib

- Dasam Granth

- Janam Sakhis

SIKH CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES:

- Baptism.

- Khalsa.

- Five Ks: uncut hair, small comb, circular heavy metal bracelet, ceremonial short sword, special undergarment.

Part II: Comparative aim

During the third lesson, pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to compare Christianity with Sikhism and find some similarities and differences. This comparison will be based on many aspects: worship, places of worship, holy objects, prophets, important people, pilgrims, holy places, religious art and music, ceremonies, symbols and religious celebrations. Each group will be responsible for different aspects

Part III: Research skills

For homework, pupils are requested to do a research in order to find pictures-photos about Sikhs' everyday life. Pupils are encouraged to search on the Internet, in encyclopedias, books, magazines.

Part IV: Promoting pupils' empathy

Think how Sikhs pray, worship and what they eat. How would you felt if you were a Sikh?

Part V: Impact on pupils' attitudes and development of their critical thinking - Artistic and Emotional aim

During the fourth lesson, pupils bring to school all the photos and pictures that they found. The pictures are placed on the board and pupils are requested to observe them carefully. After observing the pictures, pupils are asked to write down something that impressed them about Sikhism. They have to explain why they were impressed. They can also draw a picture related to what they wrote.

LESSON PLAN 8:

LEARNING ABOUT ATHEISM

Introduction - Part I: Informational - Knowledge aim

The teacher provides pupils with some material about Atheism. Thus, during the first lesson about Atheism, the teacher gives to each group material (articles, texts, pictures[29]) about Atheism. Each group is given material with different topic:

1. Etymology and historical background of Atheism.

2. Types of Atheism.

3. Practical and theoretical Atheism.

4. Atheist philosophers.

5. Atheism, religion and morality.

Pupils read carefully, within their groups, the material given by the teacher. They focus on the most important aspects and they prepare on the computer a short presentation about the above topics.

During the second lesson, each group presents in front of all class its topic. In this way, each group "teaches" the rest of the class about a specific aspect of Atheism and everybody is informed about the general aspects of Atheism. More specifically, some key points for each topic are:

ETYMOLOGY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ATHEISM:

– The word atheism comes from the Greek word "αθεϊσμός", α + Θεός (God). Without God, godless. Thus, atheist is the person who denies or disbelieves the existence of God.

– The 15th century B.C. Greek philosopher Diagoras is known as the first atheist.

TYPES OF ATHEISM:

– Implicit atheism.

– Explicit atheism.

– Weak atheism.

– Strong atheism.

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[29] Photos of famous atheist people and symbols of atheism.

PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL ATHEISM:

– Practical atheism: Individuals live is if there are no Gods and explain natural phenomena without resorting to the divine. They do not deny the existence of God, but they consider Got as unnecessary or useless.

– Theoretical atheism: The theoretical reasons for rejecting Gods assume various psychological, sociological, metaphysical and epistemological forms.

ATHEIST PHILOSOPHERS:

– Diagoras, Socrates, Democritus, Theodorus, Euhemerus, Epicurus, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Nietzsche, Sartre.

ATHEISM, RELIGION AND MORALITY:

– Morality does not depend on a lawmaker or a God. Atheists can be moral as well.

Part II: Developing pupils' critical thinking

During the third lesson, pupils are given the following question: "Some philosophers have equated atheism with immorality, arguing that morality must be derived from God and cannot exist without a wise creator. Do you believe that atheism is related to immorality? Is immorality derived from God? Are atheists immoral?" Pupils are requested to write a short essay, about 300 words, on this topic. When they finish, some pupils can read their essays to the rest of the classroom. At the end, pupils put their essays in their portfolios.

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LESSON PLAN 9:

LEARNING ABOUT AGNOSTICISM

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Introduction

A part from Robert G. Ingersoll's lecture in 1896, titled "Why I am an agnosticist", is written on the board:

> "Is there a God? I do not know. Is man immortal? I do not know. One thing I do know, and that is that neither hope, nor fear, belief nor denial, can change the fact. It is as it is, and it will be at it must be".
>
> (Robert G. Ingersoll, 1896)

Pupils are requested to read it and discuss about it within their groups. When they finish the discussion within their groups, each group announces its thoughts about the above paragraph. After that, the teacher explains pupils that some people are agnosticists, which means that they do not know whether God exists.

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim – Learning about Agnosticism

The pupils go to the school's computer room. So each pupil can use his/her own computer. The teacher writes on the board some key words:

1) Etymology of agnosticism.

2) The origins of agnosticism.

3) Agnosticist philosophers.

4) Types of agnosticism.

Pupils are divided into four groups and each group do a research about one of the above topics (1-4) on agnosticism.

During the second lesson, pupils are gathered again in the computer room and they are asked to do a short power-point presentation on their topic. After preparing their work they present it to the rest of the classroom. The most important aspects of agnosticism are:

 1.Etymology of agnosticism:

–Agnosticism comes from the Greek word: "αγνωστικισμός" (α + γνώση) (γνώση = knowledge). Without knowledge.

–A philosophical view: We cannot have complete knowledge especially on metaphysical issues, such as the existence of God, life after death etc.

 2.The origins of agnosticism:

–It was introduced by the philosopher Thomas Henry Huxley in 1869.

3. Agnocistic philosophers:

– Thomas Henry Huxley.

– Robert G. Ingersoll.

– Bertrand Russell.

4. Types of agnosticism

– Strong agnosticism.

– Mild agnosticism.

– Apathetic agnosticism.

– Agnostic theism.

– Agnostic atheism.

– Ignosticism.

Part II: Developing pupils' critical thinking

During the third lesson, pupils are given the following questions: "Why do you personally think that some people choose to be agnosticists regarding the existence of God?". Pupils are requested to write a short essay, about 300 words, on this topic. When they finish, some pupils can read their essays to the rest of the classroom. At the end, pupils put their essays in their portfolios.

Part III: Developing pupils' critical thinking

Pupils are requested to relate agnosticism with Buddhism. How the religious philosophy of Buddhism is related to the philosophy of agnosticism?

LESSON PLAN 10:

MEETING THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF CYPRUS:

TURKISH-CYPRIOTS, ARMENIANS, MARONITES AND LATINS

The 80,7% of the Cypriots are Greek-Cypriots (including Armenians, Maronites and Latins), the 11% are Turkish-Cypriots and the 8,3% are foreigners residing in Cyprus (The Republic of Cyprus, 2004, p.1). The Greek-Cypriot community adheres to the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. The Turkish-Cypriot community adheres to Islam. The religious groups of Armenians, Maronites and Latins, in accordance with the 1960 constitution opted to belong to the Greek-Cypriot community (The Republic of Cyprus, 2004, p.1). For these reasons, it is very important for pupils to meet these religious communities that live in Cyprus.

At this point, it must be mentioned that the main teaching target of all Greek-Cypriot schools for the school year 2008-2009, as it is specified by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, is

> "The promotion of the peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and cooperation between the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots in order to reunion Cyprus and the Cypriot people".
>
> (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 2008)

In order to achieve the peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and cooperation between the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, pupils (Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots) should meet each other's culture and civilization. When they meet each other's culture and civilization they will become able to respect and appreciate each other and also, to become able to coexist and cooperate peacefully.

As it was mentioned above, Turkish-Cypriots are not the only minority that lives in Cyprus. Armenians, Maronites and Latins are also important minorities and pupils should be taught about them as well.

It is important to do an introduction to the religious minorities that live in Cyprus:

Pupils are asked to think and write down, within their groups, the religious groups – communities that live in Cyprus. When they finish, they announce their thoughts to the rest of the class. It is not expected by pupils to know all the religious minorities that live in Cyprus. However, it is expected to know about the larger religious minority of Cyprus, which is the Turkish- Cypriot one. Thus, the teacher informs them about the others:

There are four religious communities – minorities in Cyprus:

1. Turkish-Cypriots.
2. Armenians.

3. Maronites.

4. Latins

Pupils are divided into four groups and each group is responsible for one religious minority. They have to do a research in order to find information about it and then they have to present their research to the rest of the class. For their research, they have to follow some steps:

a) Do a research on the Internet about each minority.

b) Present on a power presentation the information that they found on the Internet.

c) They can interview some people from each community in order to gather some information about the specific community.

d) Find a person from each community (Turkish Cypriot, Armenian, Maronite and Latin) and interview him or her. If it is possible these people can be invited to school in order to speak to us about their community.

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PART I:

MEETING THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY OF

THE TURKISH-CYPRIOTS

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Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

The pupils should be focused on the following key points:

– Historical background

– Ethnic origins

– Turkish-Cypriots migrations

– Religion

– Language

– Education

– Population

– Political situation

– Political rights

– Famous Turkish-Cypriots.

Part II: Development of pupils' critical thinking - Emotional development Impact on pupils' attitudes

In a village near our school there is a Turkish-Cypriot school (Primary school of Pyla). So, a group of Turkish-Cypriot pupils can be invited to our school. They can spend the

day in our school in order to meet the Greek-Cypriot culture better. The Greek-Cypriot pupils can present a special program for them. This program can include Greek music, dance, poems, Greek food and others. The Turkish-Cypriot pupils can present their own program as well. The pupils from our school can visit the Turkish-Cypriot school too.

Part III: Development of pupils' critical thinking - Emotional development Impact on pupils' attitudes

Pupils watch a sixteen minute film about the teaching of History in Turkish Cypriot classrooms. The most touching part of this short film is where the Turkish-Cypriot Minister of Education says that she is a refuge too and that her house was burnt by Greek-Cypriots during the 1974 war. This helps pupils to understand that Turkish-Cypriots are not the only one to blame about the 1974 war. Both parts, Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots, have contributed to the negative events of 1974.

After watching the film, pupils are requested to answer a questionnaire in order to analyze pupils' emotions and thinking.

Part IV: Development of pupils' artistic skills - Impact on pupils' attitudes

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and prepare posters for the Turkish-Cypriot pupils. These posters can present Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot pupils to hold hands around Cyprus. Or they can present the pupils breaking the borders that divide Cyprus. The posters should aim to promote the peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and cooperation between the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. When the pupils finish their posters, a group of them visits the Turkish-Cypriot school and gives to them the posters.

PART II:
MEETING THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY OF THE ARMENIANS

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

The pupils should be focused on the following key points:

– Historical background

– Ethnic origins

– Armenians migrations

– Religion

– Language

– Education

– Population

– Political situation

– Political rights

Part II: Development of pupils' critical thinking - Emotional development Impact on pupils' attitudes

In the capital city of Cyprus there is an Armenian school (Melkonian School). So, a group of Armenian pupils can be invited to our school. They can spend the day in our school in order to meet the Greek-Cypriot culture better. The Greek-Cypriot pupils can present a special program for them. This program can include Greek music, dance, poems, Greek food and others. The Armenian pupils can present their own program as well. The pupils from our school can visit the Armenian school too.

PART III:
MEETING THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY OF THE MARONITES

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

The pupils should be focused on the following key points:

– Historical background

– Ethnic origins

– Maronites migrations

– Religion

– Language

– Education

– Population

– Political situation

– Political rights

Part II: Development of pupils' critical thinking - Emotional development Impact on pupils' attitudes

In the capital city of Cyprus there is a Maronite school (Saint Maronas Primary School). So, a group of Maronites pupils can be invited to our school. They can spend the day in our school in order to meet the Greek-Cypriot culture better. The Greek-Cypriot pupils can present a special program for them. This program can include Greek music, dance,

poems, Greek food and others. The Maronites pupils can present their own program as well. The pupils from our school can visit the Maronites' school too.

PART IV:
MEETING THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY OF THE LATINS

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

The pupils should be focused on the following key points:

– Historical background

– Ethnic origins

– Latins migrations

– Religion

– Language

– Education

– Population

– Political situation

– Political rights

Part II: Development of pupils' critical thinking

In the capital city of Cyprus there is a Latin school. So, a group of Latin pupils can be invited to our school. They can spend the day in our school in order to meet the Greek-Cypriot culture better. The Greek-Cypriot pupils can present a special program for them. This program can include Greek music, dance, poems, Greek food and others. The Latin pupils can present their own program as well. The pupils from our school can visit the Latin's school too.

LESSON PLAN 11:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Introduction

During the first lesson, the teacher writes on the board the following sentence: "Religion is mainly based on belief and science is mainly based on knowledge". Pupils are requested to read it carefully and discuss it within their groups. When they finish the discussion within their groups, each group announces its thoughts about the above sentence.

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

The pupils go to the school's computer room, so each group can use a computer. Pupils are requested to do a research on the Internet in order to find some articles about "Religion and Science". Each group[30] must find four articles. After they find the four articles, every pupil reads carefully one article and takes some notes about it.

During the second lesson, the teacher notes on the board some key words related to "Religion and Science":

1) A historical background about the relationship between religion and science.

2) The conflict between religion and science.

3) The independence between religion and science.

4) The dialogue between religion and science.

5) Integrated religion and science.

6) The attitudes of religion towards science.

7) The attitudes of scientists towards religion.

8) Scientists and philosophers that study the relationship between religion and science.

Each group is requested to prepare on the computer a power-point presentation about one of the above topics (1-8). Pupils are allowed to move from one group to another in order to find articles related to their own topic. In other words, groups can exchange information.

During the third lesson, each group presents its topic to the rest of the class.

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[30] Each group has four pupils.

Part II: Impact on pupils' attitudes – Development of pupils' critical thinking

Emotional development – Use of expressive arts

The teacher notes on the board the following two controversial issues:

❖ Euthanasia

❖ Vitals' Transplantation

Pupils are requested to discuss within their groups for few minutes. After that, a discussion is developed within the classroom. The teacher explains briefly what euthanasia and vitals' transplantation mean and explains that these two issues are called controversial because there is a conflict between religion and science about them. The teacher explains religion's and science's views on these two issues.

Teacher notes on the board the following two questions:

❖ Imagine that a close person to you suffers from a serious disease and soon she/he will die. She/he is really in deep pain and no medication can help. So, she/he decides that want to use euthanasia in order to put an end to her/his pain. How do you feel about that? Do you agree with her/his wish? Discuss. Please do a drawing in order to express your feelings about it.

❖ Imagine that a close person to you had an accident. He/she is in coma; he/she is a cerebrally dead. The doctors said that he/she will die in about three days, even with machine support. Doctors suggested transplanting his/her vitals (heart, eyes, liver, and reins). His/her family have a dilemma. Should they allow doctors to transplant his/her vitals? What if his/her situation improves? Relatives have to deicide quickly because his/her vitals are getting worst. How do you feel about it? Do you agree? Please do a drawing in order to express your feelings about it.

Part III: Development of pupils' critical thinking

Pupils are divided into two groups in order to do a debate on the controversial issue of euthanasia. The one group supports the euthanasia and the other group is against euthanasia. They have to use many strong arguments in order to support their opinion.

LESSON PLAN 12:
PROTECTING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

This lesson will be focused on four environmental problems:

❖ The pollution and the ozone's destruction.

❖ Sources of energy.

❖ Forests destruction - Fires in the woods[31].

❖ Lack of water[32].

❖ What resources each religion gives us about the environment?

THE POLLUTION AND THE OZONE'S DESTRUCTION

Introduction

The children are gathered in the school's computer room. The teacher reads an article in the newspaper about the icebergs' melt in the North Pole. The teacher asks children to comment this article and to think why the icebergs are melting in the Poles. Finally, they conclude that icebergs are melting because earth's temperature has increased. Pupils are requested to search on the internet in order to find some information about icebergs melting. After they finish, each child says one sentence that he/she found on the Internet. The teacher notes on the board all the information. Some of those sentences are referring to ozone's destruction. Thus, they discuss about ozone: What is ozone? What is the role of ozone? What had happened to ozone? Why this had happened?

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

Pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to do a research on the Internet and find information about the ozone's destruction. Each group is working on a different topic:

– The ozone's role.

– The ozone's destruction.

– The reasons for the ozone's destruction.

– The effects of the ozone's destruction.

When pupils finish this work, each group announces to the rest of the classroom its findings about the ozone.

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[31] This is a very serious problem in Cyprus because of the high temperatures during the summer.

[32] This is also a very serious problem in Cyprus because of the last decade's drought.

SOURCES OF ENERGY

Introduction

Children watch on the TV two short films. The first film is about a car that moves, not with petrol but with sun. The second film is about an "Aeolian Park" which produces electricity. Pupils are requested to do some comments about those two films. They are asked to think why people invented the car that moves with the sun and the "Aeolian Park". After they discuss those two topics, they conclude that in our planet there isn't left much energy, especially petrol. Thus, scientists try to invent and use other sources of energy friendly to the environment. At this point, pupils do a research on the Internet about the various sources of energy.

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

Pupils are requested to work within their groups in order to do a research on the Internet and find information about the different sources of energy. Each group is working on a different type of energy[33]:

– Solar energy.

– Hydroelectric energy.

– Aeolian energy.

– Waves' energy.

– Tidal energy.

– Geothermic energy.

When pupils finish this work, each group announces to the rest of the classroom its findings about the different sources of energy.

FORESTS DESTRUCTION - FIRES IN THE WOODS

Introduction – Knowledge aim

Children watch on the TV a short film about a big fire that happened two years ago in a forest in Cyprus. Pupils watch the forest's and houses' destruction. Pupils are requested to do some comments about this film. They are asked to work within their groups and write down what might caused this fire and what were the results from this fire. After they finish, each group announces their thoughts.

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[33] Those types of energy are chosen because they do not pollute the environment.

LACK OF WATER

Introduction – Knowledge aim

Pupils watch on the TV a short film which it was taken from the news. This film is about a tanker that brings water to Cyprus from Greece. Pupils are requested to do comments on it. Why do Cypriots have to bring water from another country? Pupils discuss within their groups about the drought problem in Cyprus. When they finish, its groups announces its thoughts to the rest of the class.

Part II: Impact on pupils' attitudes – Development of pupils' critical thinking

Pupils are divided into four groups. Each group will work on a different environmental problem:

1. The pollution and the ozone's destruction.
2. Source of energy friendly to the environment.
3. Forests destruction - Fires in the woods.
4. Lack of water.

They are requested to work within their groups in order to find ways of protecting the natural environment. The first group will suggest ways for protecting the ozone. The second group will suggest how the different sources of energy can be used in our everyday lives. The third will suggest ways to prevent fires in the woods and the fourth group will suggest ways for saving the water. Each group has to prepare a power-point presentation about its topic.

Part III: Development of critical thinking

Pupils are requested to do a research on the Internet in order to find what resources each religion gives us about the environment?

Part IV: Use of expressive arts

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and do posters about the environment. These posters must include only drawings, not sentences. Pupils are divided into four groups. Each group works on a different topic:

1. Recycling
2. How the sources of energy, which are friendly to the environment, can be used in our everyday lives.
3. Signs that they can be placed within the forest in order to avoid fires (i.e. No Smoking).
4. Ways of saving the water.

LESSON PLAN 13:
PROMOTING HEALTH EDUCATION

Introduction

During the first lesson, the teacher asks pupils to think and discuss within their groups about the main problems that teenagers face in their everyday lives. When they finish the discussion within their groups, each group announces its thoughts. The teacher notes on the board the pupils' thoughts. Some key points are: drug use, alcohol, gabling, suicide, unhealthy food and human relationships.

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim - Development of pupils' critical thinking
Emotional development

There are three groups, so each group is requested to work on two topics:

1. Drug and alcohol use.
2. Gabling and unhealthy food.
3. Human relationships and suicide.

Pupils are requested to discuss within their groups about their topics. In order to help them, each group is given some pictures related to its topics. To the first group is given pictures about drug and alcohol use. To the second group is given pictures about gabling and unhealthy food and to the third group pictures about human relationships and suicide. These pictures will help pupils to think and to come up with some ideas about their topics. When pupils finish their discussion within their groups, they announce to the rest of the class their thoughts.

Part II: Conducting a research

During the second lesson, pupils are requested to do their own research about the above topics. They must follow all the necessary research steps:

1. Developing interview protocols.
2. Finding their research samples.
3. Conducting the interviews.
4. Analyzing their data from the interviews.
5. Commenting on their research results.

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The teacher should give pupils with some important guidelines in order to help them conduct their research successfully:

DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

1. *DEVELOPING THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS:* They are requested to write down five questions. Those questions can be about:
   - The reasons why young people start drinking alcohol or using drugs and soon they become addicted to them.
   - The dangers of drinking alcohol and using drugs.
   - Family's role in preventing young children from start using drugs and drinking alcohol.
   - School's role in preventing young children from start using drugs and drinking alcohol.
   - New healthy habits that young people can have instead of drugs and alcohol.
2. *FINDING THEIR RESEARCH SAMPLES:* They can interview children of their age or one year older or both. They should interview about five children.
3. *CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS:* The interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder and then, at the end of each interview, they will be transcribed. The school can provide pupils with the digital recorder.
4. *ANALYZING THEIR DATA FROM THE INTERVIEWS:* Pupils have to write down the interviewees' opinions about drugs and alcohol use. They should write them down in their own words.
5. *COMMENTING ON THEIR RESEARCH RESULTS:* Pupils have to make comments on the interviews and they should write down their personal opinion in a critical way.

GAMBLING AND UNHEALTHY FOOD

1. *DEVELOPING THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS:* They are requested to write down five questions. Those questions can be about:
   - The different types of gambling.
   - The reasons why young people start gabling and soon they become addicted to it.
   - The dangers of gambling.
   - New habits that young people can have instead of gambling.
   - The reasons why young people prefer unhealthy food.

– The dangers of eating unhealthy food.

– Healthy and nutritious food.

2. *FINDING THEIR RESEARCH SAMPLES:* They can interview children of their age or one year older or both. They should interview about five children.

3. *CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS:* The interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder and then, at the end of each interview, they will be transcribed. The school can provide pupils with the digital recorder.

4. *ANALYZING THEIR DATA FROM THE INTERVIEWS:* Pupils have to write down the interviewees' opinions about gabling and unhealthy food. They should write them down in their own words.

5. *COMMENTING ON THEIR RESEARCH RESULTS:* Pupils have to make comments on the interviews and they should write down their personal opinion in a critical way.

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AND SUICIDE

1. *DEVELOPING THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS:* They are requested to write down five questions. Those questions can be about:

– Family relationships, school relationships, friendships.

– The importance of human relationships.

– The reasons for suicide.

– Preventing a suicide.

2. *FINDING THEIR RESEARCH SAMPLES:* They can interview children of their age or one year older or both. They should interview about five children.

3. *CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS:* The interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder and then, at the end of each interview, they will be transcribed. The school can provide pupils with the digital recorder.

4. *ANALYZING THEIR DATA FROM THE INTERVIEWS:* Pupils have to write down the interviewees' opinions about human relationships and suicide. They should write them down in their own words.

5. *COMMENTING ON THEIR RESEARCH RESULTS:* Pupils have to make comments on the interviews and they should write down their personal opinion in a critical way.

Part III: Impact on pupils' attitudes – Development of pupils' critical thinking

Emotional development

When the groups finish their research, they present (with a power point presentation) their results to the rest of the class.

LESSON PLAN 14:
THE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE

Introduction

During the first lesson, the teacher asks pupils to think and discuss within their groups about the origins of the universe: 'How was the universe created?'. When they finish the discussion within their groups, each group announces its thoughts. The teacher notes on the board the pupils' thoughts. Some key points are: 'God has created the universe', 'It wasn't created by anybody or anything ', 'It was created by the Big Bang', 'It was created by a supernatural power'. The teacher and the pupils discuss about these key points. The teacher helps pupils to categorize their thoughts about the origins of the universe. The specific children are very young, so their thoughts are categorized only into three general categories:

1. Religious theories about the origins of the universe.   Mainstream
2. Scientific theories about the origins of the universe.   theories
3. Sub-stream – Non mainstream theories about the origins of the universe.

Part I: Knowledge aim – Research aim

The teacher asks pupils to be divided into three groups. The pupils who support the idea that the universe was created by God will be the first category – group. The pupils who support the idea that the universe was created by the Big Bang will be the second category – group. The pupils who support neither the idea of the Big Bang nor the God Creator will be the third category – group.

Each group is requested to do a research on the Internet in order to support its ideas. Thus, during the second lesson, pupils go to the computer room in order to gather information about their topic. During the third lesson, pupils return back to their classroom. Each of the above group is reading the material that they gather and they take important notes on it.

Part II: Development of pupils' critical thinking - Emotional development Impact on pupils' attitudes

Teacher advices pupils to read carefully all the material because during the fourth lesson the three groups will do a philosophical debate about the origins of the universe. Each group has to find the arguments in order to support successfully its views about the origins of the universe.

Some key points for each group can be the following:

1. RELIGIOUS THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE
    - This is a mainstream religious theory which means that is based mainly on historical documents and testimonies (i.e. Bible, Koran).
    - Mainstream religious theories discuss about what happened, where and when it happened, how and why it happened.

2. SCIENTIFIC THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE
    - This is a mainstream scientific theory which means that is supported by observations, data and histories.
    - Mainstream scientific theories discuss about what happened, where and when it happened, how and why it happened.
    - These theories do predictions and they do scientific experiments in order to check their predictions.
    - Scientific theories use scientific instruments to measure their data.
    - At this point, pupils should be informed about the latest scientific experiment involving the Higgs' boson and the origin of the universe.

3. SUB-STREAM – NON MAINSTREAM THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE
    - Sub-stream theories are rarely supported by observations, data and histories. They tend to ignore all the current data.
    - Sub-stream theories usually imagine data (i.e. Gods, aliens).
    - They involve invisible or immeasurable data.

After they will gather all the necessary information about their topic, they have to do a philosophical debate in order to support their opinion about the origins of the universe. The teacher should be the coordinator of the debate. The pupils, throughout the debate, should realize that the truth is somewhere in the middle of the above theories. Nobody can say for sure that the universe was created by God, or by the Big Bang. It was surely created by something (Big Bang or God or something else), because all material things have an origin. At this point, it is necessary to tell pupils about Socrates' and Heraclitus aphorisms:

"I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance"

Socrates

"Everything is in a state of flux"

Heraclitus

The first aphorism, "I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance", means that it is impossible for human beings to have knowledge about everything. The human knowledge has limits.

The second aphorism, "Everything is in a state of flux", means that everything changes, nothing is stable. Human knowledge is updated all the time.

Based on those two aphorisms, pupils should realize that it is impossible for human beings to have knowledge about everything. Of course, this does not mean that they should not investigate knowledge and facts.

LESSON PLAN 15:
LIFE AFTER DEATH

Introduction

Each pupil is requested to think and write on a paper his/her thoughts about "life after death". They are advised to write down their own opinion and not any religion's opinion. After they are finish, each pupil reads to the rest of the classroom his/her ideas.

Part II: Informational – Knowledge – Research aim- Historical background

The teacher puts on the board some photos of Egyptian mummies and pupils are requested to do comments on them. They are expected to say that ancient people "wrap up" the dead people in this way because they wanted to preserve them in a good condition. Then, the teacher asks them to think within their groups the following questions: "Why did they want to preserve the dead bodies?" and "Why don't we mummify the dead people in nowadays?". After a short discussion within the classroom, teacher helps pupils realize, if they haven't realized it already, that ancient people believed that dead people needed their bodies even after death. For this reason, their bodies had to be preserved. On the contrary, nowadays, the most religions support the idea that after the biological death, the human soul plays the important role, not the body.

Part II: Informational – Knowledge – Research aim –
How the different religions approach life after death?

Pupils are divided into eight small groups. Each group has to do a research about 'how the different religions approach life after death?'. For this reason, they can do a research on the Internet. They have to do a research about the following religions – value systems:

1. Buddhism
2. Christianity
3. Hinduism
4. Islam
5. Judaism
6. Sikhism
7. Agnosticism
8. Atheism

When pupils finish their research, they are requested to present their findings to the rest of the classroom. In this way, all pupils are informed about how the different religions approach life after death. During the eight presentations, all pupils are requested to take notes.

Part III: Comparative aim – Development of pupils' critical thinking

Pupils are requested again to work within their groups. They have to use the notes that they took during the presentations and find some similarities and differences between the different religions and value systems.

LESSON PLAN 16:

GOOD AND EVIL

Introduction

The teacher writes on the board two words: "Good" and "Evil". Each group is requested to do a brainstorming about these two words. What does it come to their mind when they hear those two words? When they finish the brainstorming, each group announces its thoughts to the rest of the classroom. Among other ideas, it is expected from children to mention that "good" comes from God and "evil" from Devil. At this point, the teacher explains to the pupils that "good" does not necessarily comes from God and "evil" from Devil. The idea that "good" comes from God and "evil" comes from Devil belongs to Christianity.

Part I: Informational – Knowledge aim – Terminologies for "Good" and "Evil".

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and write their own terminologies of "good" and "evil". They should write about 100 words. After they finish, each group announces to the rest of the classroom their own terminologies.

Part II: Informational – Knowledge – Research aim –

Actions of "Good" and "Evil".

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and think some good human acts and some evil acts. Each group has to write about five good human acts and five evil acts. After they finish, each group announces their thoughts.

Part III: Informational – Knowledge – Research aim –

How the different world religions and value systems approach the idea of "Good" and "Evil"?

Each group has to do a research about 'how the different religions and value systems approach the idea of "Good" and "Evil"?'. For this reason, they can do a research on the Internet. They have to do a research about the following religions – value systems:

1. Buddhism
2. Christianity
3. Hinduism
4. Islam

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5. Judaism

6. Sikhism

7. Agnosticism

8. Atheism

Pupils should focus on the following key points during their research:

– What is consider good by each religion?

– What is consider evil by each religion?

– How each religion rewards good acts?

– How each religion punishes evil acts?

When pupils finish their research, they are requested to present their findings to the rest of the classroom. In this way, all pupils are informed about how the different religions approach good and evil.

Part IV: Informational – Knowledge – Development of pupils' critical thinking

What is good and what is evil for society, ecology and human personality?

Pupils are divided into three groups. The pupils of the first group are requested to think and write down their ideas about "What is good and what is evil for society". The pupils of the second group are requested to think and write down their ideas about "What is good and what is evil for ecology". Lastly, the pupils of the third group are requested to think and write down their ideas about "What is good and what is evil for human personality". After they finish, each group presents its ideas to the rest of the classroom. In this way, pupils realize that good and evil are not necessarily related to religions. They are mainly related to humans' ability to distinguish between right and wrong actions.

LESSON PLAN 17:
PEACE AND WAR

Introduction

A picture of Pablo Picasso's famous "Guernica" is placed on the board and pupils are asked to express their feelings about it. It is expected from pupils to say that "Guernica" brings them out feelings of sadness, melancholy, grief and sorrow. At this point, the teacher tells them that "Guernica" is a famous painting by Pablo Picasso. Picasso was inspired by civil war in Spain in order to do that painting.

Part I: Informational – Knowledge aim – Feelings for war

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and write down their feelings about war. They should also write down what might cause a war and what are its consequences? When they finish, they announce their thoughts to the rest of the classroom.

Part II: Informational – Knowledge aim – Feelings for peace

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and write down their feelings about peace. They should also prepare a catalogue of actions that can make our world more peaceful. They when they finish, they announce their thoughts to the rest of the classroom.

Part III: Informational – Knowledge – Research aim – Peace heroes and leaders

Each pupil is requested to do a research on the Internet in order to find information about one hero that he/she was sacrificed for peace or about a peace leader.

Part IV: Development of pupils' artistic skills – Part I

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and write down one small poem about peace and one about war.

Part VI: Development of pupils' artistic skills – Part II

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and do a poster about peace and war. They should separate (with a line) the poster into two parts. On the one part they should draw something about peace and the on the other something about war.

LESSON PLAN 18:
POVERTY AND WEALTH

Introduction

A picture of some children from Africa that suffer from famine is placed on the board. Pupils are requested to do some comments about this picture. It is expected to say that those children are starving to death every day because they are very poor. Taking this opportunity, pupils are asked to work within their groups and write down their own terminology of "poverty". When they finish, each group announces its own terminology.

Part I: Emotional development – Feelings for poor children

Pupils are asked to work within their groups and write down their feelings about the children of the picture. "How do you feel about those children?". When they finish, they announce their feelings to the rest of the classroom.

Part II: Informational – Knowledge aim – Research aim – Computer skills- POVERTY:

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and do a research on the Internet in order to find information about poor nations around the world. Their research should be focused on the following key points:

– Causes of poverty: environmental, economic, political, geographical and social factors.

– Effects of poverty: starvation, health problems (infectious diseases), educational problems, child labor.

– How can we help poor nations: help by non-governmental organizations, help by wealthy nations, scientific advisors, educational support and access to water, electricity and sanitation.

After pupils finish their research, they do a presentation on power-point.

Part III: Informational – Knowledge aim – Research aim – Computer skills WEALTH:

Pupils are asked to work within their groups and do a research on the Internet about the five wealthiest nations all over the world. Pupils are also asked to write down their own terminology of "wealth". When they finish, each group announces its own terminology and information about the five wealthiest nations all over the world.

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Part IV: Development of pupils' critical thinking

During this activity, pupils are requested to compare poverty and wealth and think how wealthy nations can help poor nations.

Part V: Development of pupils' attitudes – Empathetic attitude

Pupils are encouraged to raise some money and goods for the poor children of Africa. For this reason, they have to prepare an announcement in order to inform all the pupils of the school. Also, they can give this announcement to some of their friends, relatives and neighbors. They can collect money, books, clothes, blankets, toys, food (biscuits, food in tins). They can collect money and goods for a month and when they finish; they should call the "Red Cross" to come and collect and send the money and goods to Africa.

Part VI: Development of pupils' artistic skills

Pupils are requested to do a poster about poverty. They should draw some scenes with poor children starving.

<div align="center">

LESSON PLAN 19:

XENOPHOBIA AND RACISM

</div>

Introduction

The word "xenophobia" is written on the board. The teacher asks from pupils to think what is that word means and from which two words comes from. It is expected to say that the word "xenophobia" ("ξενοφοβία") comes from the Greek words "ξένος" (xenos), which means "foreigner" and "φόβος" (phovos), which means "fear". Thus, "xenophobia" is when somebody fears of the foreigners. After that, pupils are asked to explain the word "racism". Pupils will realize that the meaning of "xenophobia" and "racism" is similar.

Part I: Development of pupils' critical thinking

Xenophobic actions and attitudes

Pupils are asked to think within their groups some xenophobic actions and attitudes in our everyday life.

Part II: Development of pupils' critical thinking

Reasons of xenophobia

Pupils are asked to think within their groups the following question: "Why some people afraid of foreigners?".

Part III: Informational – Knowledge aim – Research aim

Examples of xenophobia and racism in all over the world

The teacher explains to pupils that xenophobia and racism can cause many problems, even wars and killings. Some examples are:

1. The ethnic tensions between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots.
2. Adolf Hitler's and Nazi's attitude towards Jews.
3. Apartheid in South Africa.
4. The terroristic attack of Al Qaeda's towards the modern capitalistic Christian world.
5. Conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis.
6. The racist attitude of the European colonists towards the aborigines of America (Indians).

Pupils are divided into six groups and they are requested to do a research on the Internet in order to find information about one of the above xenophobic examples. Each group is responsible for a different topic.

Part IV: Development of pupils' critical thinking – Impact on pupils attitudes

Pupils are requested to work within their groups and write down a list of non-xenophobic actions and attitudes that promote the respect towards foreigners.

LESSON PLAN 20:

UNIVERSAL HUMAN VALUES:

RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS RESPECT, JUSTICE, HONESTY,

TRUTH, TRUST, COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING.

Introduction

Pupils are asked to think what the main universal human values are. Pupils tell their thoughts and the teacher notes them on the board. It is expected to note the following universal human values:

1. Racial respect

2. Religious respect

3. Justice

4. Honesty

5. Truth

6. Trust

7. Cooperation

8. Understanding

Part I: Development of pupils' critical thinking –

Promoting universal human values

Pupils are divided into eight groups. Each group will be responsible for one of the above human value. The first group has to make a list of ten actions that promote racial respect. The second group has to make a list of ten actions that promote religious respect. The third group about justice, the fourth about honesty, the fifth about truth, the sixth about trust, the seventh about cooperation and the eighth about promoting understanding among people. When they finish their lists, each group announces its thoughts.

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Appendix B

Religious Education Textbooks in Cyprus (Previous Syllabus)
The teaching topics and the textbooks of religious education – Syllabus 1996-2009

There are six[34] textbooks for the teaching of religious education in the primary schools. The textbook for year one is called *'With the Grace of Christ: Orthodox Christian Education'*. Some of the teaching topics included in this textbook are (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1999, pp.6f): 'The meaning of the cross', 'I am doing my cross', 'Jesus Christ', 'The birth of Jesus Christ', 'The shepherds go to Jesus', 'Balthazar, Gaspar and Melchior', 'The presents of Jesus Christ', 'Epiphany', 'The last supper', 'Jesus is arrested', 'Jesus' trial', 'The passions of Christ', 'The crucifixion of Christ', 'The resurrection of Christ', 'The Orthodox Easter', 'The ascension of Christ', 'The Holy Spirit', 'The holy water', 'The church', 'I am going to the church', 'The priest', 'The role of the Christian Orthodox priest', 'The candle', 'The meaning of the prayer', 'The morning prayer', 'Prayers in the church', 'Virgin Mary', 'Our mother Virgin Mary', 'The holy sacrament of baptism', 'The power of love', 'Love makes everything beautiful', 'Constantine the Great and Saint Helen', 'Saint Helen has visited Cyprus', 'Varnavas the Apostle', 'The holy sacrament of Eucharist', 'The book', 'Three Holy and Saint teachers', 'Our church is celebrating'.

The textbook for year two is called *'With the Love of Christ: Orthodox Christian Education'*. This textbook includes (Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, 1998a, pp.5f): 'The meaning of love', 'Love in the family', 'The family of God', 'The church', 'The meaning of the Orthodox icons', 'Almighty God', 'God is everywhere', 'The children of God', 'The power of love', 'The meaning of forgiveness', 'The birth of Jesus Christ', 'Virgin Mary', 'The Orthodox Easter', 'Love for the natural environment'.

The third textbook of religious education, for year three, is *'God in our life'*. This book is divided into eight chapters. Each chapter includes different teaching topics (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006a, pp. 5f): *Chapter A: God is with us:* 'The holy water', 'Cross: The symbol of Christianity', 'God is next to us', 'Prayer is a way of communication with God'. *Chapter B: The present of life:* 'David praises God', 'Our admirable world', 'God is taking care of all his creatures', 'The birth of a child is a present for a family', 'All the children of the world are brothers and sisters'. *Chapter C: Life requires love and effort:* 'Man is a companion with God', 'The human gifts', 'God bless the creative work', 'When our life is in danger', 'Our relationships with others and with God', 'The Ark of love', 'Trust towards God'. *Chapter D: Jesus Christ can change our life:* 'Virgin Mary: The mother of Jesus Christ', 'The annunciation of Virgin Mary', 'Jesus is born', 'How should we celebrate Christmas'. *Chapter E: The joy of life:* 'Jesus is baptized in Jordan river', 'The Epiphany', 'Baptism: a joyful celebration', 'My name day', 'The festival of our parish', 'The Holy Communion', 'The three Hierarchs: A celebration for schools'. *Chapter F: The life with other people around us:* 'The life with others', 'Within the family we are taught about the meaning of life', 'True friends enrich our life', 'God loves and forgives', 'The good Samaritan', 'Saint Filothei: An example of kindness', 'Bad makes our life ugly'. *Chapter G: The Passions and the resurrection of Christ:* 'The Passions of Christ', 'Jesus on the cross', 'Holy Friday: Life against death', 'Christ has risen!', 'Easter: A day of joy'. *Chapter H: Religious celebrations after Easter:* 'My Lord and my God', 'Saint George',

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[34] Six textbooks: One for each grade-year. In Cyprus there is a six-year primary education.

'The ascension of Christ', 'Saints Cosmas and Damien: Two doctors that rejected any payment'.

The textbook for year four is called *'The course of our life'*. This book is divided into seven chapters. Each chapter includes different teaching topics (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006c, pp. 5f): *Chapter A: The start*: 'The first steps', 'Where does this course lead?', 'We walk all together', 'Guidelines for our course in life'. *Chapter B: The people who indicated and walked the route:* 'The prophets', 'John the Baptist', 'Palestine: A place where Christ has walked', 'I am the route, 'Christ is calling for his disciples', 'Christ is healing sick people', 'The meeting of Christ and Zakheos', 'Holy Gospels are a compass that guide our course in life'. *Chapter C: New path, new life:* 'The Pentecost', 'The first Christian communities of love', 'An Ethiopian traveler becomes a Christian', 'Paul: A persecutor who becomes an Apostle', 'Paul preaches in Greece', 'The martyr's route of Paul from Jerusalem to Rome', 'The route to faith and sacrifice: Saint Ignatius', 'Saint Christopher'. *Chapter D: All together, we continue:* 'Sunday in church', 'A little child in church and in parish', 'An excursion to a country church', 'Visiting a monastery'. *Chapter E: In our route we face successfully all the obstacles:* 'Looking for the lost sheep', 'The meeting of Jesus with a young rich man', 'Obstacles in our route', 'Small mistakes soon become large mistakes'. *Chapter F: The Church heads to all over the world:* 'You should be headed to all nations', 'Cyril and Methodius: Two holy missioners in the Slavic places', 'The holy missionary in the East', 'The Christian Orthodox missionary in Africa', 'We are working for human unity'. *Chapter G: Religious celebrations:* 'Andrew the Apostle', 'Jesus is living for Egypt', 'John Chrysostomos: A route full of struggle', 'The reception of Jesus in Jerusalem', 'From the Passions to the Resurrection'.

The fifth textbook is called *'Christians in the struggle of life'*. This book is divided into six chapters. Each chapter includes different teaching topics (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006e, p.4): *Chapter A: The struggle in our life:* 'The struggle in school', 'We struggle with a happy spirit', 'Christ's disciples are preparing for a struggle', 'We struggle with the power of love', 'Struggle requires insistence and patience', 'Our struggle for sharing our belongings with other people'. *Chapter B: Fighters and Martyrs:* 'Apostles continue Jesus' struggle', 'Saint Stephen: The first Christian Martyr', 'The forty Saint Martyrs', 'A young man and three martyrs children', 'Modern Martyrs'. *Chapter C: The struggle in order to change ourselves:* 'A man can change', 'The thief that became a Saint', 'Our mistakes can be fixed', 'Patriarch Saint John the Gracious'. *Chapter D: Creating a beautiful world:* 'All of us can create beautiful things', 'The building and the decoration of a church', 'Saint Sofia's church: A miracle of art', 'The beauty and the secrets of an icon', 'Explain Byzantine icons', 'Wall paintings', 'Mosaics', 'Church Miniatures', 'Hymns and Psalms', 'Romanos: A person who wrote Hymns and melodies', 'Kassiani: The only woman who wrote Byzantine hymns'. *Chapter E: Struggling for a more human world:* 'A struggle for protecting our natural environment', 'Struggle for justice', 'Many children are starving to death every day', 'Struggle for peace'. *Chapter F: Religious celebrations:* 'Saint Demetrios', 'Saint Basil', 'Fasting: Preparing for the Easter', 'Peter the Apostle'.

The textbook for the sixth year of primary school is called *'Searching for the truth in our life'*. This book is divided into seven chapters. Each chapter includes different teaching topics (Ministry of National Education and Religions. Pedagogical Institute, 2006g, p.126): *Chapter A: The search and the revelation of truth:* 'People are always searching for the truth', 'Approaching the truth: A torturous but an exciting route', 'Christ has said: I am the truth', 'Meeting with the truth'. *Chapter B: The truth is written down:* 'Gospels: The book of truth', 'Isaiah: the prophet that had spoken about truth', 'Psalms: Poems about the true life', 'The book of truth in the worship of God'. *Chapter C: Jesus Christ has taught the truth:* 'Truth is precious', 'Both of them are praying to God, but…',

'We should forgive other people', 'We should be very careful when we speak to other people', 'We always say the truth', 'We build our life on strong foundations'. *Chapter D: Being awake for the truth:* 'The Church is like an Ark that saves the truth', 'Religious schisms damage the unity of all Christians', 'Heresies damage the truth', 'The Holy Synods of the Church are saving the Christian truth', 'The truth about the icons', 'The Holy Testament'. *Chapter E: Living with the truth:* 'Within the church we live like brothers and sisters', 'The truth is the light', 'We express the truth with worship hymns', 'We regret, forgive and we become friends again', 'The Holy Oil: For the health of the body and soul', 'Orthodoxy in Greece', 'The Orthodox Tradition', 'Meeting Orthodox people that live abroad'. *Chapter F: Heterodox and other believers:* 'Meeting Roman catholic Christians', 'Meeting Protestant Christians', 'The worship of Jews in the Synagogue on Saturdays', 'The prayer of Muslims in the mosque on Fridays'. *Chapter F: Religious celebrations:* 'Saint Gregory the Theologian', 'The Holy Mountain', 'An event from the life of Saint Cosmas the Aitolos'.

Appendix C
Religious Education Textbooks in Cyprus (Present Syllabus)

Year 1

'I am happy that I am living', 'The joy of life', 'Myself', 'My parents', 'My brothers and sisters', 'My grandparents and grandmothers', 'My cousins', 'My neighbors', 'I love the animals', 'I love the plants', 'I am becoming friend with everybody', 'My teachers love me and they teach me', 'My classmates love me and play with me', 'I become friend with everybody despite their gender, if boy or girl', 'I become friend with everybody despite where they come from, despite their culture and civilization', 'I become friend with everybody despite their religion and skin color', 'Jesus is the best friend of all children', 'My big family: The Church', 'Our Father: God', 'A good father: The priest', 'Love in our life (Part I): The baptism', 'Love in our life (Part II): The marriage', 'Love in our life (Part III): Our name day', 'Love in our life (Part IV): The sanctification', 'Saints are taking care of me', 'I pray for all people', 'I realize my mistakes and I change myself', 'I forgive others and we become friends', 'I share my things with everybody', 'I cooperate with everybody', 'Saint Demetrios', 'Apostle Andreas', 'Saint Spyridonas', 'Christmas (Part I): The birth of Jesus Christ', 'Christmas (Part II): In front of the Holy Baby', 'Christmas (Part III): Our gifts to newborn Jesus', 'Epiphany', 'The three wised-saint teachers: The three hierarchs', 'Virgin Mary: The Annunciation of Virgin Mary', 'The holy week', 'The passions of the Christ', 'The resurrection of Jesus', 'Saint Constantine and Saint Helen', 'Apostle Varnavas', 'An icon: Virgin Mary holding the Holy Child'.

Year 2

'We love and they love us: The family', 'A wonderful present: The birth of a child', 'In the arms of God: The baptism', 'We learn how to share (Part I): Our relationships within our family', 'We learn how to share (Part I): Our relationships within our family', 'A big family: The Church', 'Our father: God', 'Our brother: Jesus', 'Our mother: Virgin Mary', 'Two Saints-protectors of children: Saint Stylianos and Saint Marina', 'Sharing the love: The Holy Liturgy', 'Heart full of love: The parable of the Good Samaritan', 'The power of love: The old monk and the bread', 'Love and Offer', 'We forgive and they forgive us', 'Pray and Donation', 'Friend with everyone (Part I): Beyond the biological differences', 'Friend with everyone (Part II): Beyond the religious differences', 'Friend with everyone (Part III): Beyond the cultural differences', 'Friend with everyone (Part IV): Beyond the gender differences', 'Friend with everyone (Part V): Beyond the racial differences', 'A beautiful world (Part I): The beautiful world of God', 'A beautiful world (Part II): Earth is our big house', 'A beautiful world (Part III): We taking care of our big house', 'A beautiful world (Part IV): We taking care of all the creatures of God', 'Apostle Andreas', 'Saint Spyridonas', 'Christmas (Part I): The birth of Jesus', 'Christmas (Part II): In front of the Holy Newborn Child', 'Christmas (Part III): Our presents for Jesus', 'Epiphany', 'Saint Neophytos', 'The three wised-saint teachers: The three hierarchs', 'Virgin Mary: The annunciation of Virgin Mary', 'The Holy Week', 'The passions of the Christ', 'The resurrection of the Christ', 'Apostle Varnavas', 'An icon: Jesus and the children'.

Year 3

'The birth of a child is a present for the whole family: Joachim and Anna have Virgin Mary', 'The baptism of Jesus', 'The holy sacrament of the "Unction"', 'The relationships between brothers: Joseph and his brothers', 'A big family: The Church', 'The three wised-saint teachers: The three hierarchs', 'Our classmates: Jesus' companions', 'We cooperate with everyone', 'Inviting everybody in our home: Abraham's Hospitality', 'Unique and

Loved', 'We respect others' differences', 'Children with special educational needs', 'My neighbors (Part I): The Christian Parish', 'My neighbors (Part II): Different and Loved', 'My neighbors (Part III): Turkish-Cypriot and Latins', 'My neighbors (Part IV): Maronites and Armenians', 'My neighbors (Part V): A foreigner moves in my neighborhood', 'Love towards everyone: The Holy Liturgy', 'Our mother: Virgin Mary', 'Our brother: Jesus', 'Our brothers: The Saints', 'The sanctification of life: The sanctification in our home', 'The joy in our parish: Celebrating the name day of a Saint: A religious festival in the parish', 'The joy of life: Our name day', 'A journey of love: The marriage', 'A temporary separation: A funeral…', 'I become brother and sister with all the children of the world', 'Children that they became martyrs for Jesus', 'A universal society: The Church', 'An icon: The icon of Christmas', 'Christmas (Part I)', 'Christmas (Part II)', 'Easter (Part I)', 'Easter (Part II)'.

Year 4
'A happy society: The Church', 'I meet my own self: The holy sacrament of unction', 'I change my self like Zacchaeus did', 'Mistakes can be fixed: The repentance', 'God always is helping us: The parable of the Merciful Father', 'Evil makes our life ugly: The Fall…', 'Stopping the evil in life (Part I): the Prophets', 'Stopping the evil in life (Part II): Saint John', 'Stopping the evil in life (Part III): Virgin Mary', 'The God who became a human being: Jesus Christ', 'Jesus changes life: The miracle at Cana of Galilee', 'Jesus cures: The cure of the man who was possessed by daemons', 'Jesus makes miracles', 'The parable of the lost sheep', 'All of us can offer: The parable of the Good Samaritan', 'All people are brothers and sisters: The Pentecost', 'Society of life: The love of the first Christians', 'For a universal community (Part I): Apostle Varnavas in Cyprus', 'For a universal community (Part II): Apostle Paul in the world', 'For a universal community (Part III): The Saints Methodius and Cyril', 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from famine', 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from social rejection', 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from wars', 'Our brothers and sisters that suffer from the environmental pollution', 'An icon: Saint George is killing the evil dragon', 'Christmas (Part I)', 'Christmas (Part II)', 'Easter (Part I)', 'Easter (Part II)'.

Year 5
'Living with others: The Orthodox Church', 'Guidelines for authentic life: The Ten Commandments', 'Authentic life (Part I): The Gospels', 'Authentic life (Part II): The Gospels', 'Sharing our life with other people: The Holy Liturgy', 'Presenting an authentic example of life: The life in a Monastery', 'Difficulties in life (Part I): Selfishness', 'Difficulties in life (Part II): Hating our fellow man', 'Difficulties in life (Part III): An illness', 'Trust to God: The Ark of Noah', 'Sharing our joy and sorrow: The Christian parish', 'Our big house: The Church', 'A big family: The Holy Liturgy', 'Beauty in life (Part I): God's architecture', 'Beauty in life (Part II): The icon', 'Beauty in life (Part III): The Hymnology', 'Beauty in life (Part IV): The Saints', 'A harmonic world is the God's world', 'Taking care of the animals and other creatures', 'Taking care of the world', 'Environmental pollution', 'Technology in our life', 'The creative work', 'Earth: The house for all people', 'Authentic life (Part I): The freedom', 'Authentic life (Part II): The peace', 'Authentic life (Part III): The justice', 'Authentic life (Part IV): Equality between men and women', 'Authentic life (Part V): A society of both living and dead people', 'Christmas (Part I)', 'Christmas (Part II)', 'Easter (Part I)', 'Easter (Part II)'.

Year 6
'A big family: The Church', 'All of us are different, all of us are united (Part I): The Holy Liturgy', 'All of us are different, all of us are united (Part II): Men and women', 'All of us are different, all of us are united (Part III): yellow, black and white people', 'The truth

in life: Jesus, Jesus is changing the life: The cure of the man who was possessed by daemons', 'I fell but then I stand up again: The parable of the Merciful Father', 'I offer to the people that they are in need', 'I understand myself better when I communicate with God: The Pray, Fasting', 'The life in a big family: The Church', 'Selfishness is dividing people (Part I): Heresies', 'Selfishness is dividing people (Part II): The Schism of Christian Church', 'The truth: The Symbol of the Christian Orthodox belief', 'Difficulties in life (Part I): Bad cultural habits', 'Difficulties in life (Part II): The famine', 'Difficulties in life (Part III): The social isolation', 'Difficulties in life (Part IV): The war', 'Difficulties in life (Part V): Environmental problems', 'The Holy Eucharist', 'An icon: The icon of Pentecost', 'The Church in nowadays', 'The Church within the contemporary world', 'The Church of Cyprus within the contemporary world', 'The Roman-Catholics', 'The Protestants', 'The Jewish', 'The Muslims', 'Christmas (Part I)', 'Christmas (Part II)', 'Easter (Part I)', 'Easter (Part II)'.

Appendix D

Research Questionnaires

Introductory Questionnaire

*Personal number: …………….….…....……..   Class: …………….….…....…….
Country of origin: …………….….…....…….   Religion: …………….….…....….…

*Your answers will be treated in confidence. That's why, you are asked to write your personal number and not your name. Thanks for participating in this educational research!

❖ Religious Education is: ……………………………………........................

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

❖ When I hear the words Religious Education, I think some words: ………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

❖ In general, what I have taught during Religious Education lessons all these school

years: …………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………….………

………………………………………………………………………………………..

❖ What I expect to be taught this year:

………………………………………….………………………………………………

………………………………….......……………………………………………………

……………………………………………….......………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Diagnostic Questionnaire

*Personal number: …………….…....…….   Class: …………….…....…….
Country of origin: …………….…....…….   Religion: …………….…....…

*Your answers will be treated in confidence. That's why, you are asked to write your personal number and not your name. Thanks for participating in this educational research!

In your personal opinion, how important are the following aims for religious education? Please tick ☑ how important are the following aims:

Religious Education	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important
(a)To teach pupils about Christianity.				
(b)To teach pupils how to become good Christians.				
(c)To teach pupils about the various religions and faith systems.				
(d)To teach pupils how to understand, respect, appreciate and help every individual despite his/her cultural, religious, social or economic background.				
(e)To teach pupils how to respect and protect the natural environment.				

Please choose one of the following five options. Put it in a circle:

1) Which are the official ethnic groups – religious communities of Cyprus?
(a) Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Latins and Armenians.
(b) Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots and English.
(c) Greek-Cypriots, English, Maronites and Italians.
(d) Greek-Cypriots, Spanish, Italians and English.
(e) Greek, Turkish and English.

2) What is your personal opinion about Greek-Cypriots?
(a) They are mostly good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people.
(b) They are mostly good people.
(c) I have no feelings for them.
(d) They are mostly bad people.
(e) They are mostly bad, trustless, unhelpful and lazy people.

3) What is your personal opinion about Turkish-Cypriots?
(a) They are mostly good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people.
(b) They are mostly good people.
(c) I have no feelings for them.
(d) They are mostly bad people.

(e) They are mostly bad, trustless, unhelpful and lazy people.

4) What is your personal opinion about Armenians that live in Cyprus?
(a) They are mostly good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people.
(b) They are mostly good people.
(c) I have no feelings for them.
(d) They are mostly bad people.
(e) They are mostly bad, trustless, unhelpful and lazy people.

5) What is your personal opinion about Maronites that live in Cyprus?
(a) They are mostly good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people.
(b) They are mostly good people.
(c) I have no feelings for them.
(d) They are mostly bad people.
(e) They are mostly bad, trustless, unhelpful and lazy people.

6) What is your personal opinion about Latins that live in Cyprus?
(a) They are mostly good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people.
(b) They are mostly good people.
(c) I have no feelings for them.
(d) They are mostly bad people.
(e) They are mostly bad, trustless, unhelpful and lazy people.

7) What is your personal opinion about the foreign workers (for example from Syria, Philippines, Pakistan, Russia, Georgia) that live and work in Cyprus?
(a) They are mostly good, trustful, helpful and hardworking people.
(b) They are mostly good people.
(c) I have no feelings for them.
(d) They are mostly bad people.
(e) They are mostly bad, trustless, unhelpful and lazy people.

8) Can people, that come from different countries and profess different religions, coexist and work together peacefully?
(a) Yes, people that come from different countries and profess different religion can easily coexist and work together peacefully.
(b) There are few obstacles for people that come from different countries and profess different religions to coexist and work together peacefully.
(c) There are many obstacles for people that come from different countries and profess different religions to coexist and work together peacefully.
(d) I have no opinion about this.
(e) No, it is impossible for people that come from different countries and profess different religions to coexist and work together peacefully.

9) How safe do you feel walking through your own neighbourhood?
(a) Completely safe.
(b) Safe.
(c) Not very safe.
(d) Not safe.
(e) Not safe at all.

10) How safe do you feel walking through areas where another community is in the majority?
(a) Completely safe.
(b) Safe
(c) Not very safe
(d) Not safe.
(e) Not safe at all.

11) How often do you have contact with people from a different religious background to you?
(a) Frequent
(b) Sometimes
(c) Occasional
(d) Hardly ever
(e) Never

12) How many of your friends have a different religious/ethnic background to you?
(a) Many
(b) Some
(c) A Few
(d) One
(e) None

13) I would prefer to have a:
(a) Greek-Cypriot friend.
(b) Turkish-Cypriot friend.
(c) English friend.
(d) Maronite friend.
(e) Good, trustful and helpful friend. It doesn't matter where he/she comes from.

14) Had you ever visited North Cyprus? **Yes**/**No**. If 'Yes', how many times?
(a) Once
(b) Two
(c) Three
(d) Several times
(e) Often

15) How do you feel about visiting North Cyprus?
(a) Nervous
(b) Curious
(c) Cautious
(d) Confident
(e) Pleased

16) In your own opinion, the universe was created by:
(a) God
(b) A supernatural power.
(c) The "Big Bang".
(d) It is not sure whether the universe was created by God or by the Big Bang or by something else.
(e) Aliens
(f) A combination of the above. Please state: ……………………………………

Please tick (✓) the answer that suits you best:

Have you ever viewed/participated in any of the following cultural/religious activities? If 'No', would you be interested in viewing / participating in any of them?

Activity	Viewed or participated? **Yes or No**	If 'No', would you like to view / participate? **Yes or No**
Visiting a mosque		
Viewing a Catholic ceremony		
Viewing a Protestant ceremony		
Viewing a Maronite ceremony		
Viewing an Armenian ceremony		
Visiting the other side of the border (North Cyprus)		
Visiting a Turkish-Cypriot school		

Please answer the following questions. Just write your opinion.
Remember, there are no correct or wrong answers.
Just write down your own personal opinion:

1)   Please name five world religions that you know:
(a)   ……………………………………..............................……….....................
(b)   ……………………………………………………………….....................
(c)   ……………………………………………..…………………………………
(d)   …………………………………………..…………………………………...
(e)   …………………………………………..…………………………………...

2)   For each one of the above religions, please write down something that you know:
(a)   ……………………………………..…………………………………….......
(b)   ……………………………………………………………………….............
(c)   ……………………………………..…………………………………….......
(d)   …………………………………..………………………………………......
(e)   ……………………………………..…………………………………….......

3)   Do you have a Turkish-Cypriot friend? If you don't, do you wish to have one? Please explain your answer.
……………………………………………………………………………….....
……………………………………………………………………………….....
……………………………………………………………………………….....
……………………………………………………………………………….....
……………………………………………………………………………….....

4) What does peace mean to you?

…………………………………………..…………………………………………….
…………………………………………..…………………………………………….
…………………………………………..…………………………………………….
…………………………………………..…………………………………………….

5) What does peaceful coexistence mean to you?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………..……………………………………………

6) Please write a catalogue of five actions that can make our world more peaceful.
(a) …………………………………………..…………………………………………
(b) …………………………………………………………………………………….
(c) …………………………………………………………………………………….
(d) …………………………………………………………………………………….
(e) …………………………………………………………………………………….

7) Are you currently involved in any kind of community or voluntary work activities? **Yes**/**No**. If 'Yes', what?

…………………………………………………………………………………………....
…………………………………………………………………………………………....
…………………………………………………………………………………………....

8) Imagine that a close person to you suffers from a serious disease and soon she/he will die. She/he is really in deep pain and no medication can help. So, she/he decides that want to use euthanasia in order to put an end to her/his pain. How do you feel about that? Do you agree with her/his wish? Discuss your opinion.

…………………………………………………………………………………………....
…………………………………………………………………………………………....
…………………………………………………………………………………………....
…………………………………………………………………………………………....
…………………………………………………………………………………………....
…………………………………………………………………………………………....

Thanks for completing this questionnaire!

Visiting Religious Places Questionnaires

<u>Visiting a Catholic Church</u>

1. Express your feelings after you have visited the Catholic Church.
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. What did you like the most within the Catholic Church?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. What are the similarities between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………….

4. What are the differences between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………….

5. Would you like to visit the Catholic Church again?
   Yes or No?

<u>Visiting an Evangelical Church</u>

1. Express your feelings after you have visited the Evangelical Church.
   ....
   ....

2. What did you like the most within the Evangelical Church?
   ....
   ....

3. What are the similarities between the Evangelical and the Orthodox Church?
   ....
   ....

4. What are the differences between the Evangelical and the Orthodox Church?
   ....
   ....

5. Would you like to visit the Evangelical Church again?
   Yes or No?

Visiting a Mosque

1. Express your feelings after you have visited the Mosque.
   …………………………………………………………………………………..
   …………………………………………………………………………………...

2. What did you like the most within the Mosque?
   …………………………………………………………………………………..
   …………………………………………………………………………………..

3. What are the similarities between the Mosque and the Orthodox Church?
   …………………………………………………………………………………..
   …………………………………………………………………………………..

   What are the differences between the Mosque and the Orthodox Church?

   …………………………………………………………………………………..
   …………………………………………………………………………………...

4. Would you like to visit the Mosque again?
   Yes or No?

Final Questionnaires

LEARNING ABOUT THE DIFFERENT
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

School: ....

Class: ....
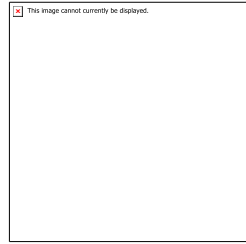
1) Write down all the religions that you are aware of:

....

....

2) Which religion is the most impressive one for you?

....

3) Do you think that all religions have something to teach us?

Yes   No

4) Do you think that is good that there are so many and different religions around the world?

Yes   No

MEETING THE DIFFERENT
RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF CYPRUS

School: ....

Class: ....

1) Which are the religious communities of Cyprus?

....

....

2) Do you think that the different religious communities of Cyprus can coexist peacefully?

Yes   No

3) Which religious community of Cyprus do you like the most, apart from the Greek-Cypriot one?

....

4) Which religious community of Cyprus do you like the less?

....

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

School: ....

Class: ....

1)   How do you think the universe was created?

……………………………………….…………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………….…………………….......

2)   Do you believe in life after death?
……………………………………………………………………………….…………
……………………………………………………………………..................

3)   When a person is seriously ill, we should be hoping to:
      Put in circle the answer that suits you the most:
      (a)God   (b)The doctors   (c)Both. God and doctors.

RELIGIOUS ISSUES

School: ....

Class: ....
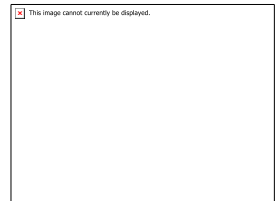
1) Write down some good actions that can make our world better:
……………………………………………………..………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Write down some bad actions that make our world worst:
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………….

SOCIAL ISSUES

School: ....
Class: ....

1) Write down some good effects of peace:
    ………………………………………………………………………………………
    ………………………………………………………………………………………

2) Write down some bad effects of the war:
    ………………………………………………………………………………………
    ………………………………………………………………………………………

3) How can we help the poor and sick children around the world?
    ………………………………………………………………………………………
    ………………………………………………………………………………………

4) How can we face racism?
    ………………………………………………………………………………………
    ………………………………………………………………………………………

MORAL ISSUES

School: ....
Class: ....

Write down the most important universal values (for example honesty, cooperation):
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

HEALTH EDUCATION
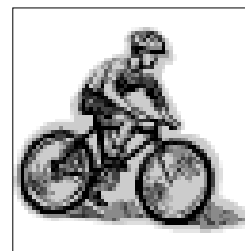
School: ....

Class: ....

1) Write down some environmental problems:

....

....

2) How can we protect our environment?

....

....

3) Write down some social problems (for example smoking) that affect people's health seriously:

....

....

4) How can we face all those social problems?

....

....

Appendix E

Interview Protocols

Pupils' interview protocol

1) Do you find Religious Education an interesting subject? Explain your answer.

   (a)Tell me something that you find interesting.

   (b)Tell me something that you don't find interesting.

2) What would you like to be taught about during RE lessons? Would you like to be taught about something extra? If yes, what?

3) Would you like to be taught about other world religions? Yes/No? Explain your answer.

Teachers' interview protocol

1) What do you see as the main teaching purposes of Religious Education in the Primary School?

2) What do you see as the main difficulties and challenges that teachers face in teaching religious education in primary schools in Cyprus at the moment?

3) What changes do you think should be made to the teaching of religious education? Do you think that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum? If so, what?

4) How can multicultural education be promoted through Religious Education?

5) Would you like to have the opportunity to teach non-Christian religions?

Educators' Interview Protocols

Turkish-Cypriot Educator

1) Why the Turkish-Cypriot community has chosen to exclude the Religious Education subject from schools?

2) Are you aware if Religious Education is taught in any other form of teaching? (for instance, the teaching of Quran in summer schools?)

3) What should be the teaching purposes of Religious Education? In your own opinion, what is the most important teaching purpose?

4) How do you think that religious education can promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds?

5) Do you think that the understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds is promoted in Turkish-Cypriot schools?

6) Do you think is it in the job of school to help pupils to understand one another's religion and culture?

7) What are the difficulties that teachers face in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious background?

8) Do you think that people, that come from different countries and profess different religions, can coexist and work together peacefully? Please explain your answer.

9) Is the idea of peaceful coexistence between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots is promoted in the Turkish-Cypriot schools?

10) How effective do you think that school teachers currently are in the teaching of religious education?

11) What do you see as the main challenges and difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education in schools in Cyprus at the moment?

12) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious education in North Cyprus?

13) What changes have to be made in the educational curriculum of North Cyprus? Do you think that some extra teaching subjects should be added in the curriculum? If you think that revisions or updating are needed, which areas would you prioritize? Do you think that Religious Education should be added in the curriculum? Please explain your answer.

14) What do you see as the main educational problems that the Turkish-Cypriot community faces at the moment?

Greek-Cypriot, Latin, Maronite and Armenian Educators

1) In primary schools where they attend children from the Latin/Maronite/Armenian community, do they follow a different Educational Curriculum and use different Religious Education textbooks? Who teaches the Religious Education subject in Latin/Maronite/Armenian schools? (question only for Latin/Maronite/Armenian educator)

2) What do you see as the main teaching purposes of Religious Education in the Primary School? In your own opinion, what is the most important teaching purpose?

3) How do you think that the way that religious education is taught might promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds?

4) To what extent do you think is it the job of school to help pupils to understand and respect one another's religion and culture?

5) Do you think that the Cypriot Educational System should face as a challenge the cultural and religious diversity in modern Cypriot society? If yes, how this can be achieved?

6) How effective do you think that primary school teachers currently are in the teaching of religious education?

7) What do you see as the main challenges and difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education in primary schools in Cyprus at the moment?

8) What are the difficulties that teachers face in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious background?

9) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious education textbooks in use in primary schools in Cyprus? If you think that revisions or updating are needed, which areas would you prioritize?

10) What changes do you think should be made to the teaching of religious education? Do you think that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum? If so, what?

11) What do you see as the main educational problems that the Latin/Maronite/Armenian community of Cyprus faces at the moment?

(question only for Latin/Maronite/Armenian educator)

Appendix F

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS TABLES

Introductory questionnaires

Table 1: Religious Education is learning about… (Town)
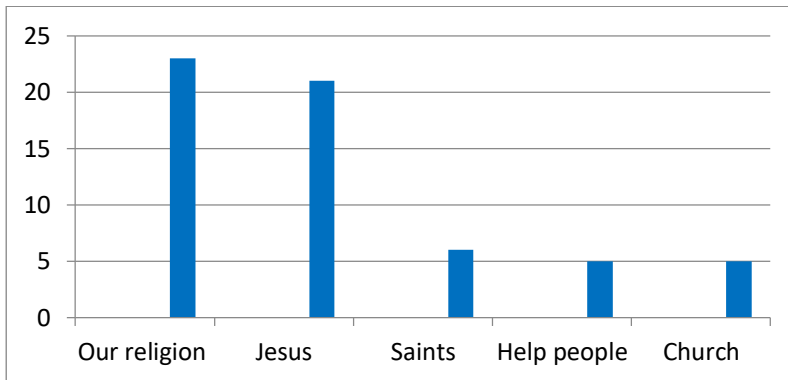
Table 2: Religious Education is learning about… (Village)
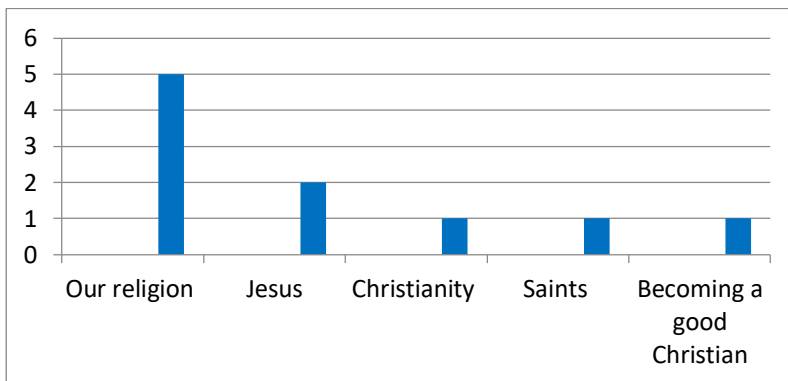
Table 3: Words related to Religious Education (Town)
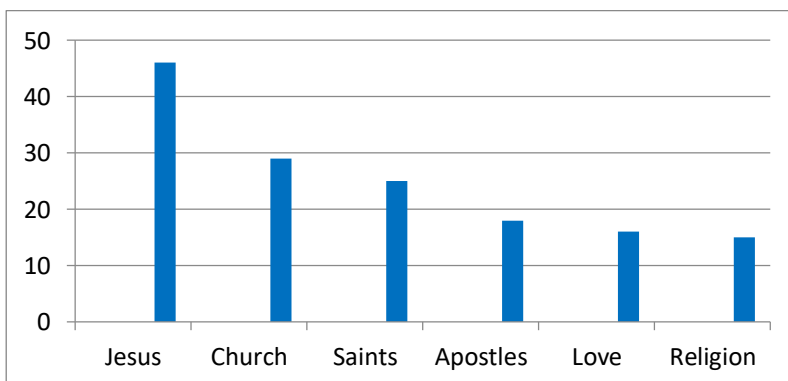
Table 4: Words related to Religious Education (Village)
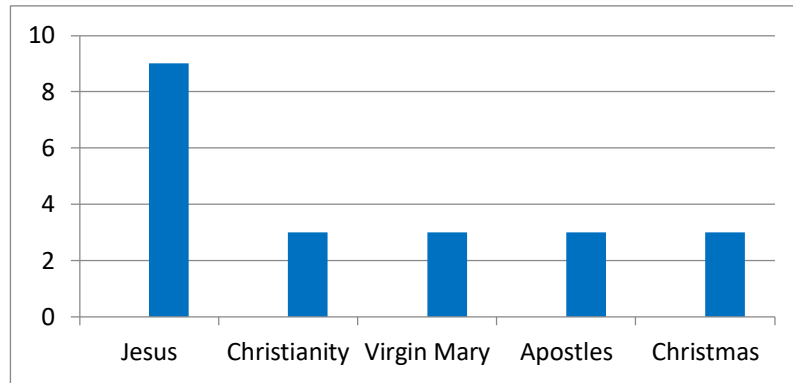
Table 5: What I have taught in RE so far (Town)
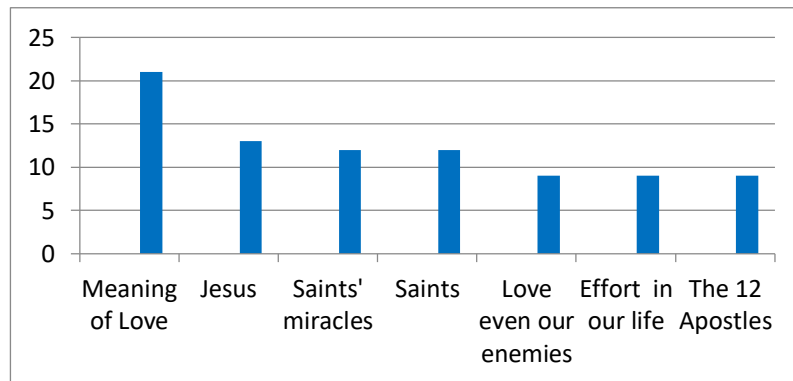
Table 6: What I have taught in RE so far (Village)
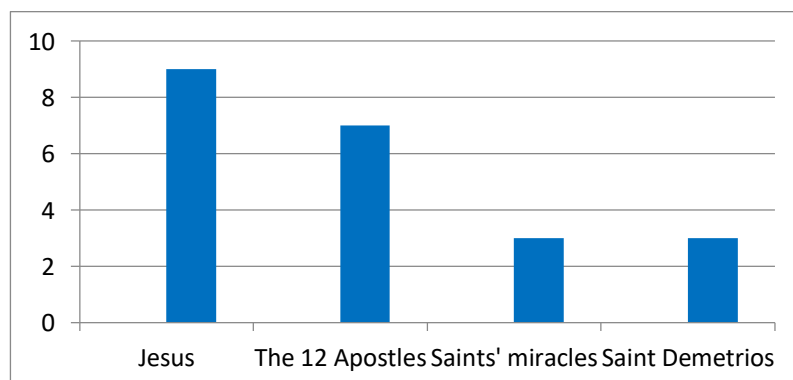
Table 7: What I expect to be taught in RE this year (Town)
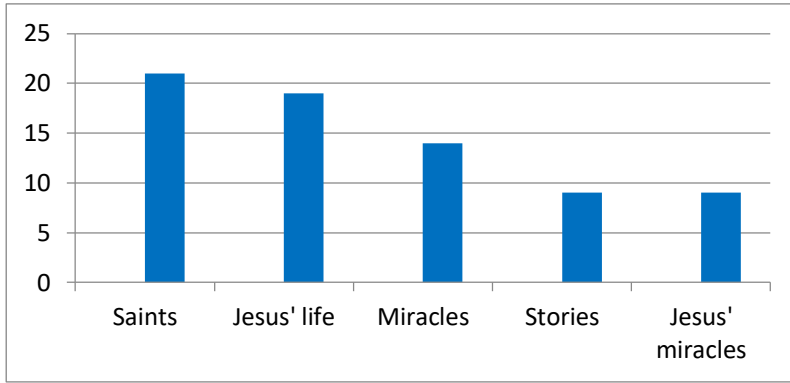
Table 8: What I expect to be taught in RE this year (Village)
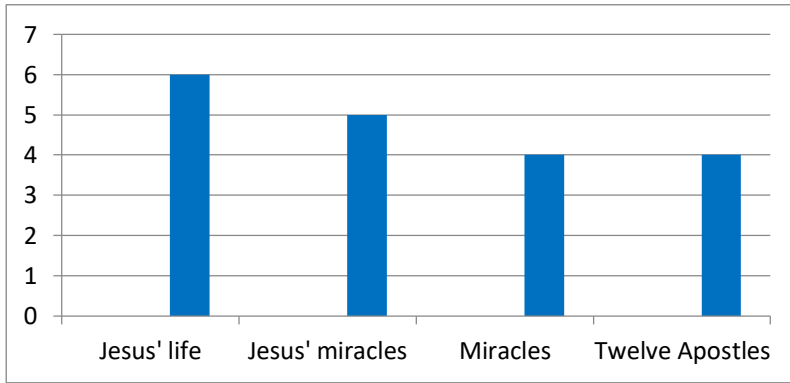
Diagnostic Questionnaires

Table 9: RE is aiming to teach pupils about Christianity (Town)
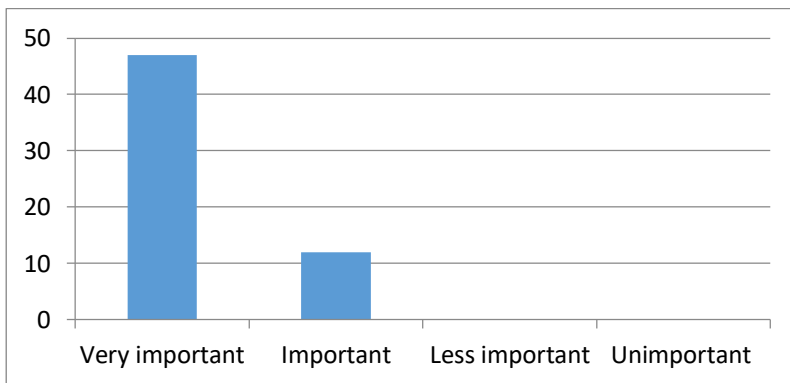
Table 10: RE is aiming to teach pupils about Christianity (Village)
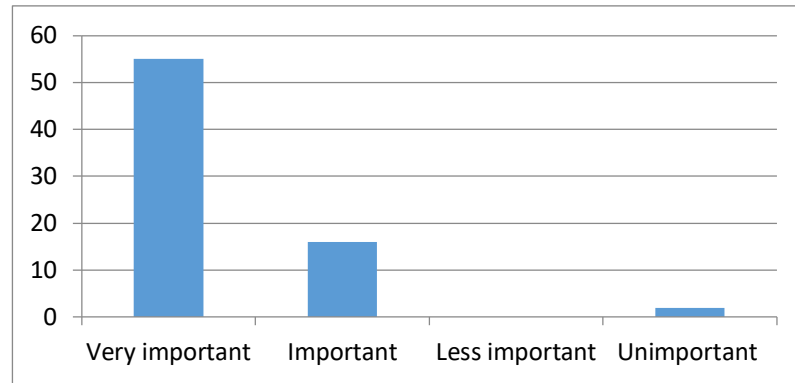
Table 11: RE is aiming to teach pupils how to become good Christians (Town)
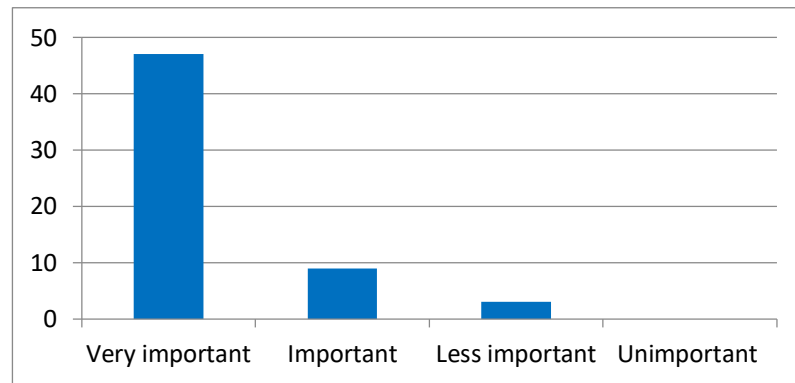
Table 12: RE is aiming to teach pupils how to become good Christians (Village)
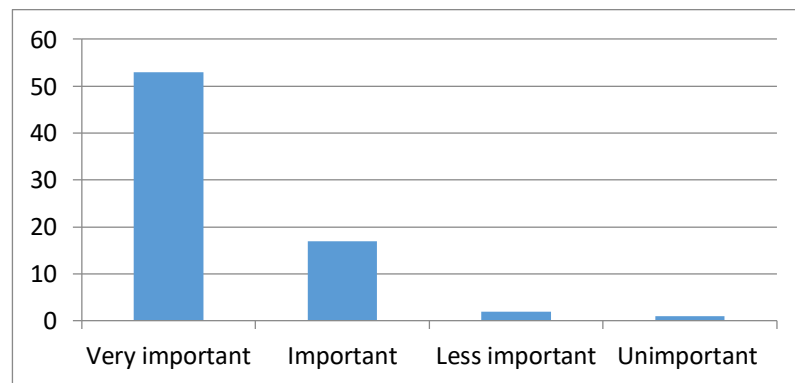
Table 13:

RE is aiming to teach pupils about the various religions and faith systems (Town)
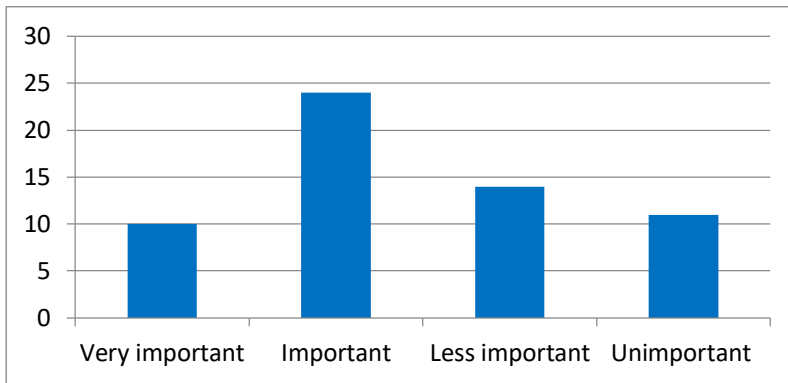
Table 14:

RE is aiming to teach pupils about the various religions and faith systems (Village)
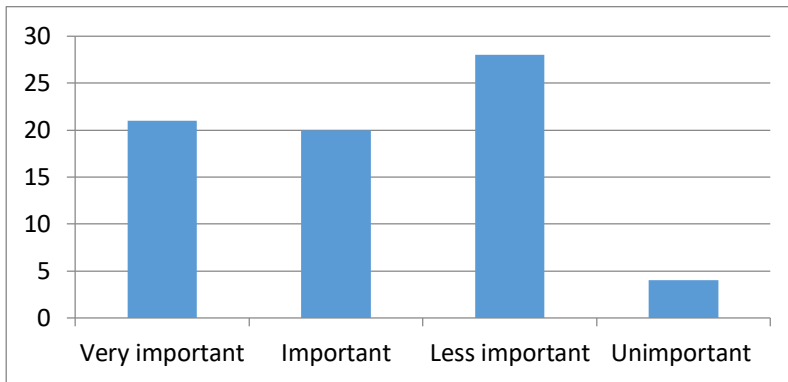
Table 15:

RE is aiming to teach pupils how to understand, respect, appreciate and help every individual despite his/her cultural, religious, social or economic background (Town)
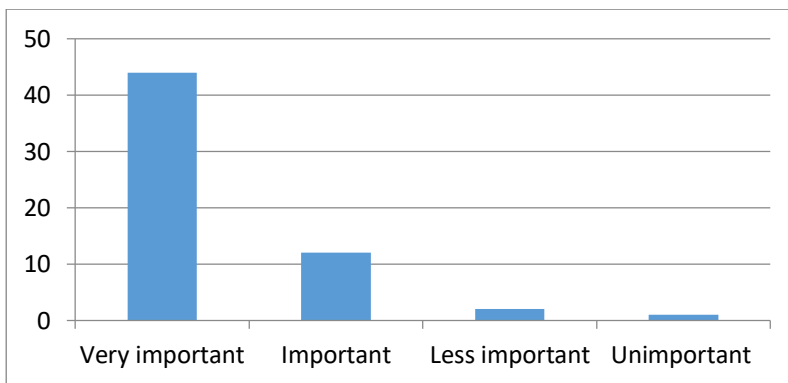
Table 16:
RE is aiming to teach pupils how to understand, respect, appreciate and help every individual despite his/her cultural, religious, social or economic background (Village)
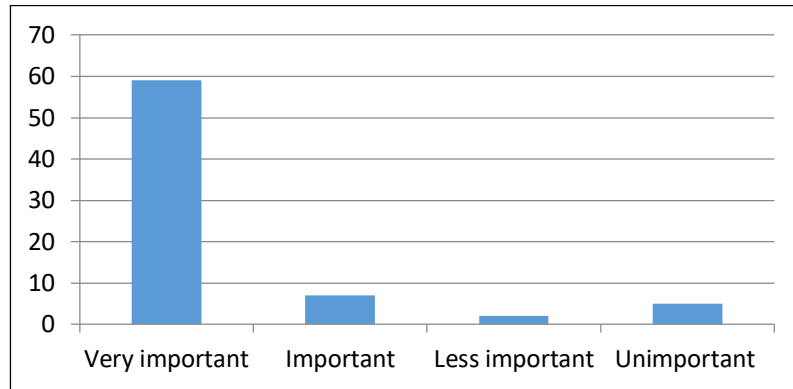
Table 17: RE is aiming to teach pupils how to respect and protect the natural environment (Town)
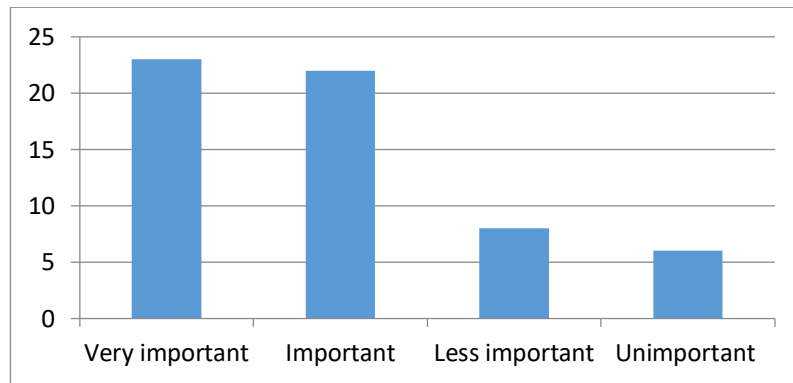
Table 18: RE is aiming to teach pupils how to respect and protect the natural environment (Village)
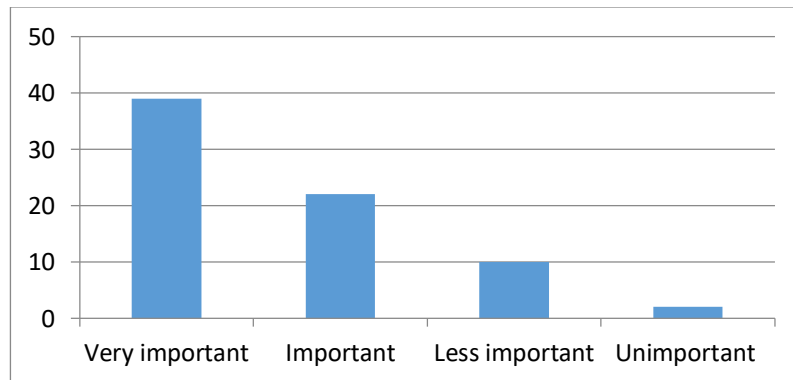
Table 19: The official ethnic groups-religious communities of Cyprus (Town)
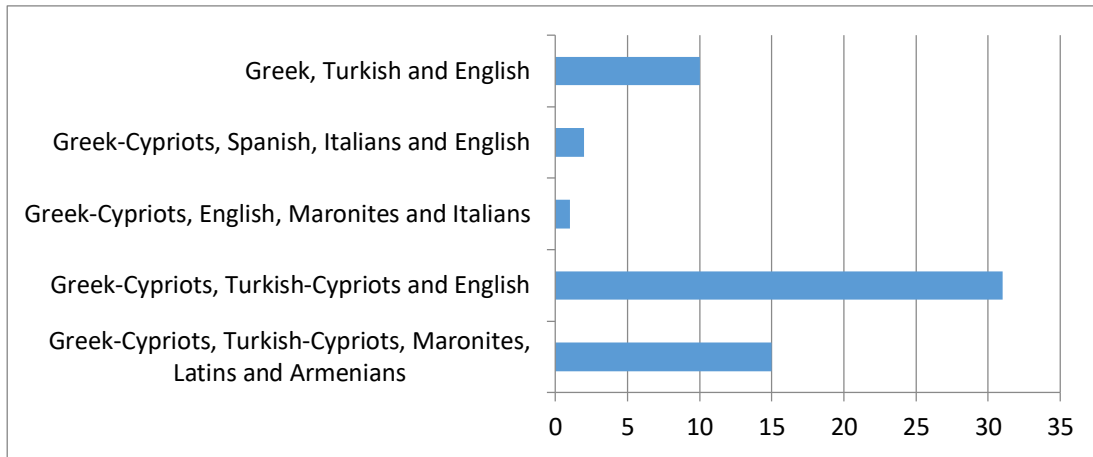
Table 20: The official ethnic groups-religious communities of Cyprus (Village)
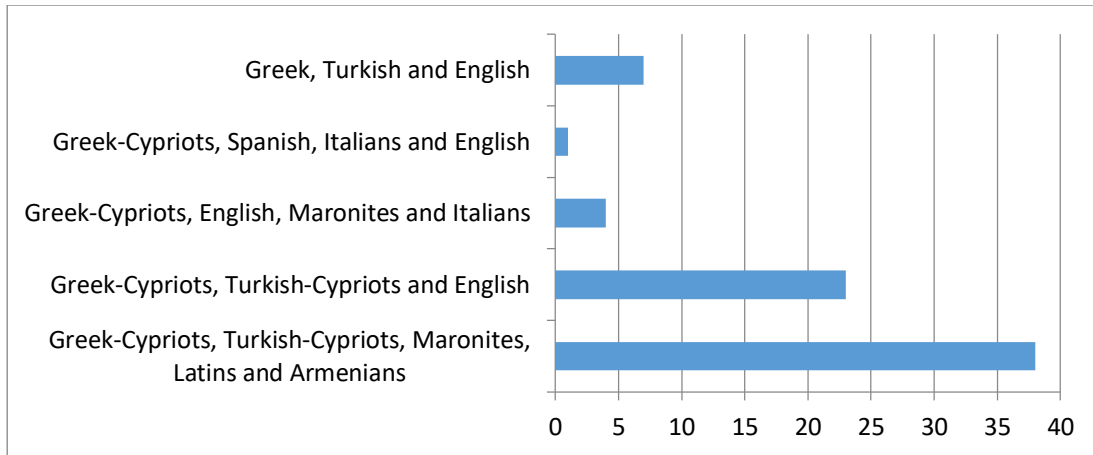
Table 21: Pupils' opinion about Greek-Cypriots (Town)

Table 21a: Pupils' opinion about Greek-Cypriots (Village)

Table 22: Pupils' opinion about Turkish-Cypriots (Town)

Table 23: Pupils' opinion about Turkish-Cypriots (Village)
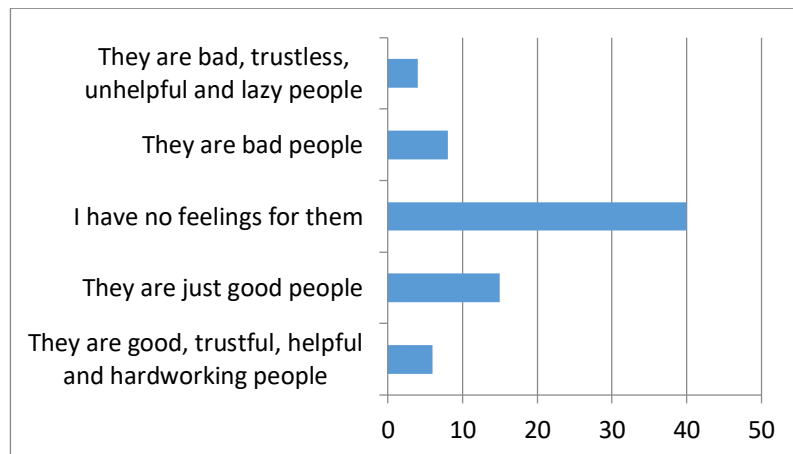
Table 24: Pupils' opinion about Armenians (Town)
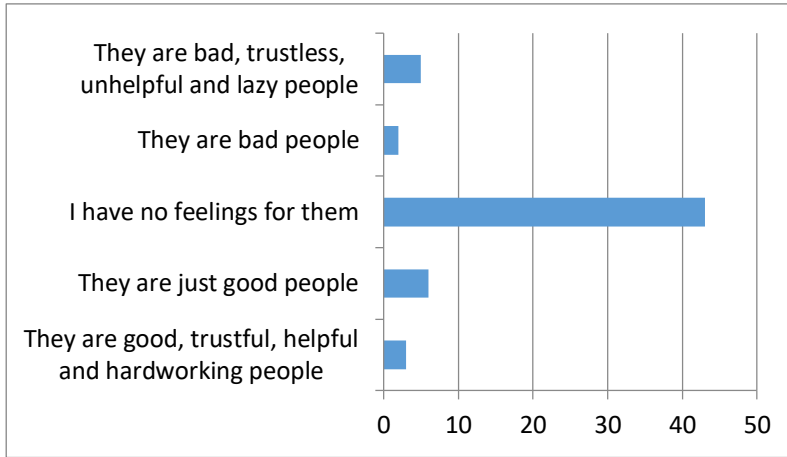
Table 25: Pupils' opinion about Armenians (Village)

Table 26: Pupils' opinion about Maronites (Town)

Table 27: Pupils' opinion about Maronites (Village)

Table 28: Pupils' opinion about Latins (Town)

Table 29: Pupils' opinion about Latins (Village)

Table 30: Pupils' opinion about the foreign workers in Cyprus (Town)
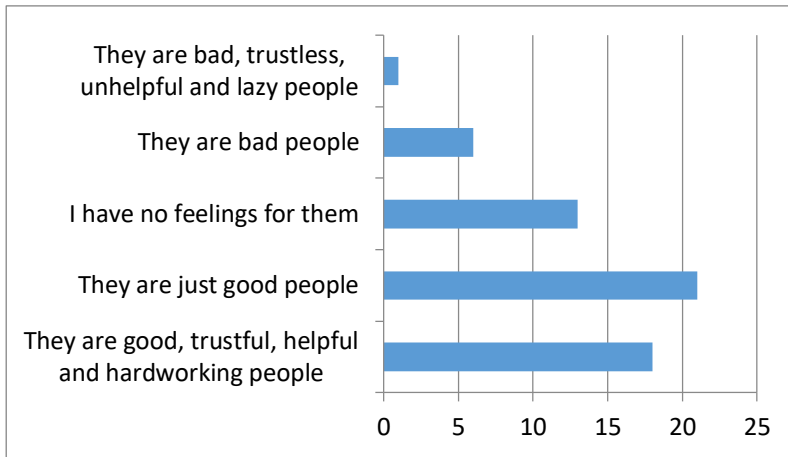
Table 31: Pupils' opinion about the foreign workers in Cyprus (Village)
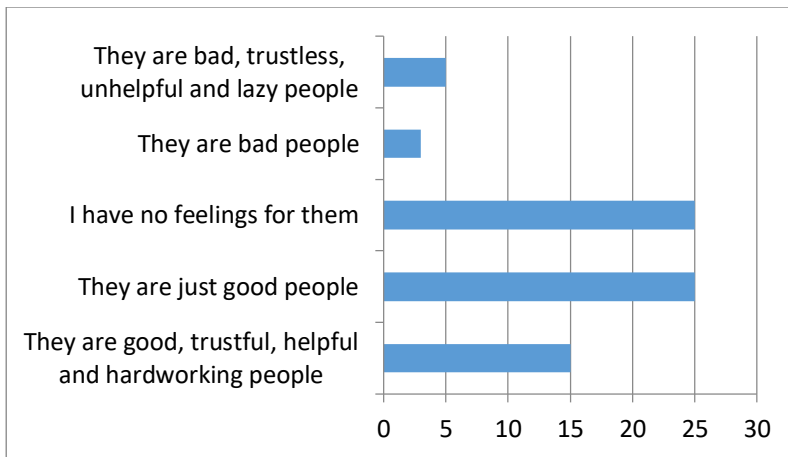
Table 32: The coexistence of people from different countries (Town)
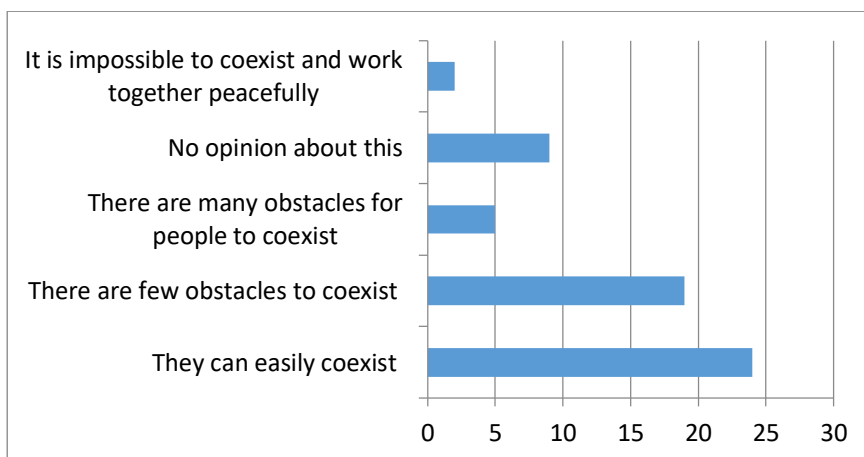
Table 33: The coexistence of people from different countries (Village)
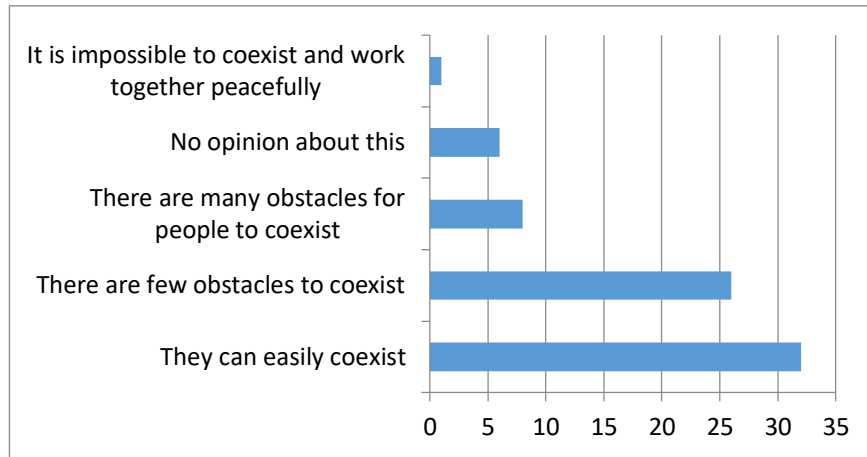
Table 34: Waking through their own neighborhood (Town)
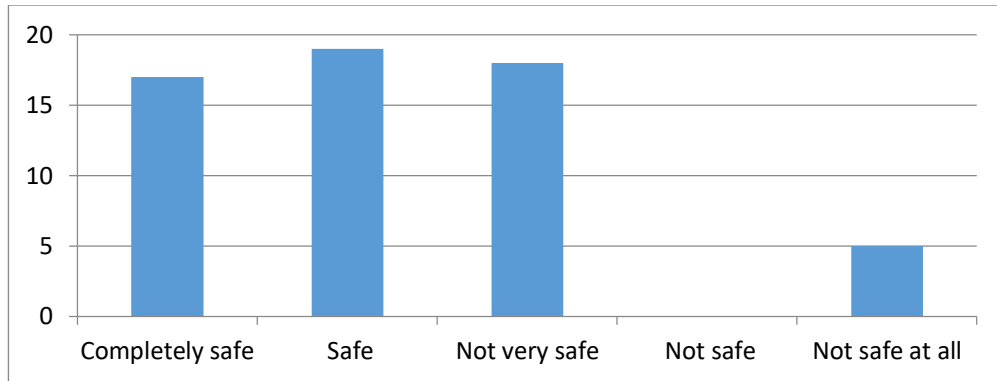
Table 35: Waking through their own neighborhood (Village)
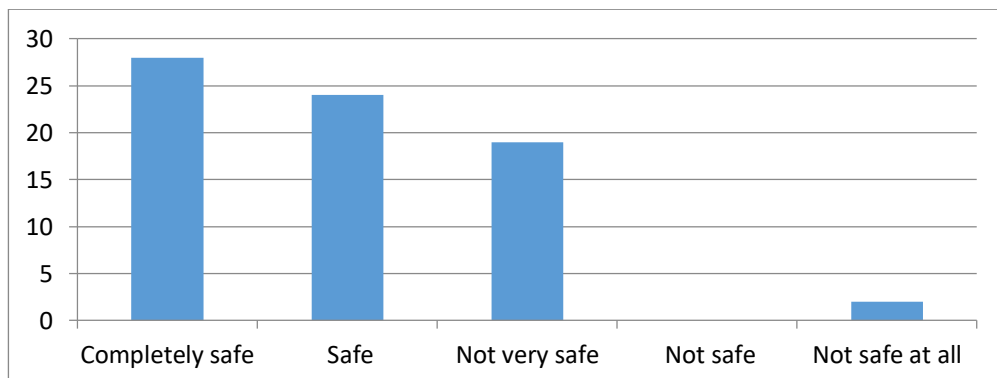
Table 36: Walking through areas where another community is in the majority (Town)
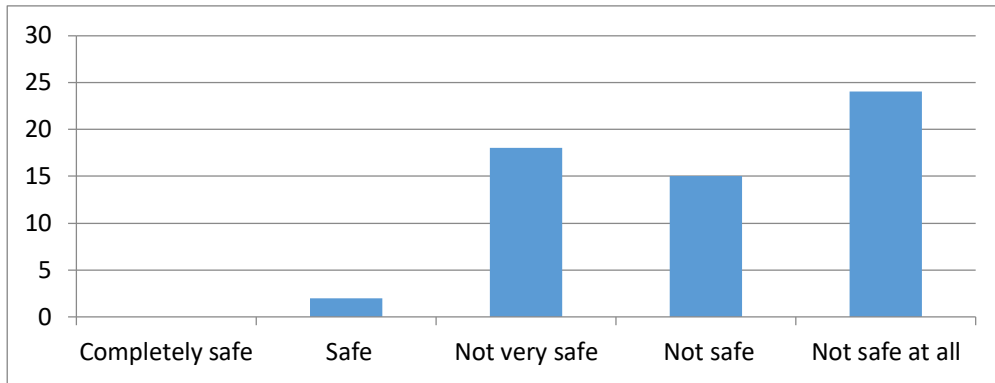
Table 37: Walking through areas where another community is in the majority (Village)
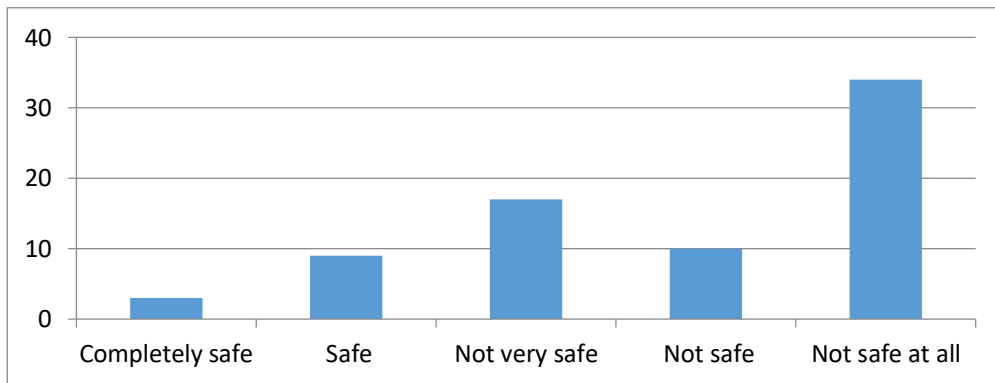
Table 38: Contact people with different religious background (Town)
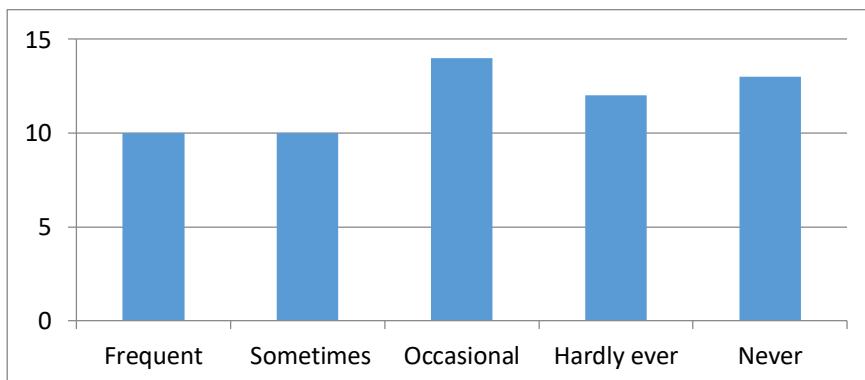
Table 39: Contact people with different religious background (Village)
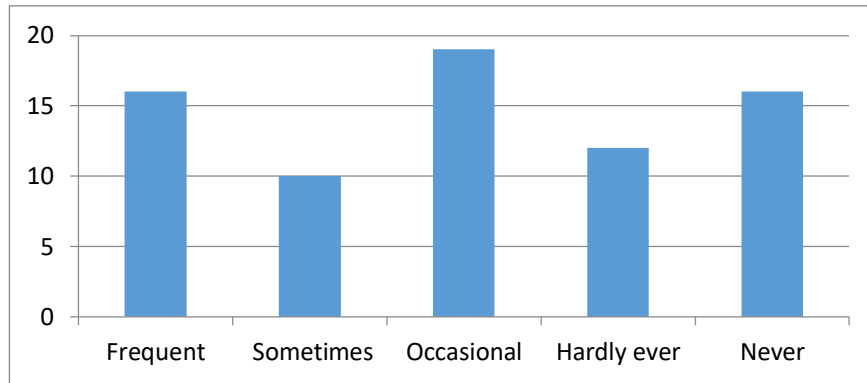
Table 40: Friends with different religious-ethnic background (Town)
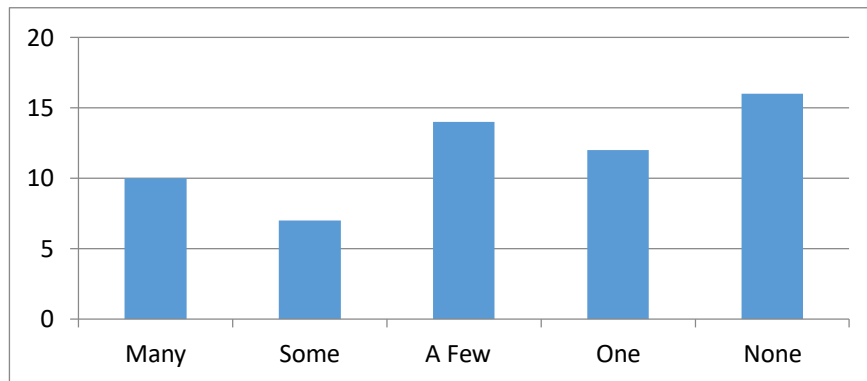
Table 41: Friends with different religious-ethnic background (Village)
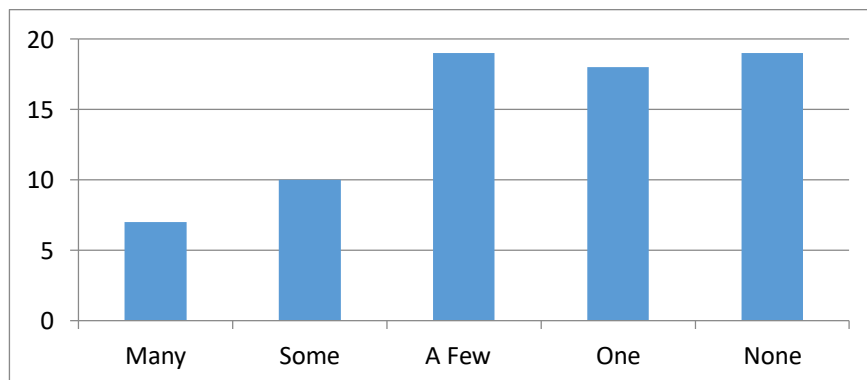
Table 42: Friends (Town)
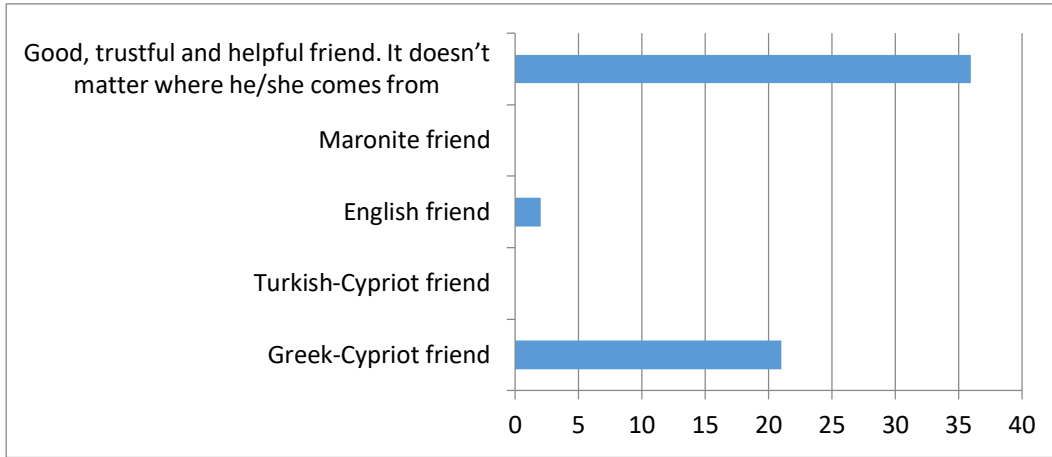
Table 43: Friends (Village)
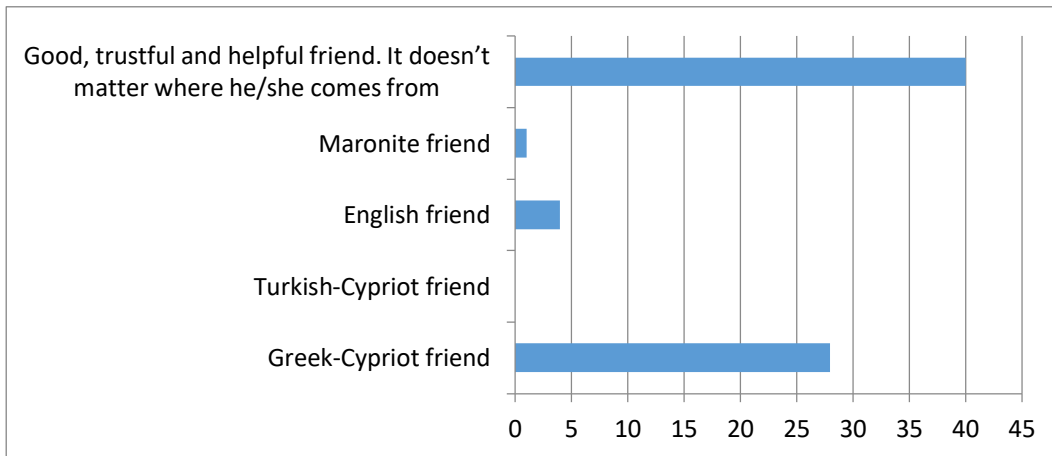
Table 44: Visiting North Cyprus (Town)
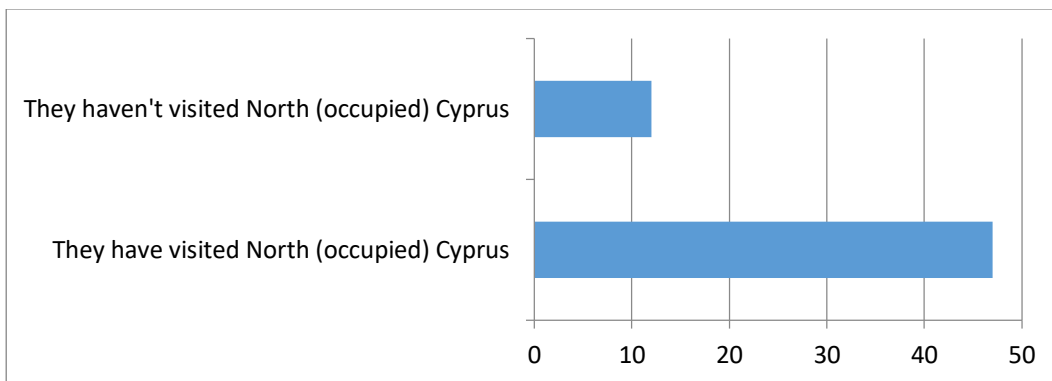
Table 45: Visiting North Cyprus (Village)
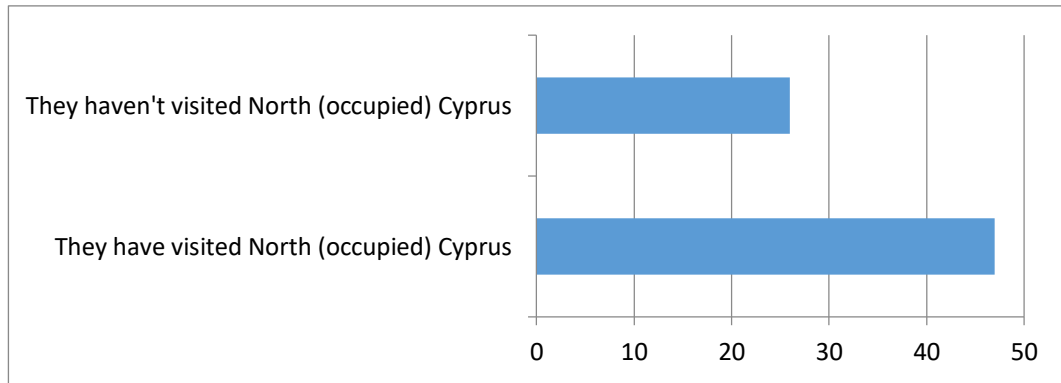
Table 46: Frequency of visiting North Cyprus (Town)
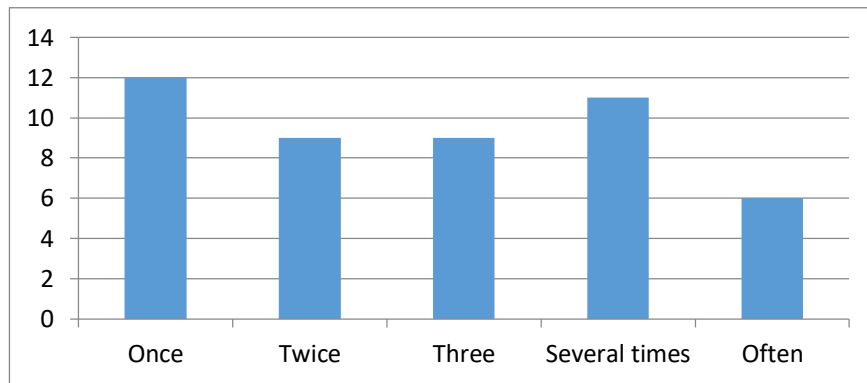
Table 47: Frequency of visiting North Cyprus (Village)
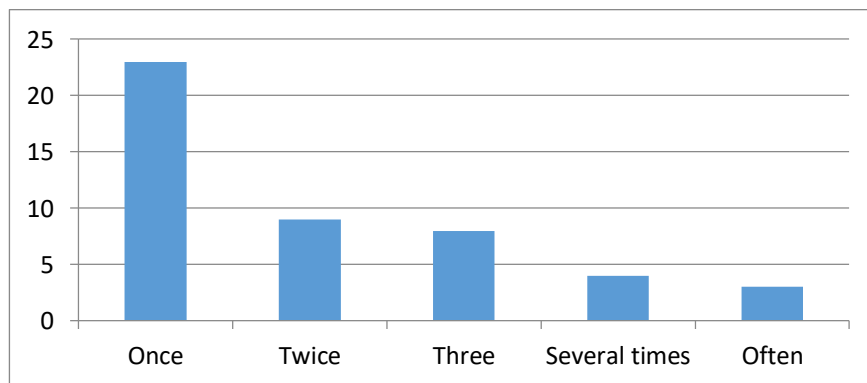
Table 48: Feelings about visiting North Cyprus (Town)
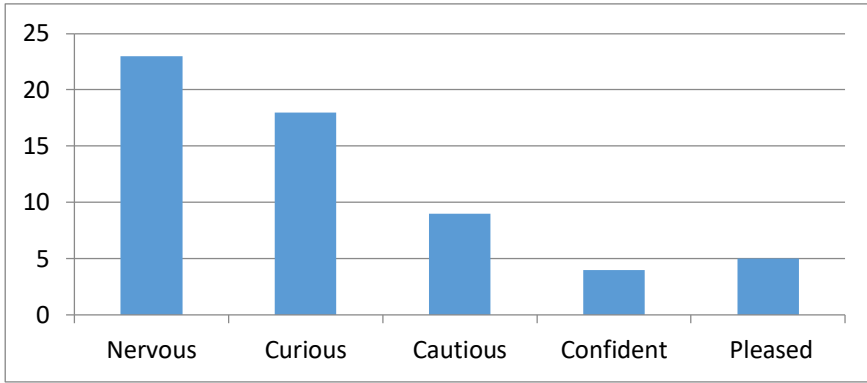
Table 49: Feelings about visiting North Cyprus (Village)
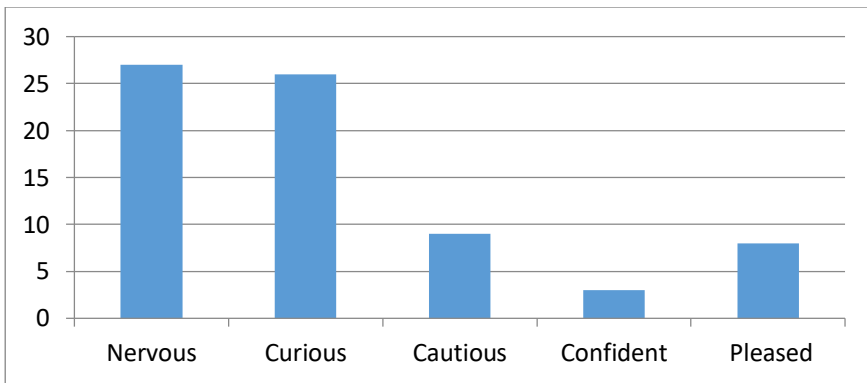
Table 50: The creation of the universe (Town)
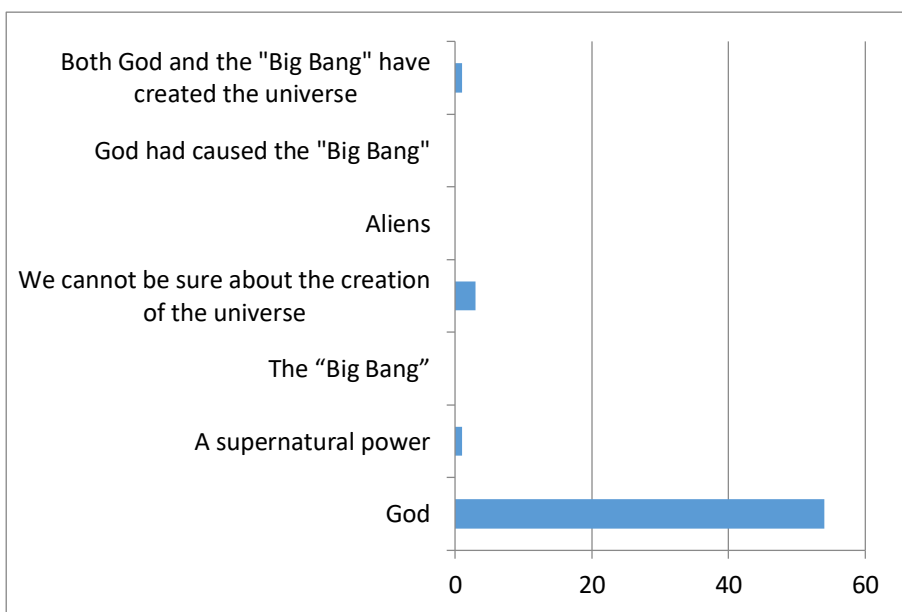
Table 51: The creation of the universe (Village)
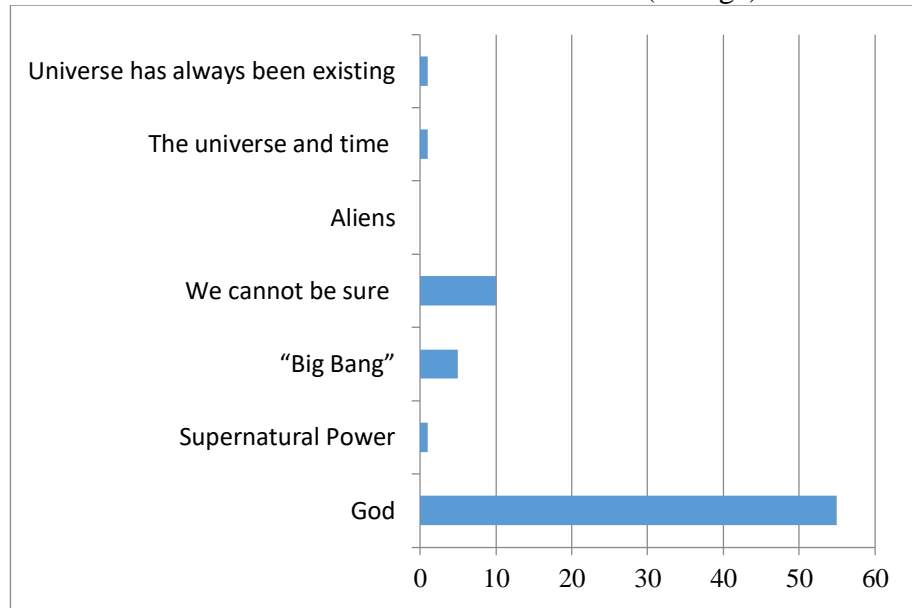
Table 52: Participation in cultural-religious activities (Town)
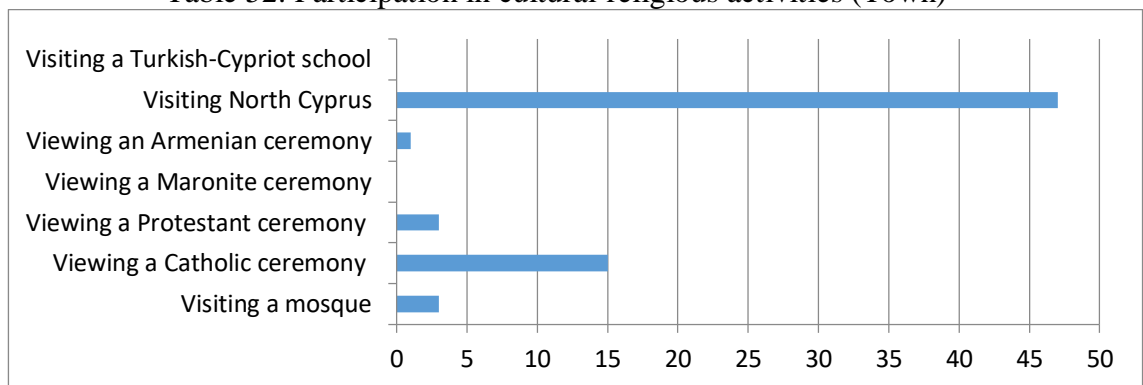
Table 53: Participation in cultural-religious activities (Village)
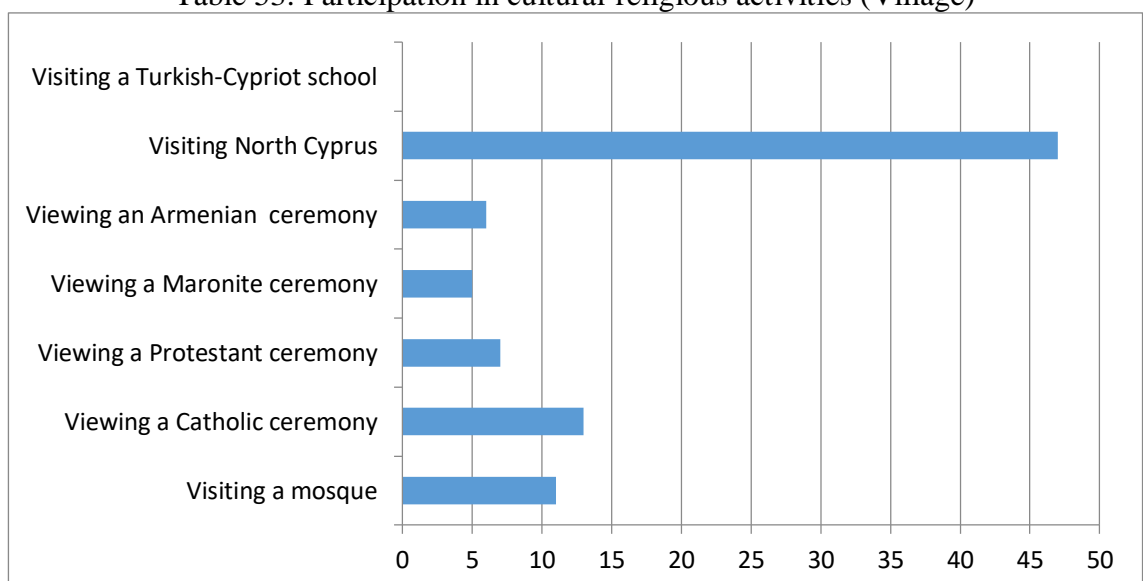
Table 54: Wish to participate again in cultural-religious activities (Town)
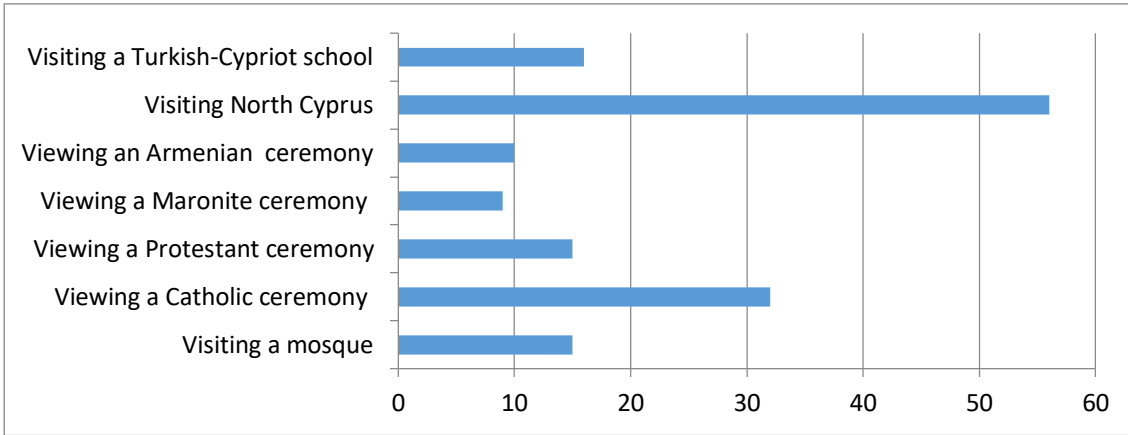
Table 55: Wish to participate again in cultural-religious activities (Village)
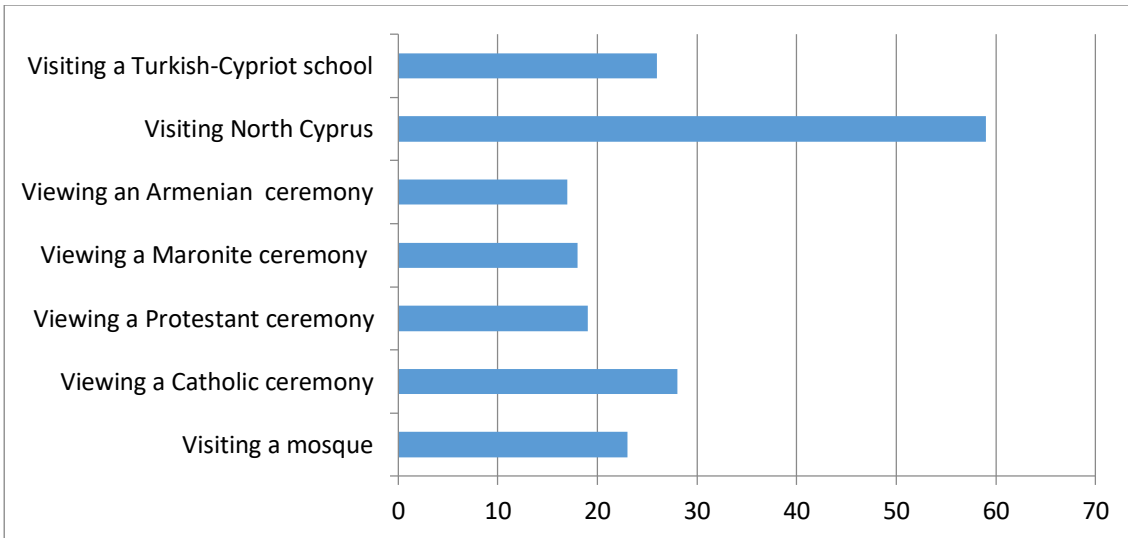
Table 56: World religions that pupils are aware of (Town)
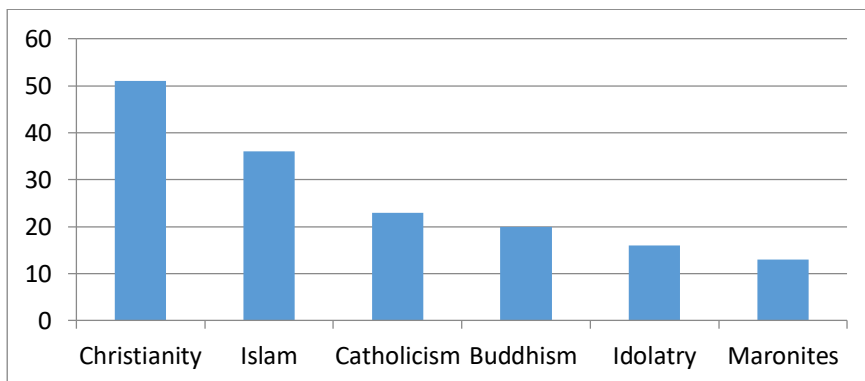
Table 57: World religions that pupils are aware of (Village)
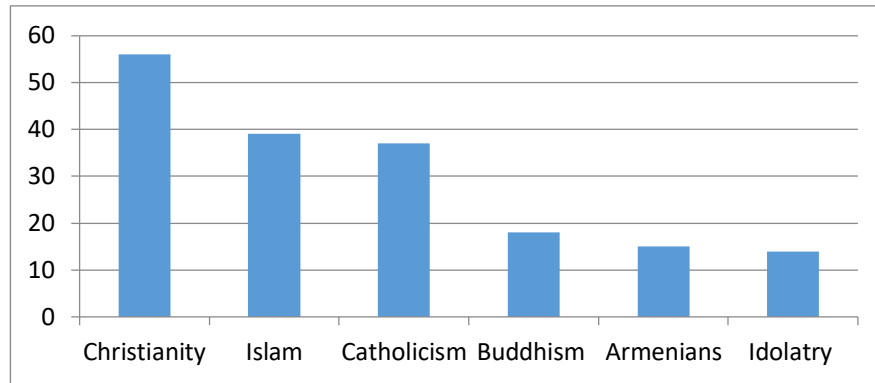
Table 58: Pupils' knowledge about the different religions (Town)
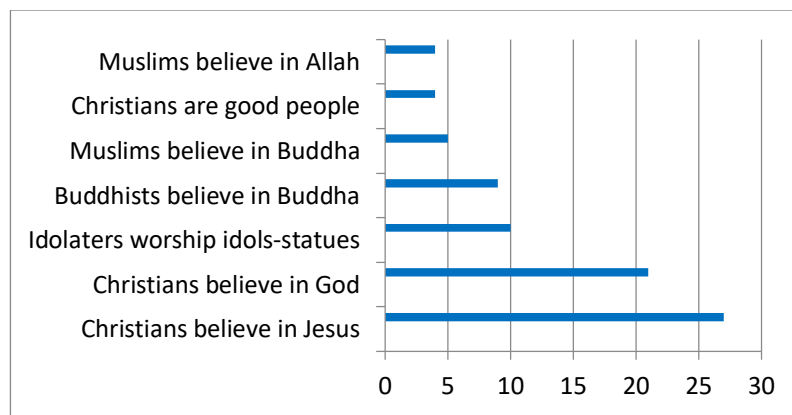
Table 59: Pupils' knowledge about the different religions (Village)
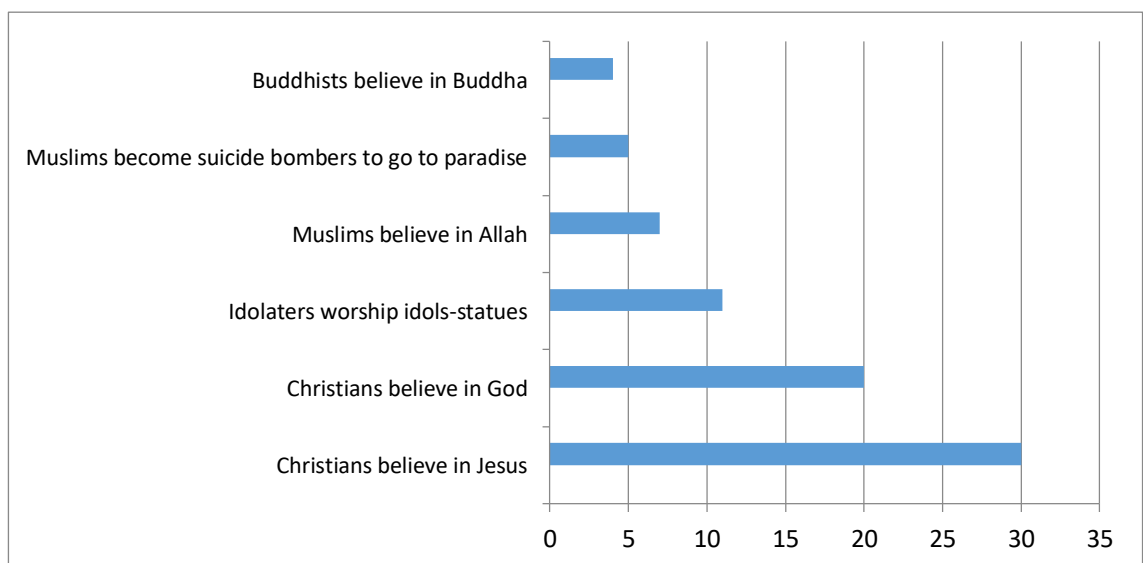
Table 60: Pupils wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend (Town)
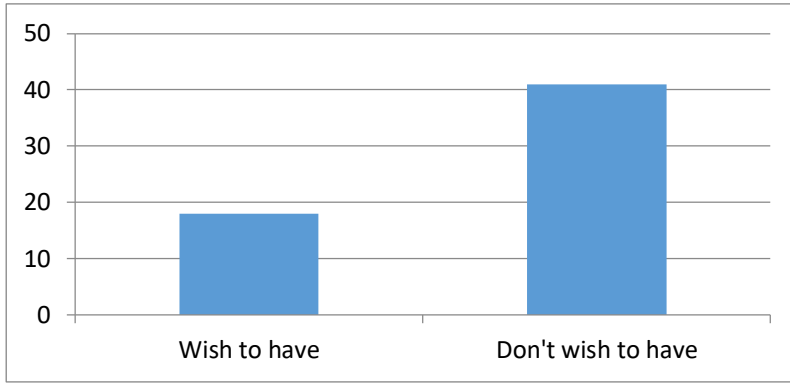
Table 61: Pupils wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend (Village)
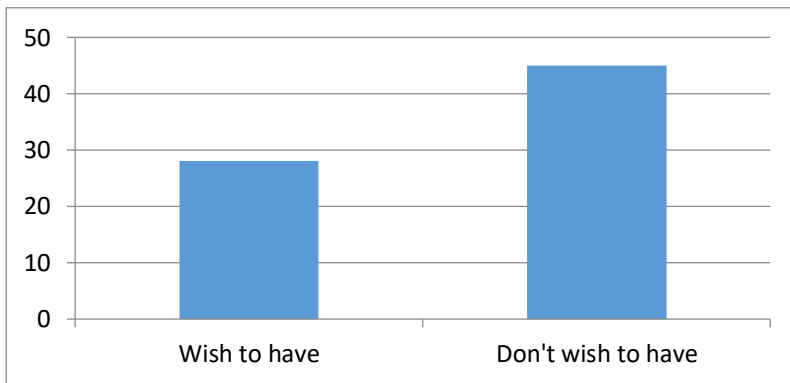
Table 62: Reasons why pupils wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend (Town)
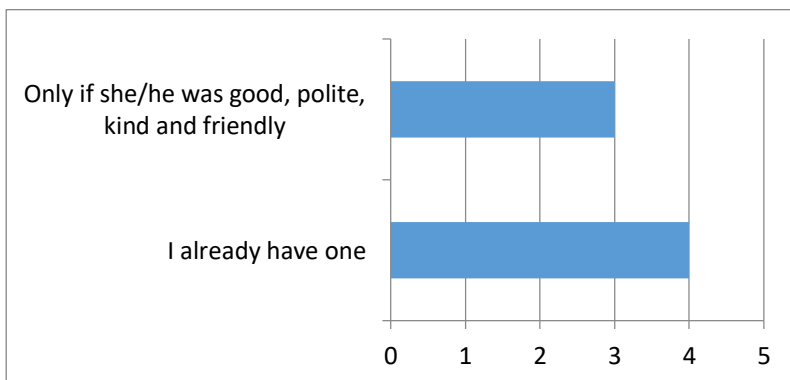
Table 63: Reasons why pupils wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend (Village)

Table 64: Reasons why pupils do not wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend (Town)
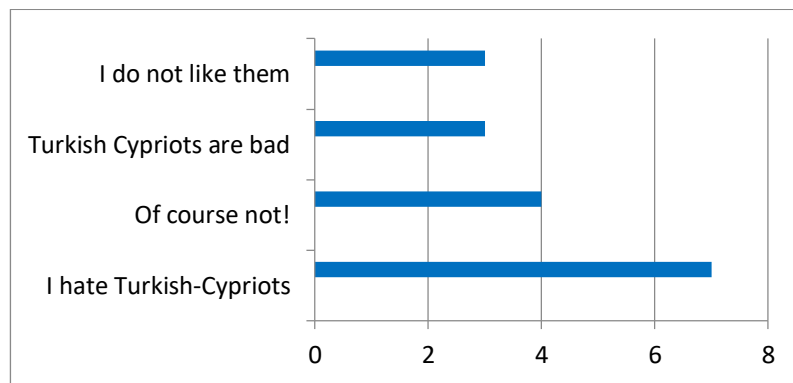
Table 65: Reasons why pupils do not wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend (Village)
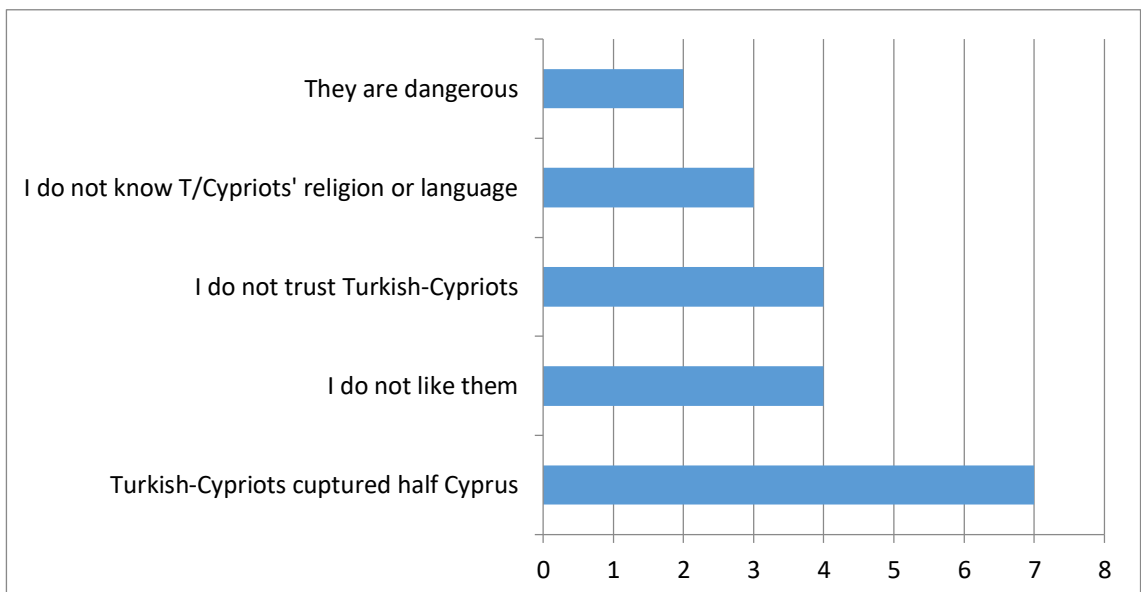
Table 66: The meaning of peace (Town)
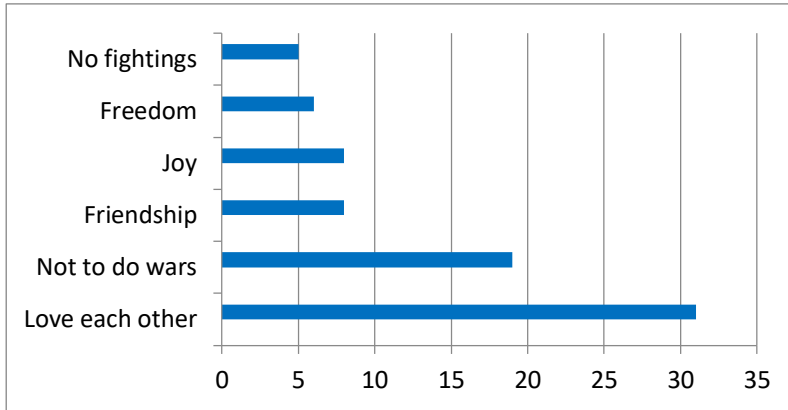
Table 67: The meaning of peace (Village)
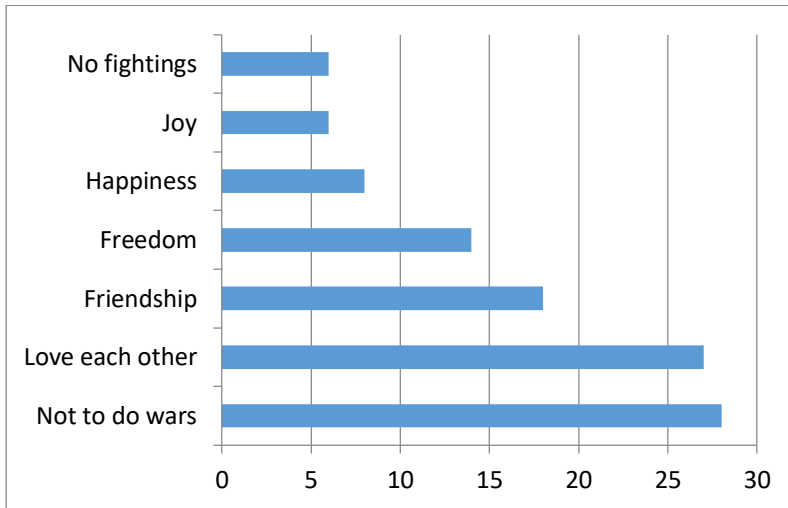
Table 68: The meaning of peaceful coexistence (Town)
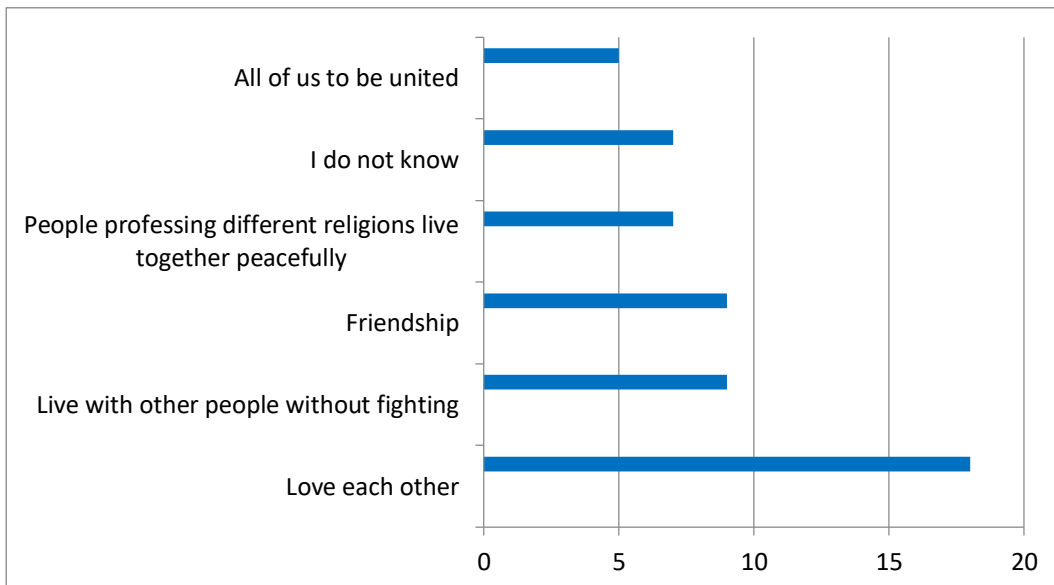
Table 69: The meaning of peaceful coexistence (Village)
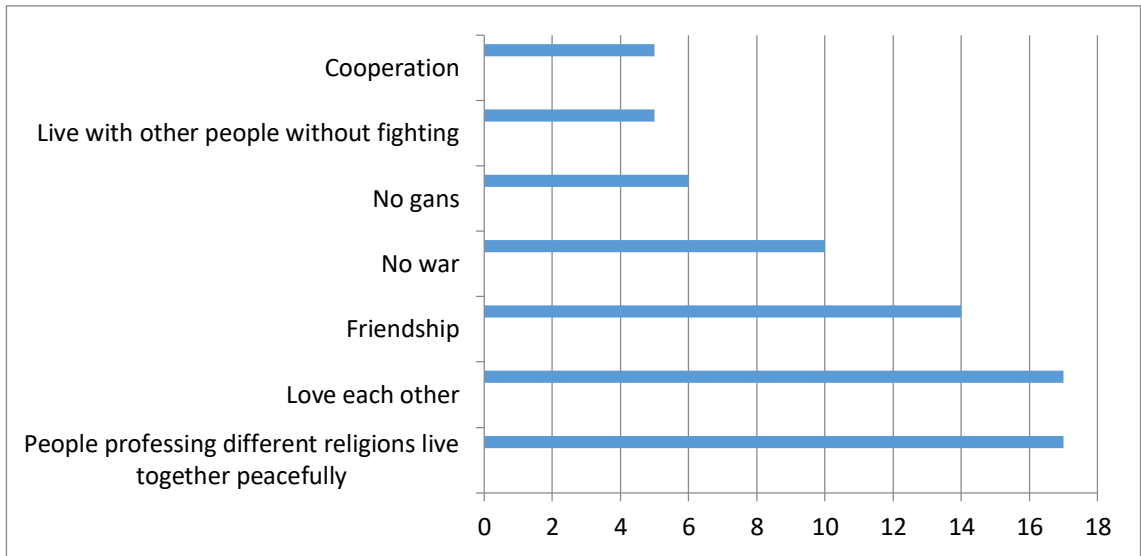
Table 70: Actions that can make our world more peaceful (Town)
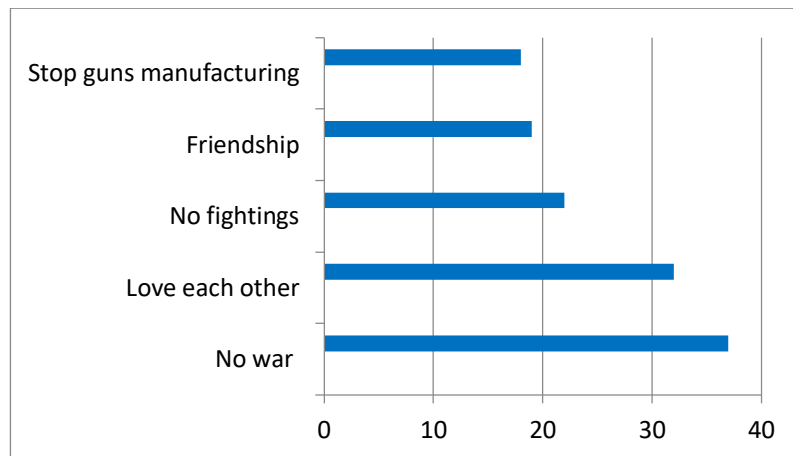
Table 71: Actions that can make our world more peaceful (Village)
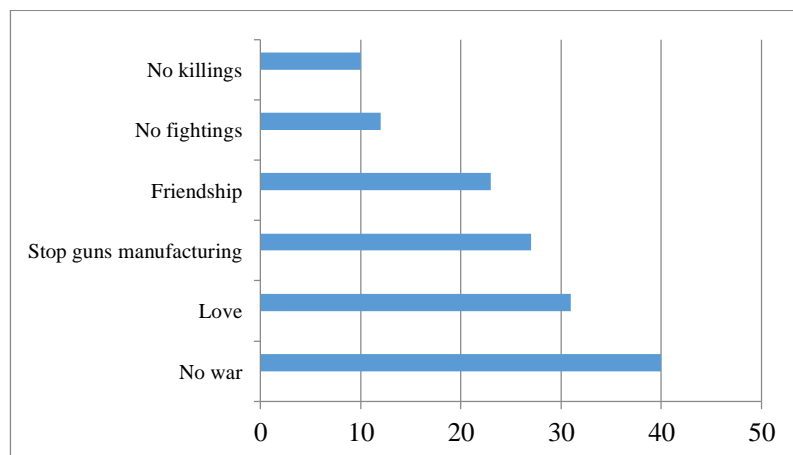
Table 72: Pupils' involvement in voluntary work activities (Town)
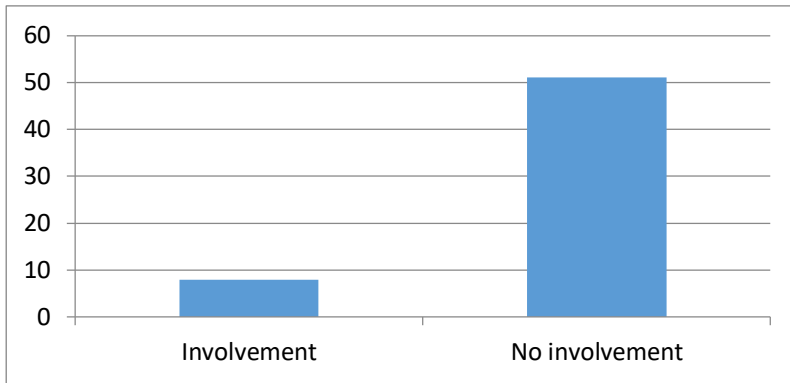
Table 73: Pupils' involvement in voluntary work activities (Village)
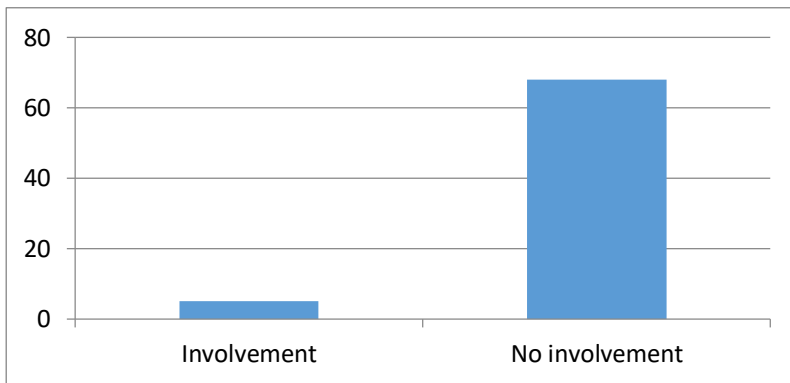
Table 74: Type of voluntary work activities (Town)
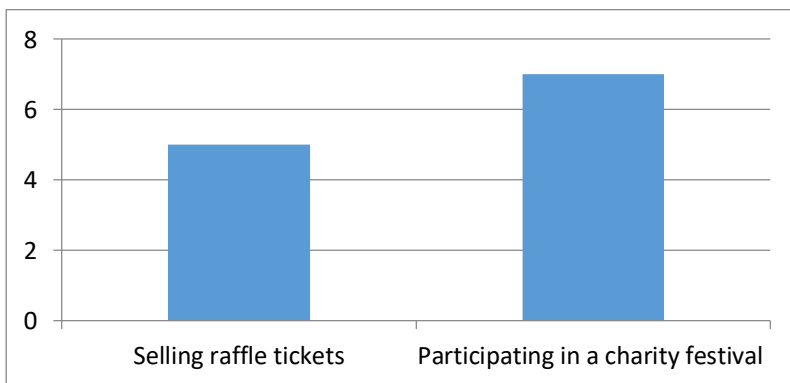
Table 75: Type of voluntary work activities (Village)
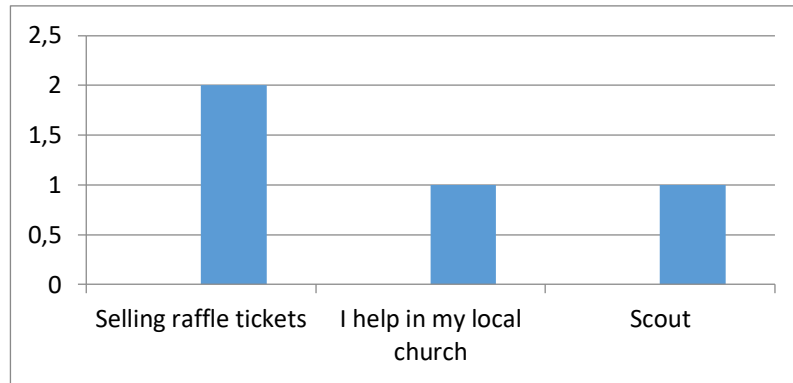
Table 76: Pupils' opinion about euthanasia (Town)
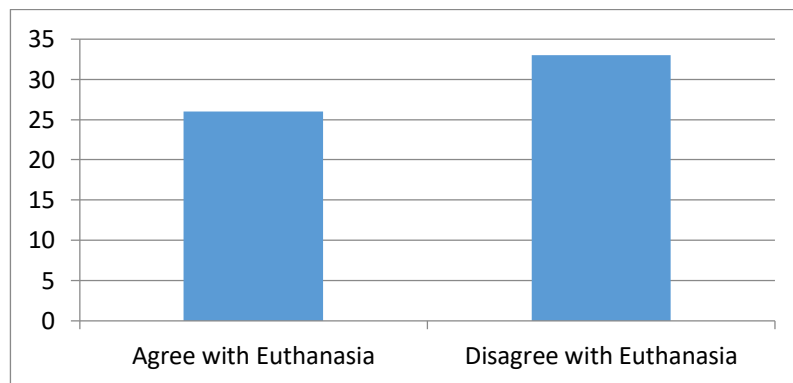
Table 77: Pupils' opinion about euthanasia (Village)
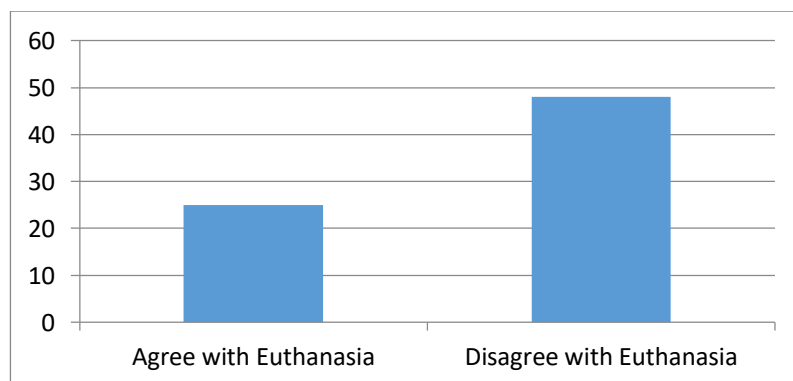
Table 78: Reasons why pupils agree with euthanasia (Town)
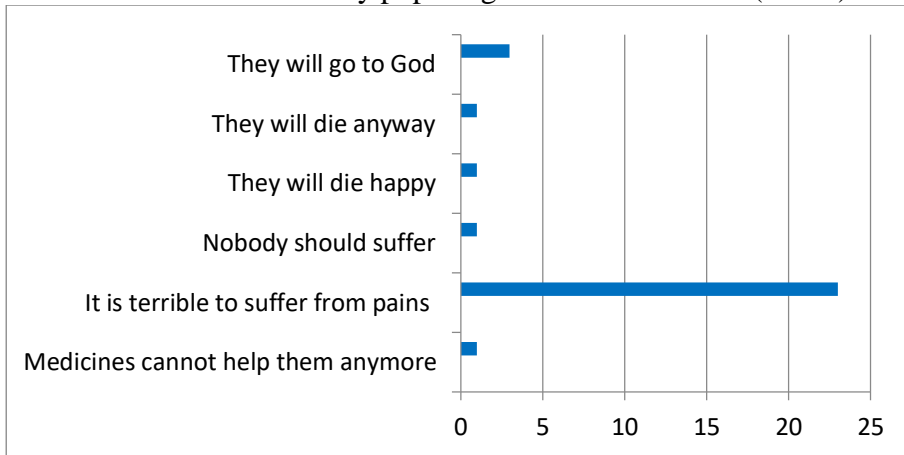
Table 79: Reasons why pupils agree with euthanasia (Village)
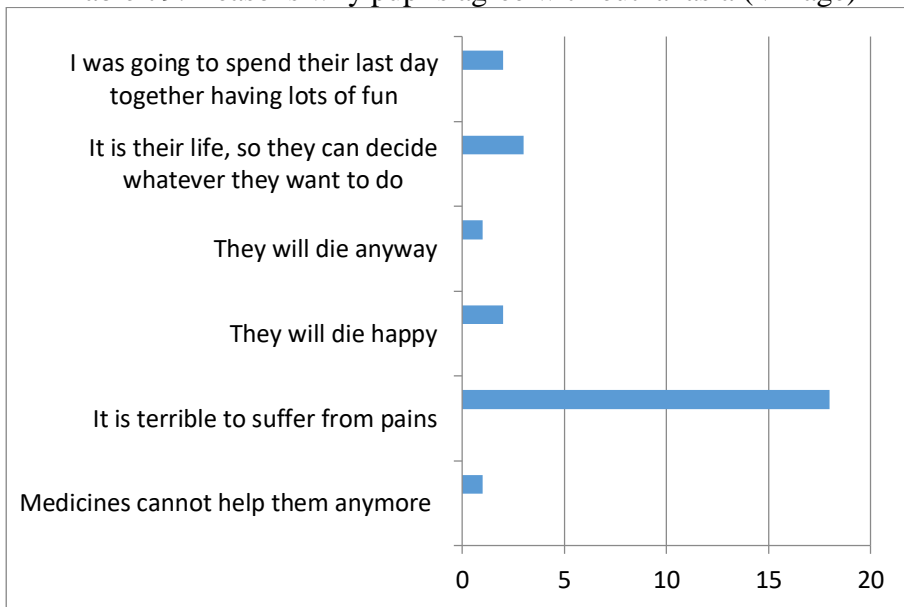
Table 80: Reasons why pupils do not agree with euthanasia (Town)
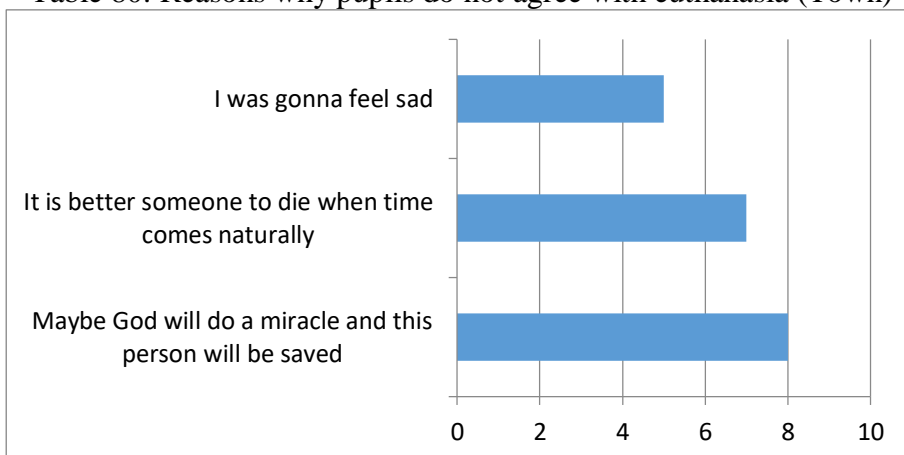
Table 81: Reasons why pupils do not agree with euthanasia (Village)
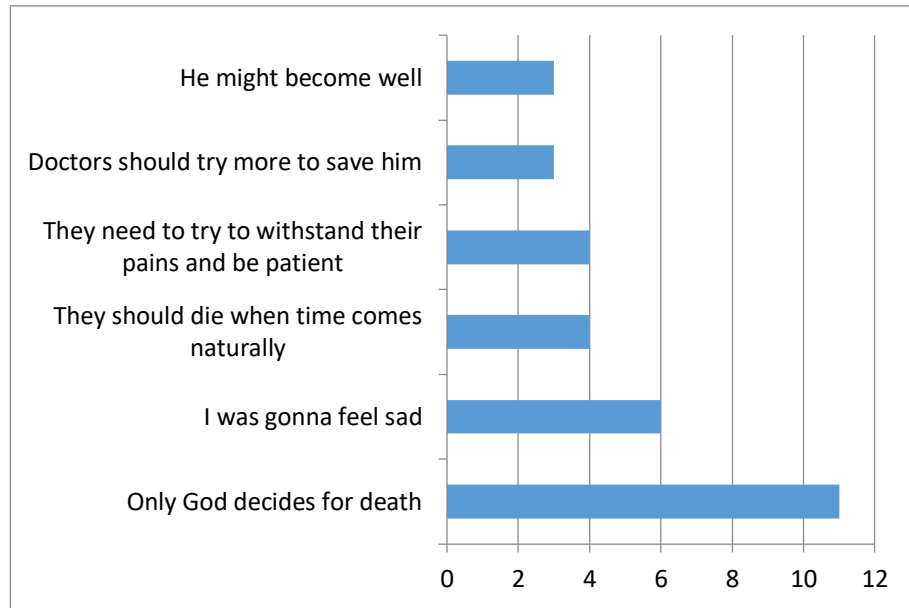
Evaluative Questionnaires

Table 82: The religious communities of Cyprus (Town)
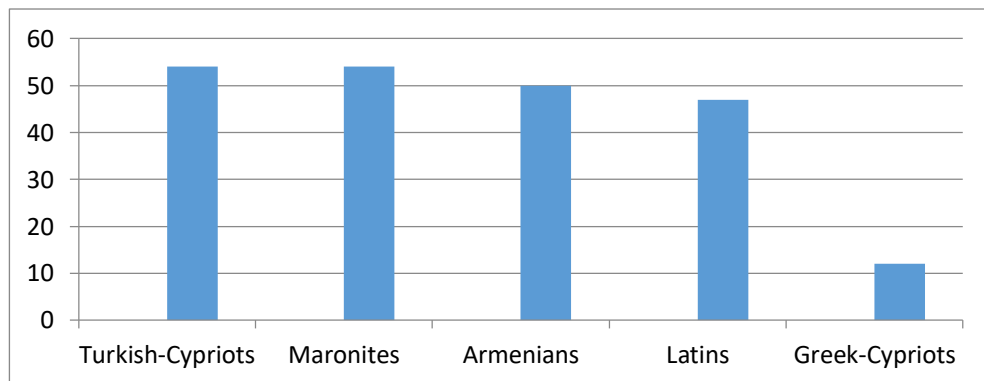
Table 83: The religious communities of Cyprus (Village)
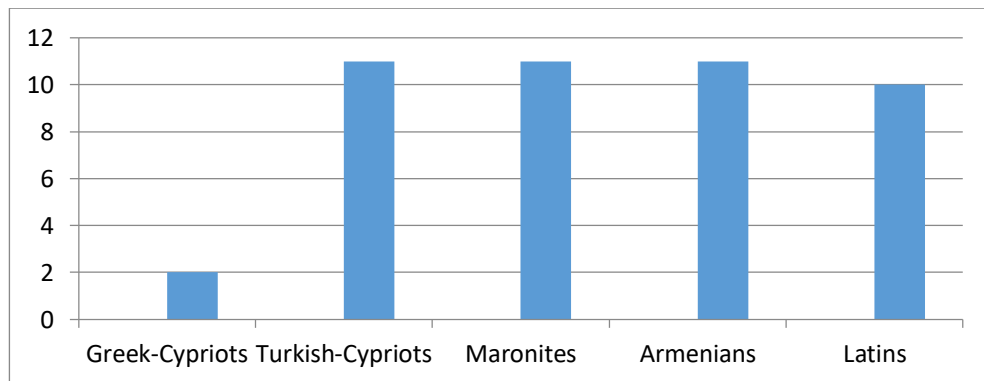
Table 84: The peaceful coexistence of the religious communities of Cyprus (Town)
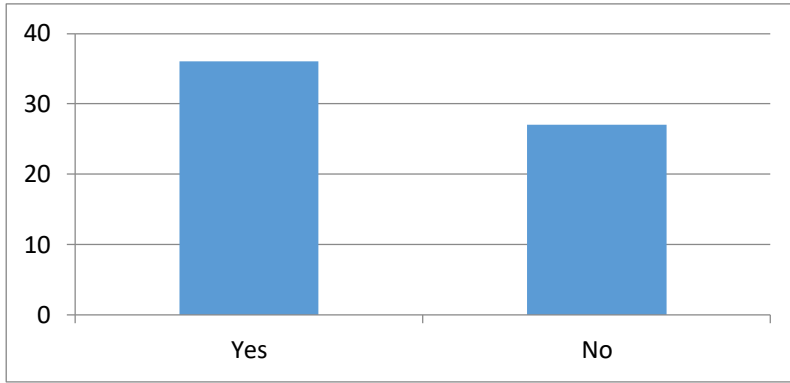
Table 85: The peaceful coexistence of the religious communities of Cyprus (Village)
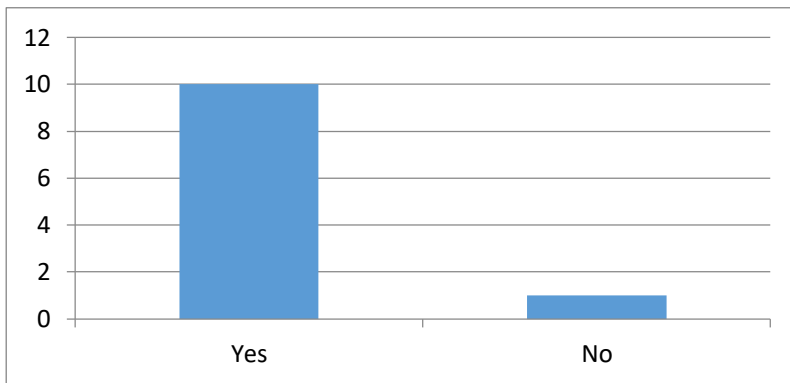
Table 86: The religious community of Cyprus that I like the most (Town)
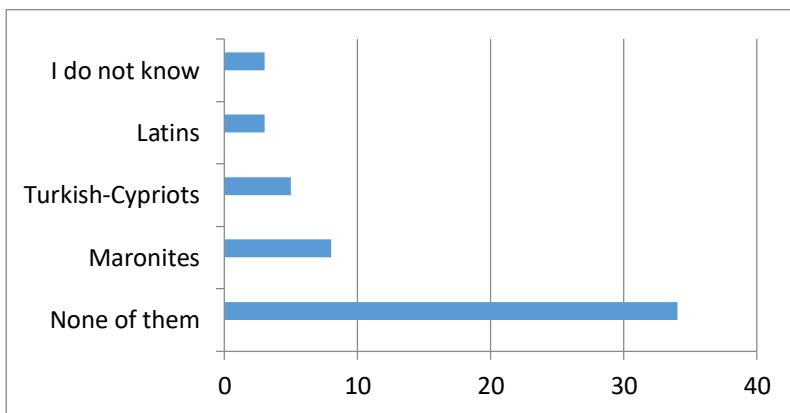
Table 87: The religious community of Cyprus that I like the most (Village)
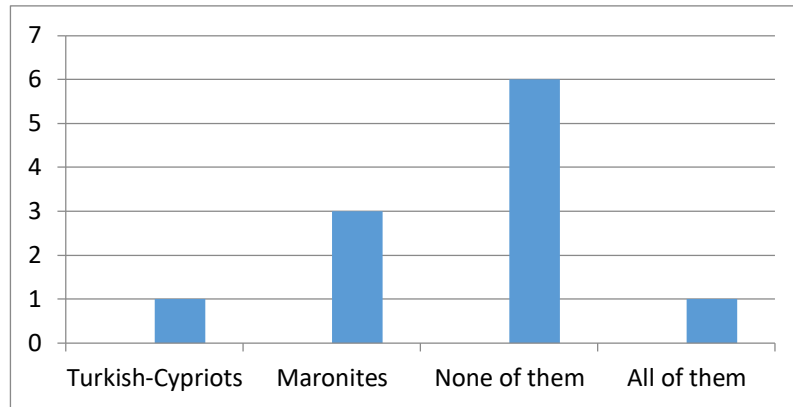
Table 88: The religious community of Cyprus that I like the less (Town)
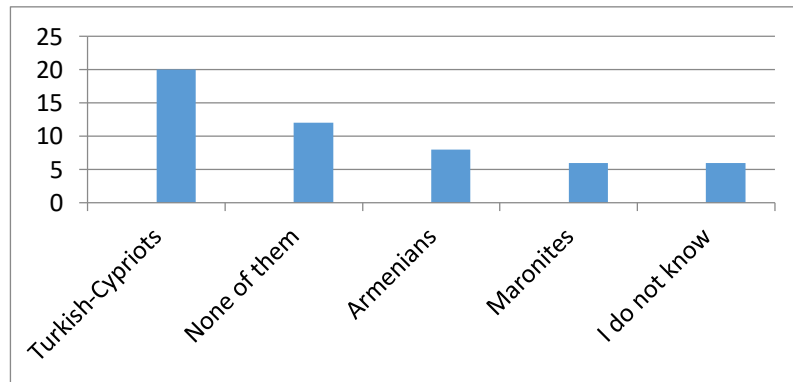
Table 89: The religious community of Cyprus that I like the less (Village)
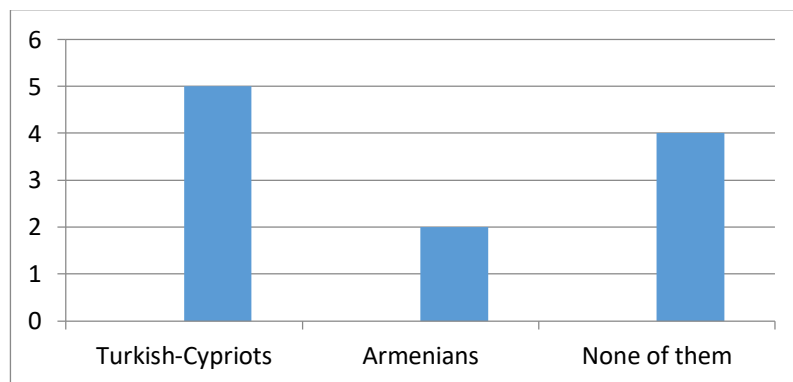
Table 90: Environmental problems (Town)
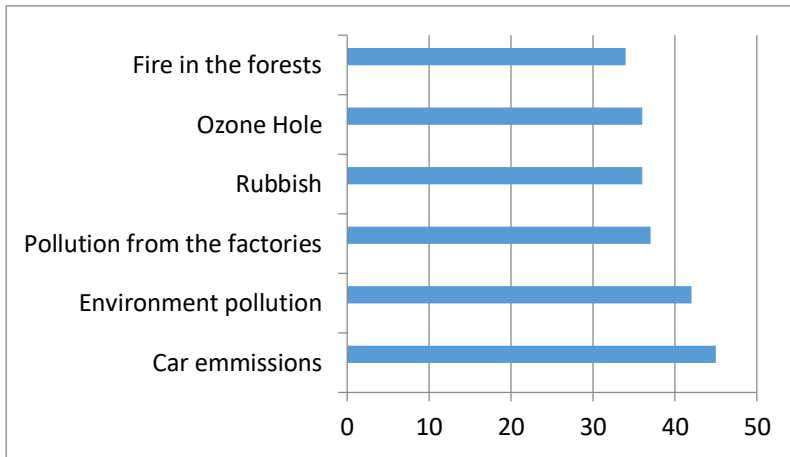
Table 91: Environmental problems (Village)
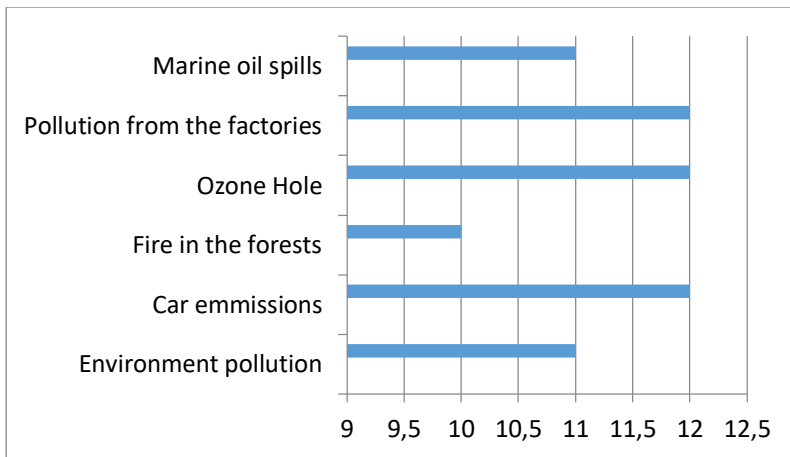
Table 92: Ways to protect our environment (Town)
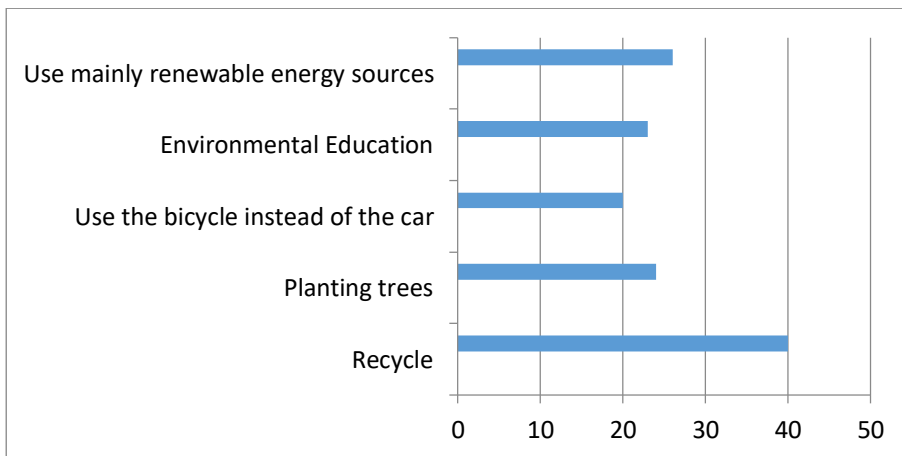
Table 93: Ways to protect our environment (Village)
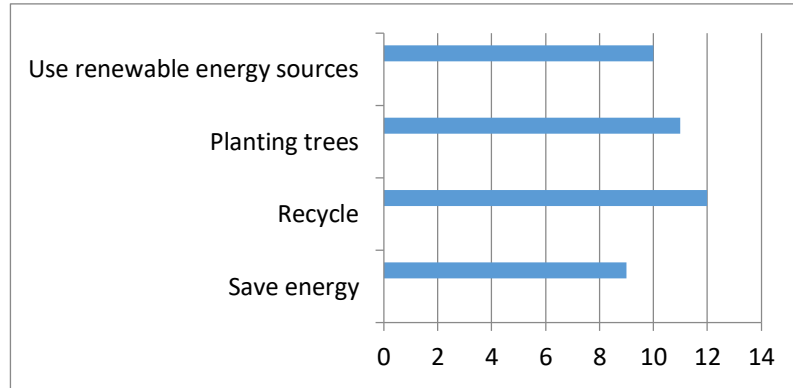
Table 94: Social problems that affect people's health seriously (Town)
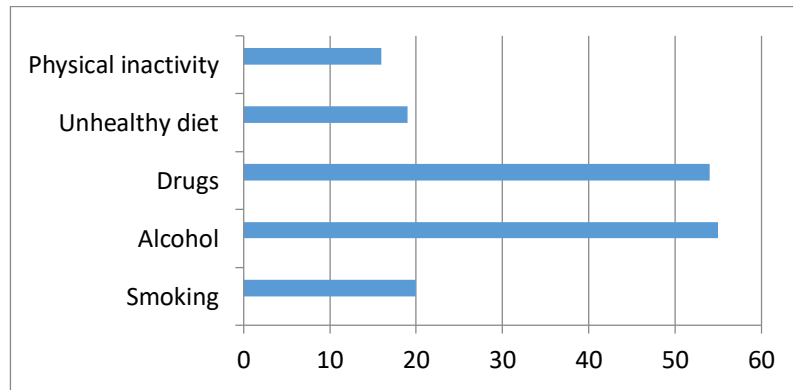
Table 95: Social problems that affect people's health seriously (Village)
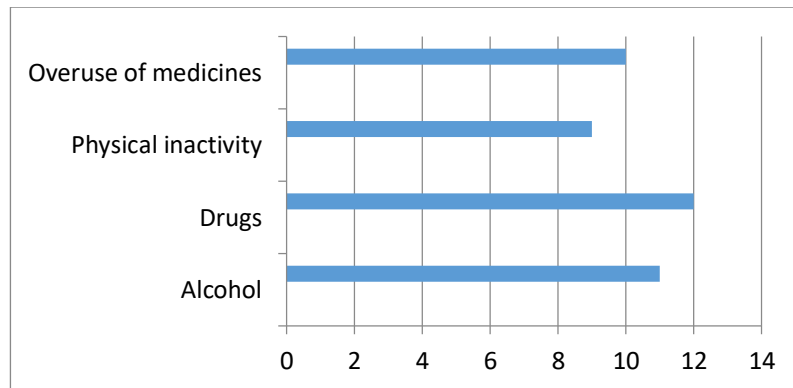
Table 96: Ways to combat the social problems (Town)
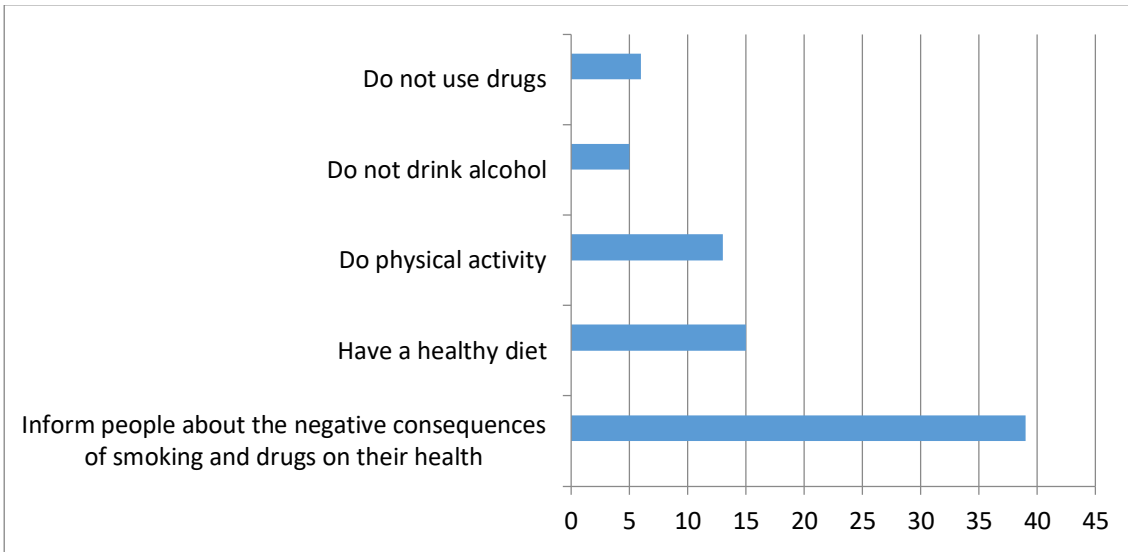
Table 97: Ways to combat the social problems (Village)
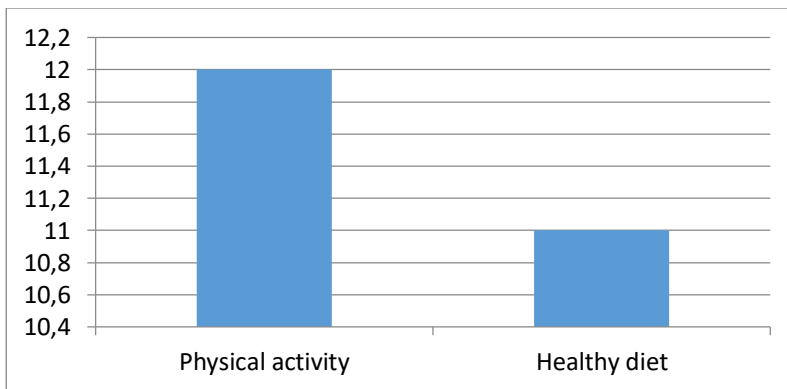
Table 98: Good actions that can make our world better (Town)
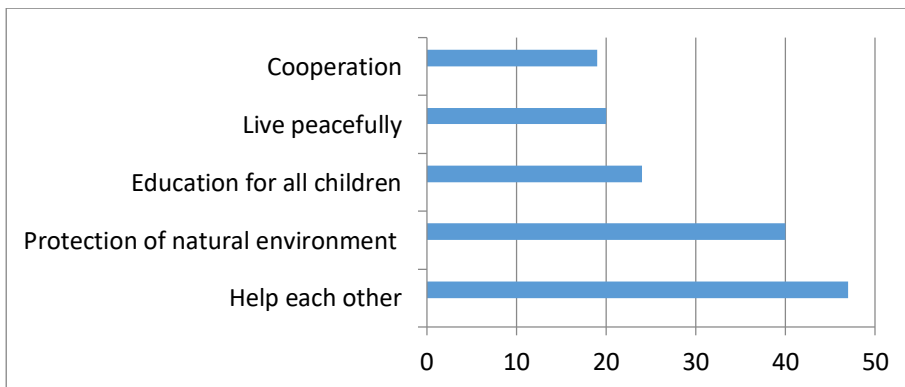
Table 99: Good actions that can make our world better (Village)
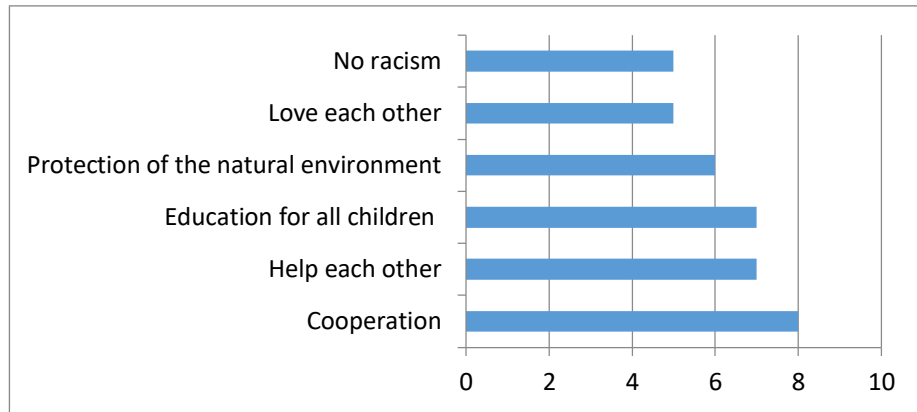
Table 100: Bad actions that make our world worse (Town)
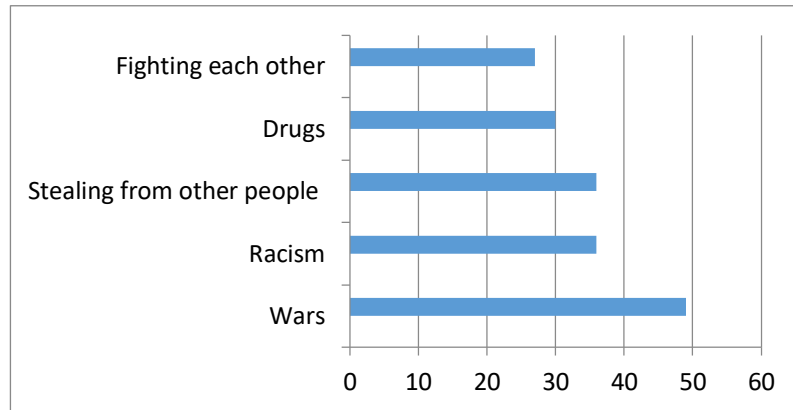
Table 101: Bad actions that make our world worse (Village)
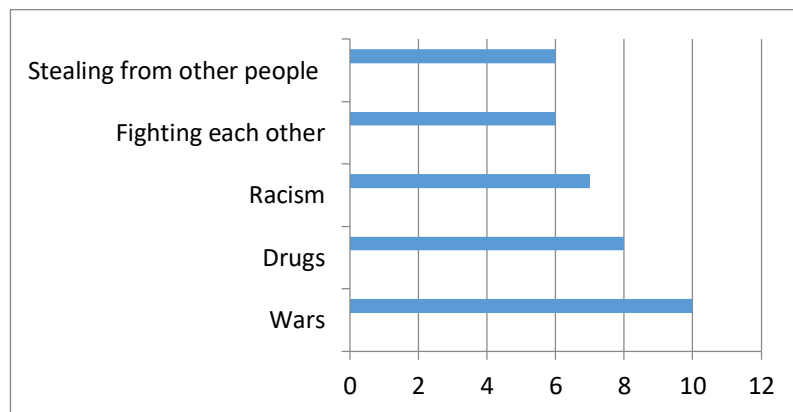
Table 102: Universal Values (Town)
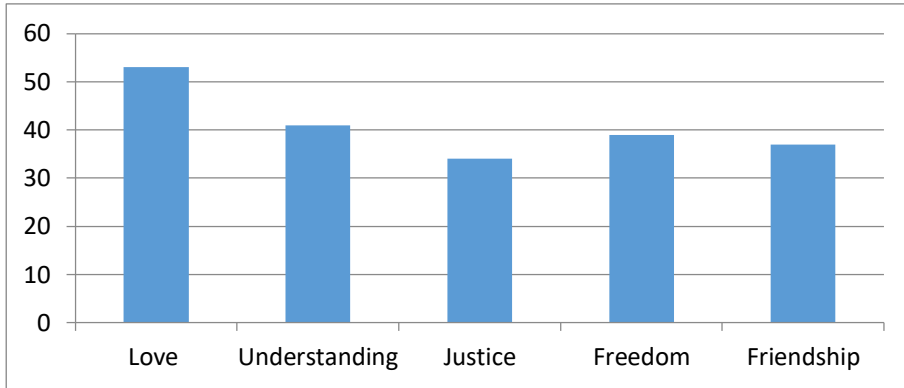
Table 103: Universal Values (Village)
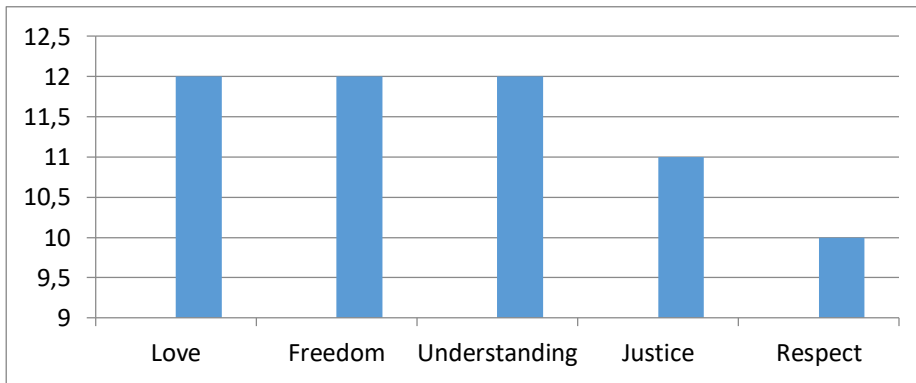
Table 104: The advantages of the peace (Town)
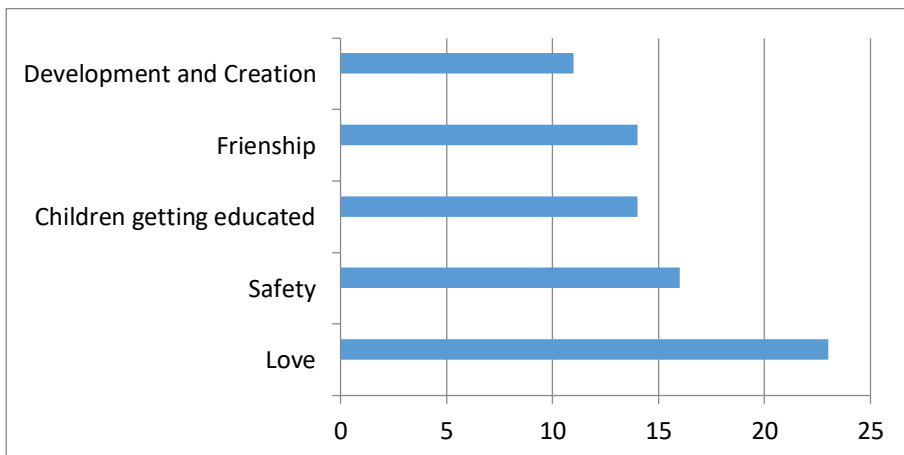
Table 105: The advantages of the peace (Village)
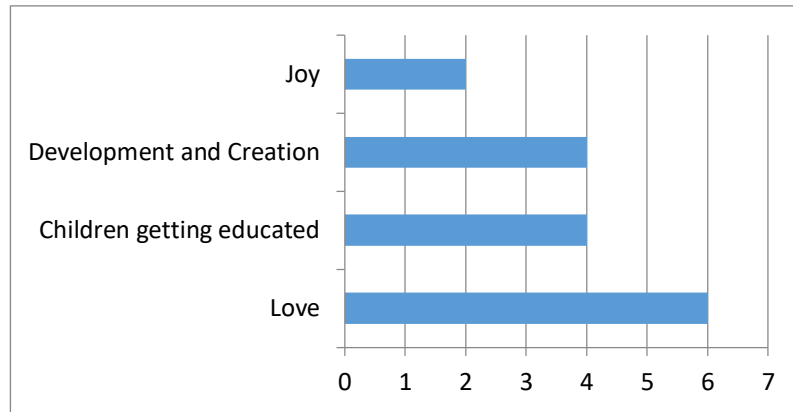
Table 106: The disadvantages of the war (Town)
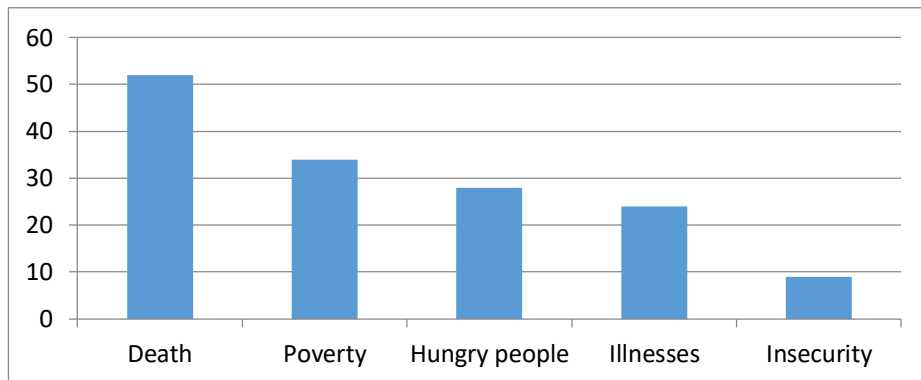
Table 107: The disadvantages of the war (Village)
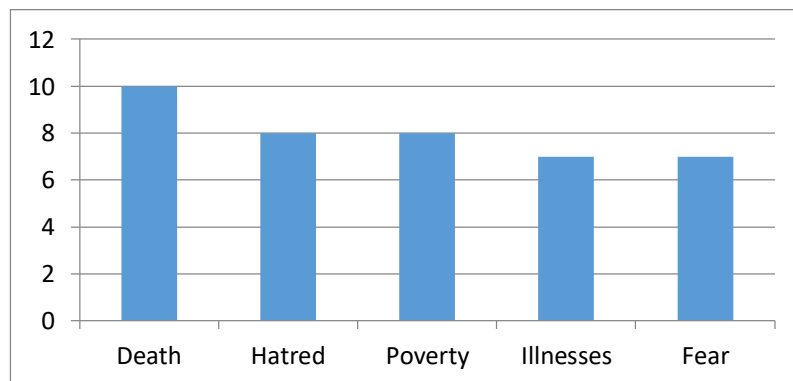
Table 108: Ways to help the poor and sick children around the world (Town)
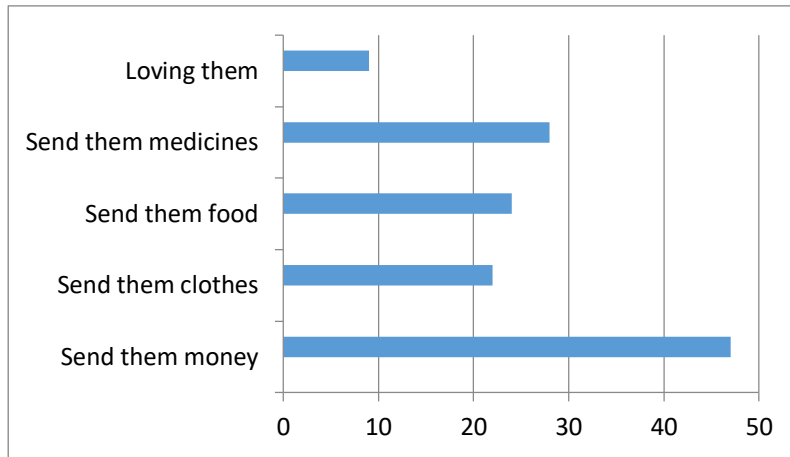
Table 109: Ways to help the poor and sick children around the world (Village)
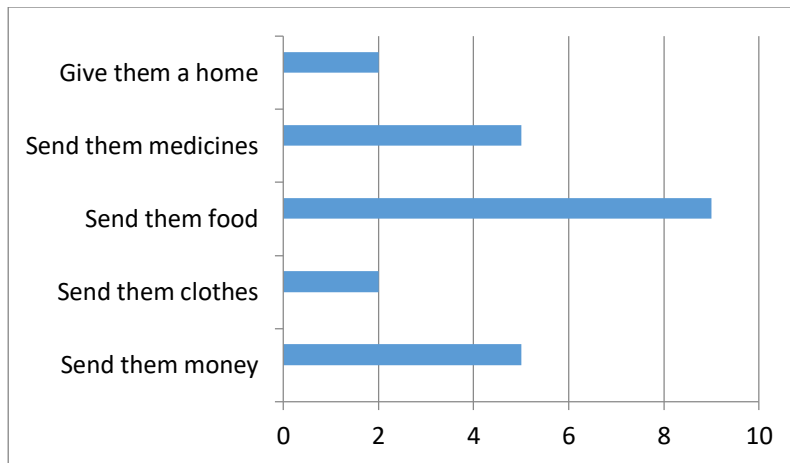
Table 110: Ways to combat racism (Town)
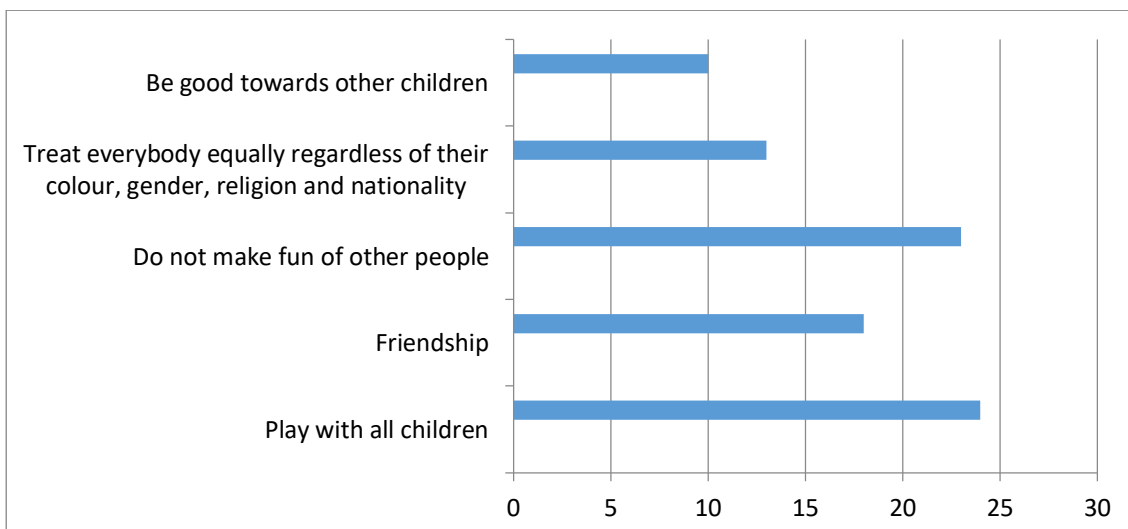
Table 111: Ways to combat racism (Village)
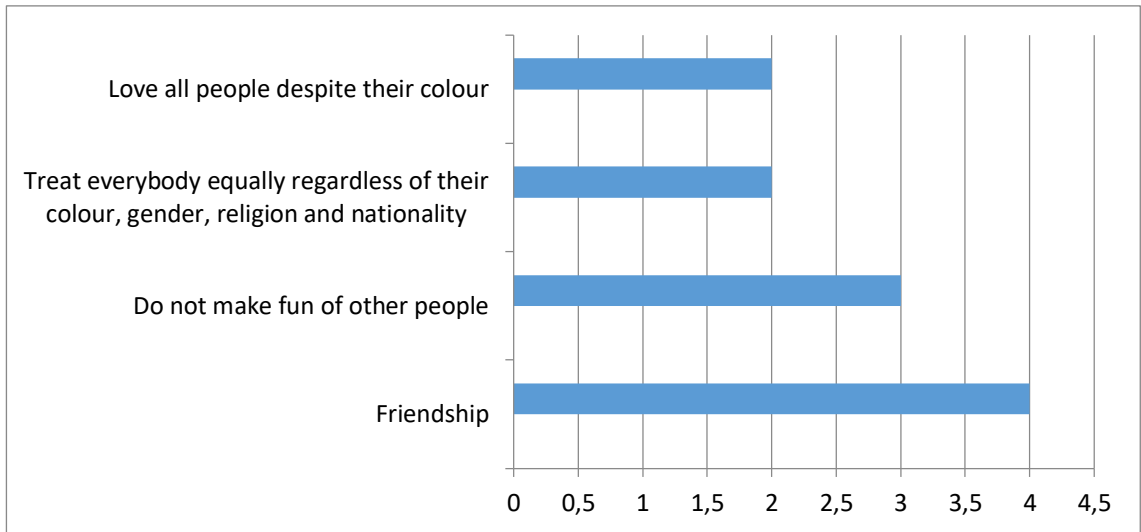
Table 112: The creation of the universe (Town)
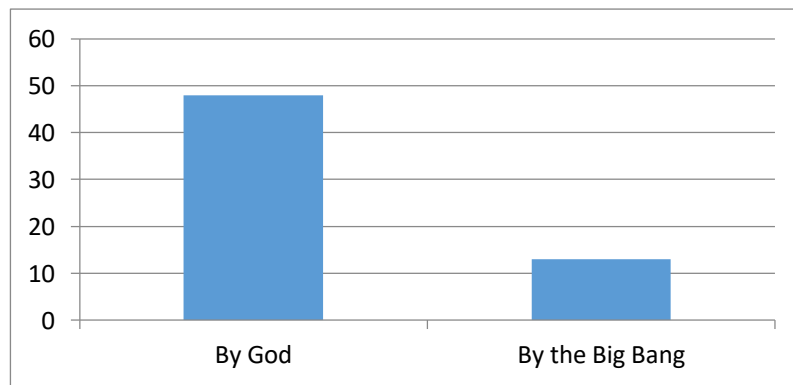
Table 113: The creation of the universe (Village)
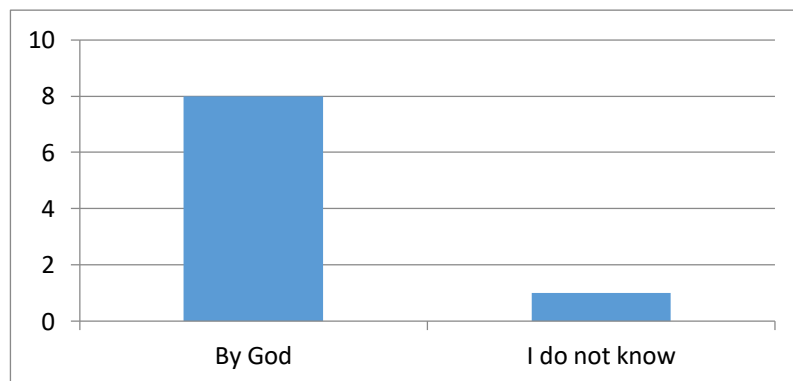
Table 114: Believe in life after death (Town)
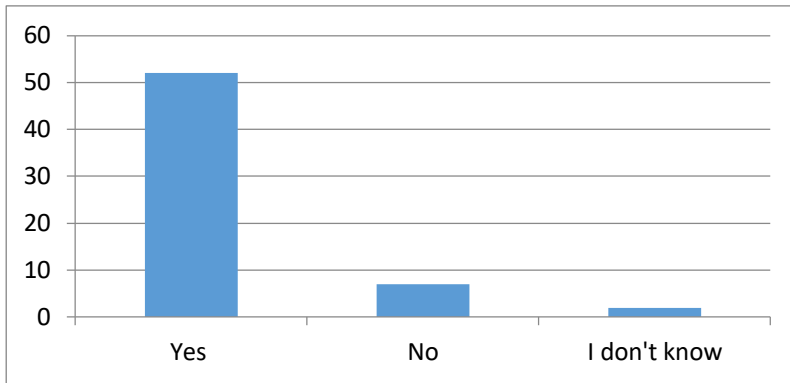
Table 115: Believe in life after death (Village)
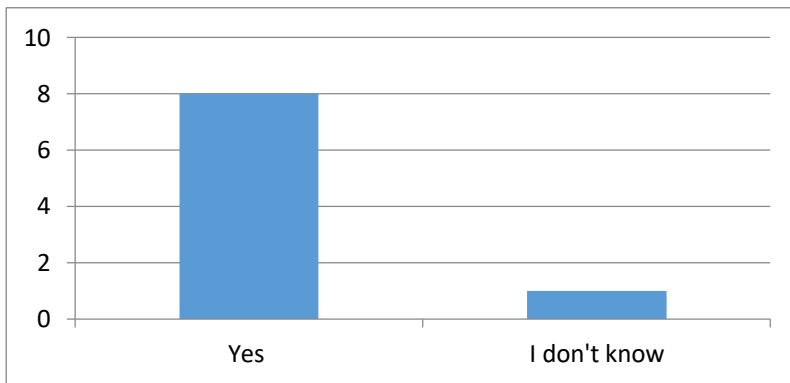
Table 116: When a person is seriously ill, we should be hoping to (Town)
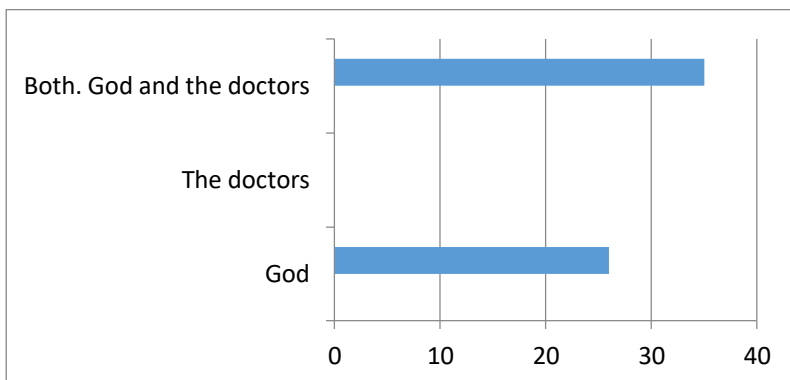
Table 116a: When a person is seriously ill, we should be hoping to (Village)
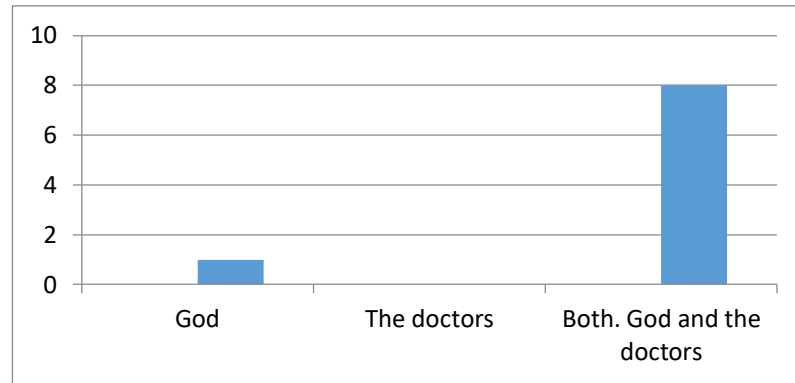
Table 117: Religions that pupils are aware of (Town)
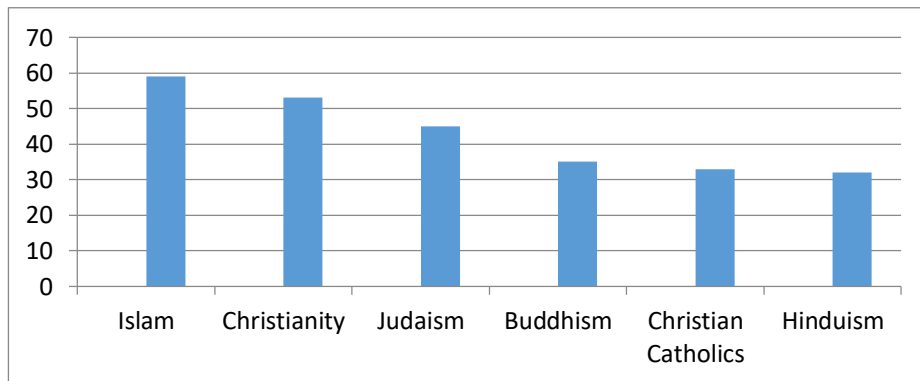
Table 118: Religions that pupils are aware of (Village)
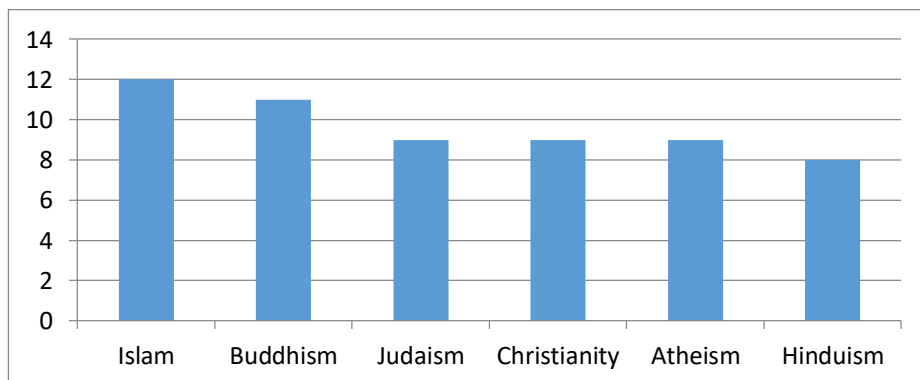
Table 119: The most impressive religion (Town)
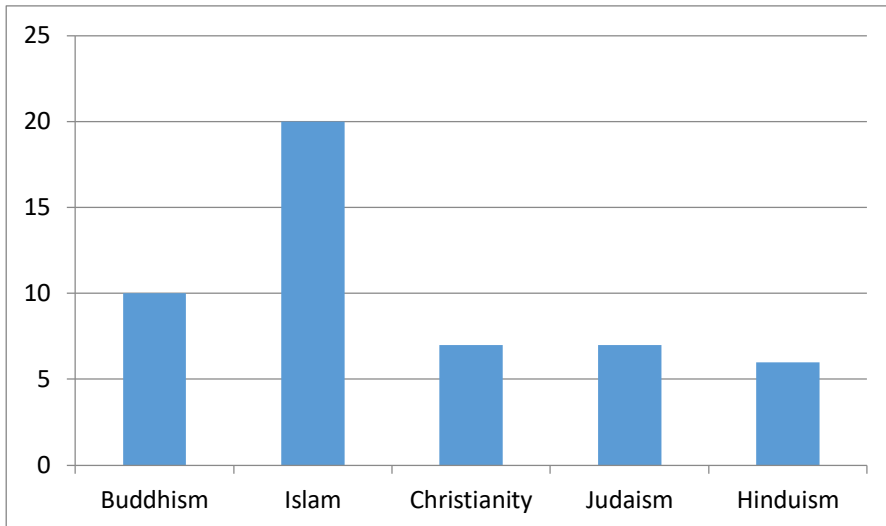
Table 120: The most impressive religion (Village)
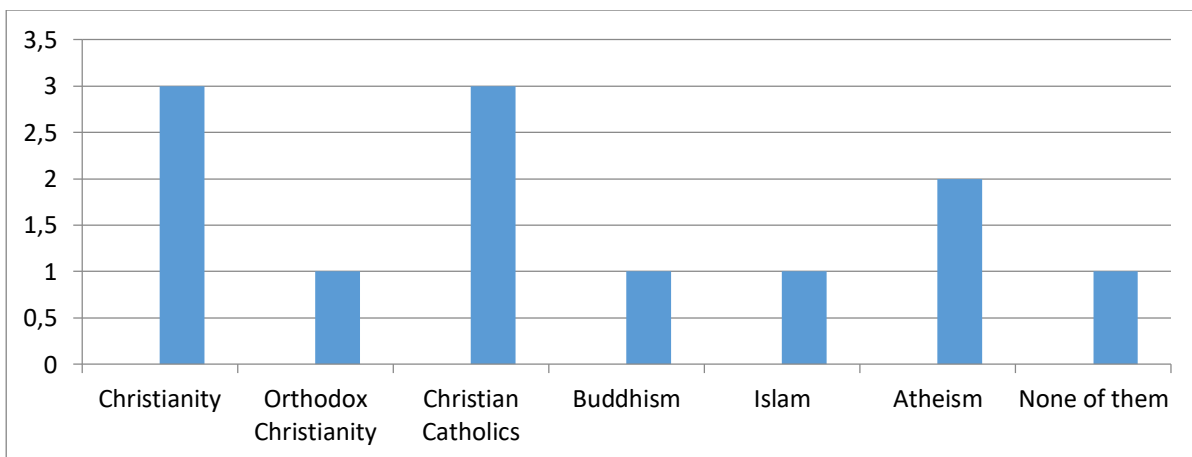
Table 121: All religions have something to teach us (Town)
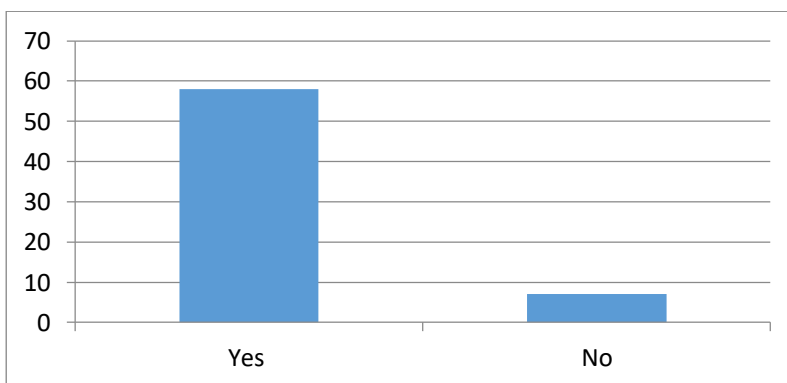
Table 122: All religions have something to teach us (Village)
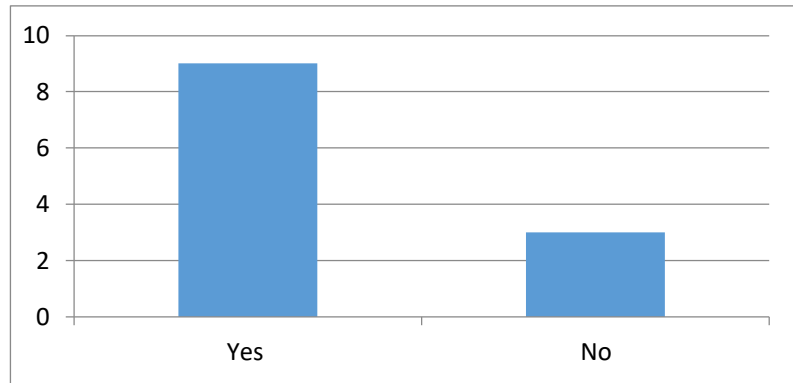
Table 123:
It is good that there are so many and different religions around the world (Town)
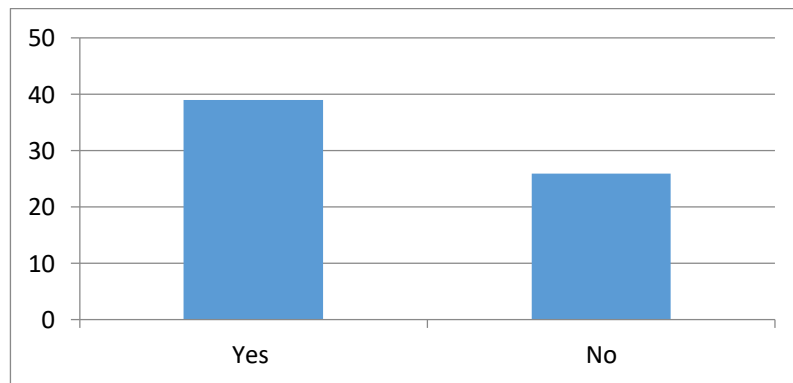
Table 124:
It is good that there are so many and different religions around the world (Village)
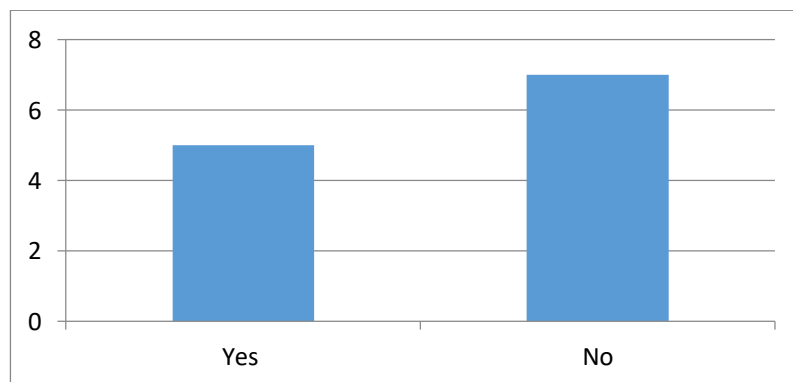
Table 125: What pupils like the most in RE this year
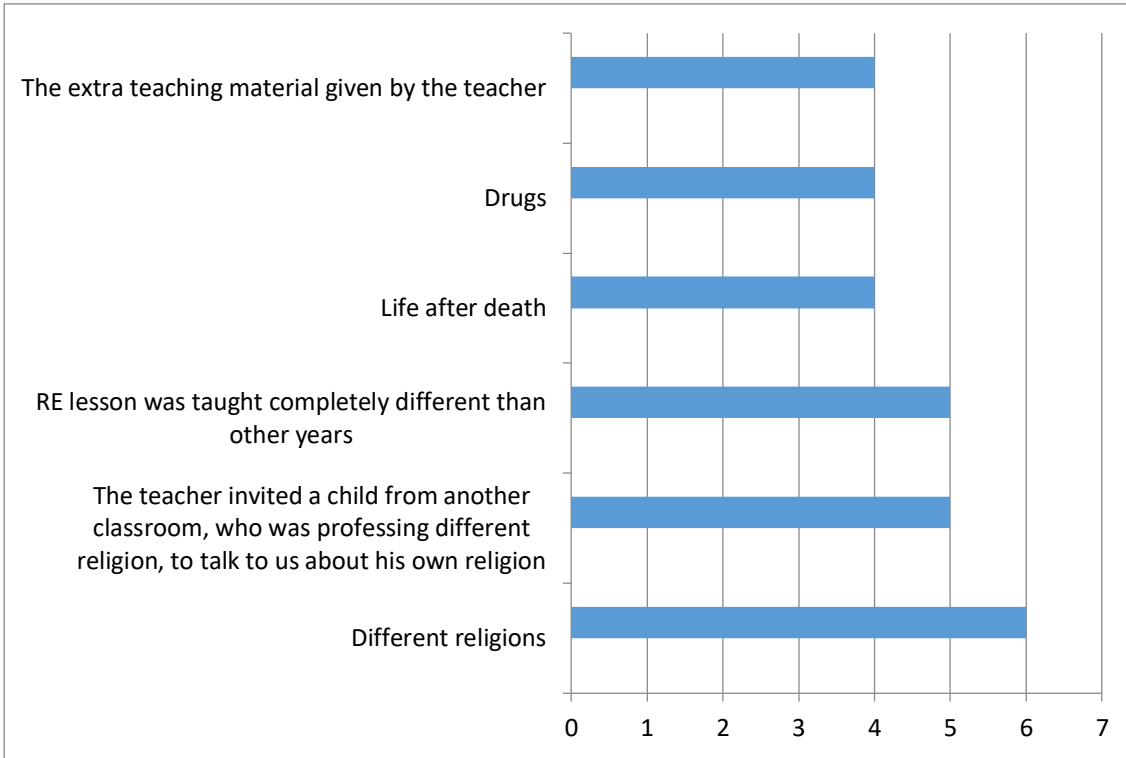
Table 126: What was different in RE this year
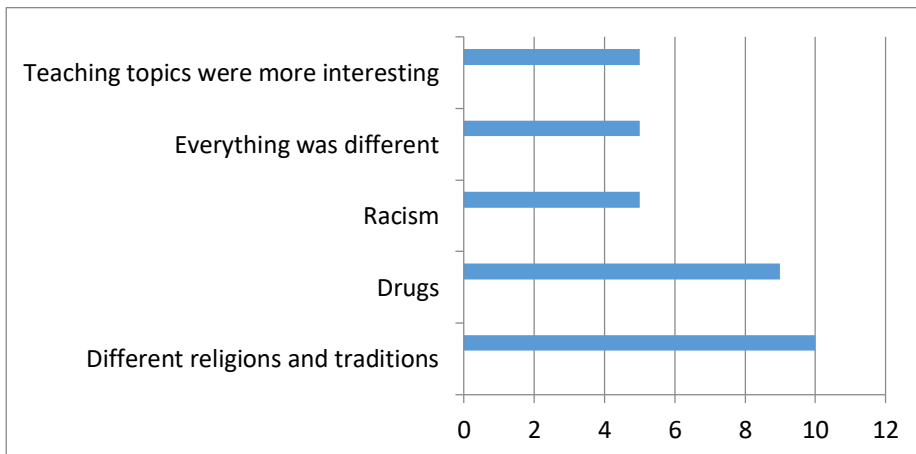
Table 127: What else would pupils like to be taught in RE
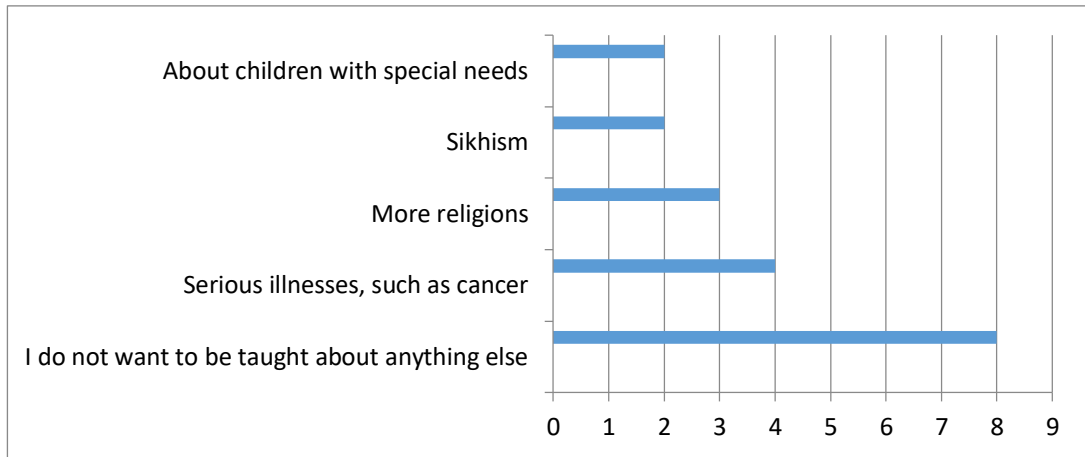
Table 128: How much interesting were the RE topics this year
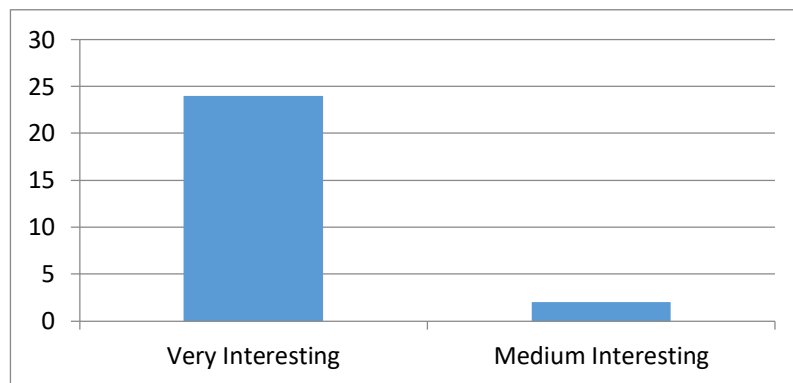
Table 129: The most interesting teaching topics were included
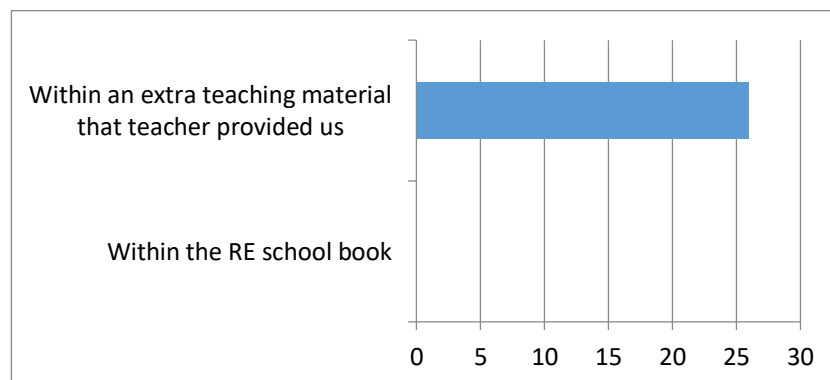
Table 130: Coding pupils' answers in categories and subcategories

Orthodox Doctrine
1. Drawing and coloring icons and pictures.
2. Jesus, Saints and Christian prayers.
3. Jesus' parables and miracles.
4. Learning more about God.
5. Orthodox Churches.
6. Byzantine psalms.
7. Details about Jesus' life.
8. A critical approach to Orthodox Christianity – Pupils' religious doubts.

RE as a Teaching Subject
1. RE as a relaxing subject.
2. RE as a theoretical and a boring subject.
3. RE teaching books.
4. Expressing thoughts and views.

Contemporary life in Cyprus
1. Contemporary social issues and problems.

Spiritual Issues
1. Spiritual issues.
2. Origins of the universe.

Health Education
1. Environmental education.
2. Health education.

World Religions
1. World religions.
2. Converting into another religion.
3. Skepticism towards other religions.
4. Religious symbols.
5. Other people's dietary habits.
6. Learning about different customs, ethics, religious celebrations and traditions.
7. Learning about other religions because of curiosity.
8. Learning about other religions because of personal reasons.
9. Learning about other religions because of social reasons.
10. Comparing religions.

Universal Values and Human Personality
1. Improving human personality.
2. Developing love and understanding.
3. RE for human-universal values.
4. The common purpose of all religions.

Pupils' Religious Misconceptions
1. Pupils' most frequent misconceptions.

The Orthodox Christian Education through the eyes of a Muslim child
1. The Orthodox Christian Education through the eyes of a Muslim child.

Table 131: Interviewing primary school teachers

4) What do you see as the main teaching purposes of Religious Education in the Primary School?
5) What do you see as the main difficulties and challenges that teachers face in teaching religious education in primary schools in Cyprus at the moment?
6) What changes do you think should be made to the teaching of religious education? Do you think that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum? If so, what?
7) How can multicultural education be promoted through Religious Education?
8) Would you like to have the opportunity to teach non-Christian religions?

Table 132: Coding teachers' answers in categories and subcategories

The main teaching purposes of RE in the Primary School
1. The development of love.
2. Love towards God.
3. Love towards people.
4. Love towards the universe.
5. Love towards the environment.
6. Learn how to worship God.
7. Participation in the Holy Sacraments.
8. Respect of the human personality.
9. Respect and accept people that practice different religions.
10. Teach the religion that is practiced by the majority.
11. Teaching about world religions and beliefs.
12. Topics from everyday life: religious, spiritual, emotional and psychomotor.
13. The principles of Christianity.
14. Children to realize that all people are equal and that God loves everybody despite their religion.
15. Moral and universal values such as love, friendship, appreciation, equality and antiracism.
16. Taught about different social issues and problems, such as drug addiction, bullying and racism.

The main difficulties and problems in teaching RE
1. There are so many children in schools who profess different religions, other than Christian Orthodox.
2. There are so many children whose families follow religious "heresies", such as Jehovah witnesses.
3. Many teachers lack knowledge regarding religious matters and have not got any religious experience (i.e. they do not practice their religion, Christian Orthodoxy).
4. There is not any effective or sufficient training for teachers, during their university studies, regarding the teaching of RE.
5. No supportive seminars regarding the teaching of RE are available from the Ministry of Education.
6. The RE curriculum and related textbooks are not appropriate because focus mainly on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity and on topics that are not so interesting for the children.

7. RE textbooks are mainly focused on the teaching of the principles and regulations of Christian Orthodox doctrine.
8. The teaching of universal values is being neglected within these textbooks.
9. Insufficient teaching time for RE lessons.
10. Teachers often teach other lessons at the expense of RE

Recommended changes in the teaching of RE

1. Respect each other's individuality regardless of colour, ethnicity or religion.
2. Teachers to respect all pupils' views and identity.
3. Teachers during their university studies should be taught strategies and ways of how to teach RE.
4. Teachers and the Ministry of Education should be aware of how RE is taught in other European countries.
5. The Ministry of Education should organise seminars regarding the teaching of RE.
6. The RE syllabus and related textbooks should be reformed and enriched with new teaching topics.
7. RE not to encourage the memorization or rote learning of information.
8. Textbooks not to include a lot of information about Saints' biographies but to focus on Jesus' parables instead.

Additional RE Teaching Topics

1. World religions.
2. Pupils need to realize through RE lessons that Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion or the only correct, true religion.
3. Social issues.
4. Universal values
5. Parents' divorce.
6. Alcoholism
7. Smoking
8. Drugs
9. Gender relationships.
10. Racism
11. Peace and war.
12. Xenophobia
13. Environmental issues.
14. Different controversial issues.

Ways to promote Multicultural Education

1. The children who profess religions other than Orthodox Christianity to talk about their own religion during RE lessons, i.e. bring in some information and objects related to their own religion.
2. Teachers need to have some knowledge of the different religious traditions.
3. Teachers need to treat all children same despite their religious beliefs.
4. Teach children about the different world religions.
5. Teach children about the meaning of democracy and equality.
6. RE syllabus need to be reformed.
7. RE textbooks need to focus on the teaching of universal values such as love and friendship.

Teaching non-Christian religions

1. Willing to teach non-Christian religions as long as it is not at the expense of Orthodox Christianity.
2. If teachers have a good knowledge of their own religion, then it is easier for them to teach other religions.

3. Willing to teach other religions because it is important for children to encounter other religions as well.
4. Teaching non-Christian religions is interesting and challenging for teachers as well because in this way they can enrich their own knowledge and develop professionally.
5. Cyprus has become multicultural with people professing different religious traditions so it is important for children to be taught about different religions. In this way, they will become less prejudiced as well.
6. Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion or the only correct or true religion. There are other religions too which need to be recognized and addressed.

Control group's findings

Diagnostic Questionnaires

Table 133: RE is aiming to teach pupils about Christianity
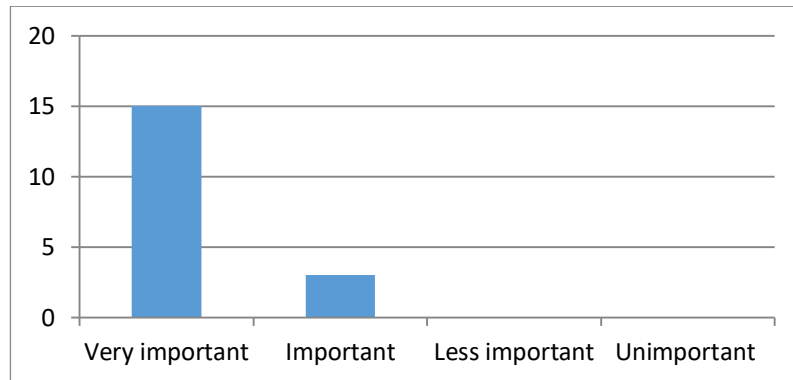
Table 134: RE is aiming to teach pupils how to become good Christians
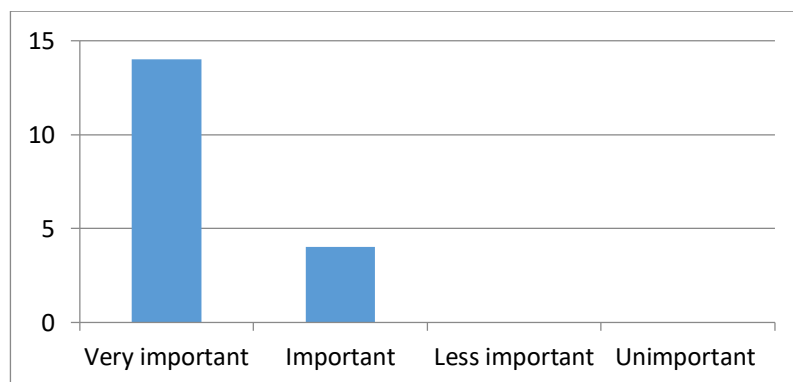
Table 135: RE is aiming to teach pupils about the various religions and faith systems
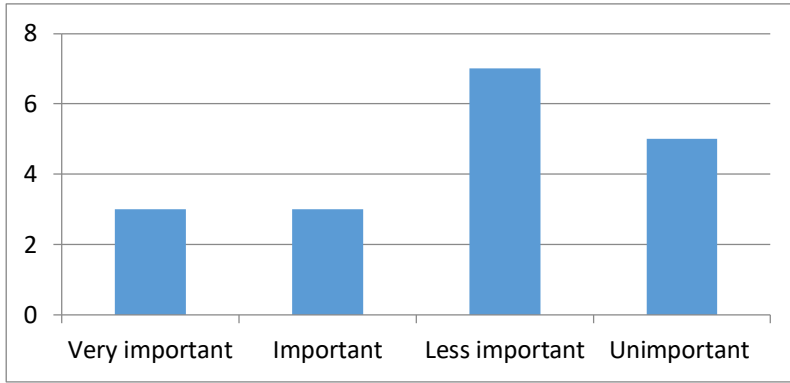
Table 136: RE is aiming to teach pupils how to understand, respect, appreciate and help every individual despite his/her cultural, religious, social or economic background
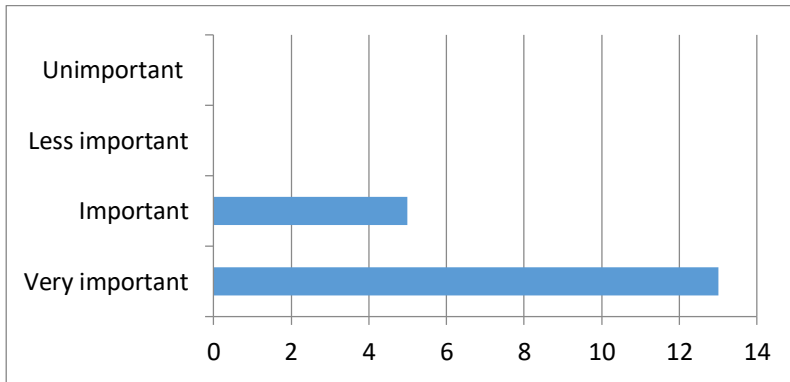
Table 137:
RE is aiming to teach pupils how to respect and protect the natural environment
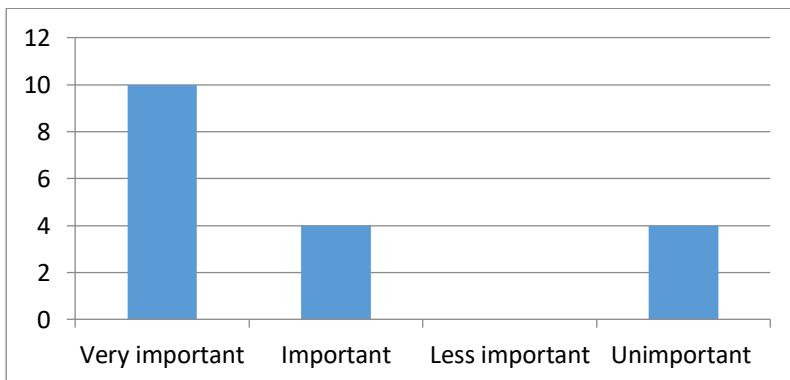
Table 138: The official ethnic groups-religious communities of Cyprus
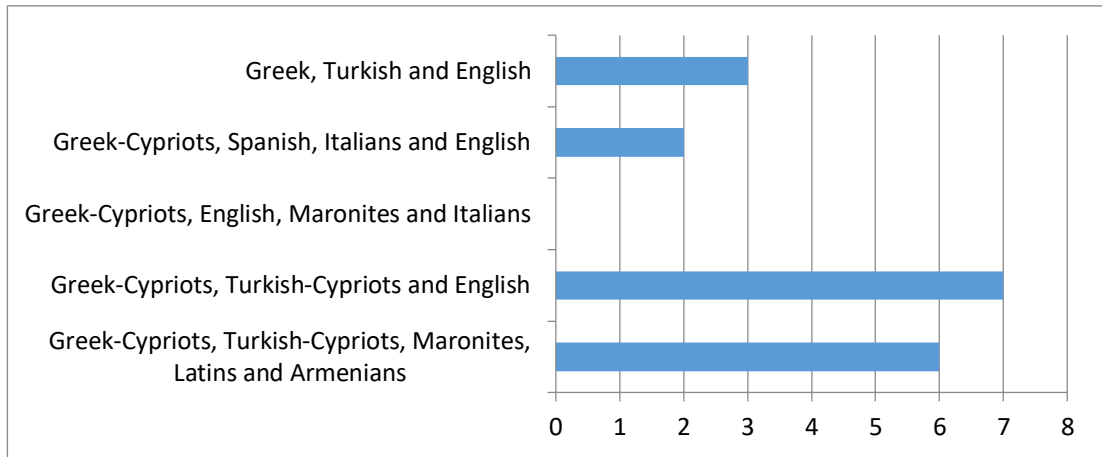
Table 139: Pupils' opinion about Greek-Cypriots

Table 140: Pupils' opinion about Turkish-Cypriots
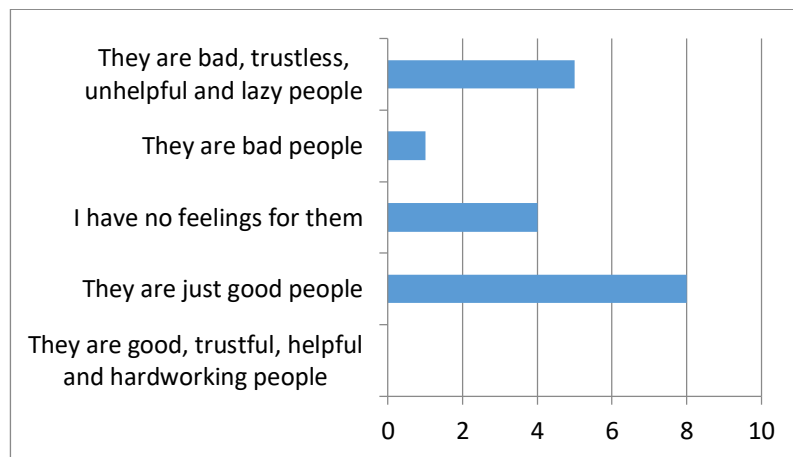
Table 141: Pupils' opinion about Armenians
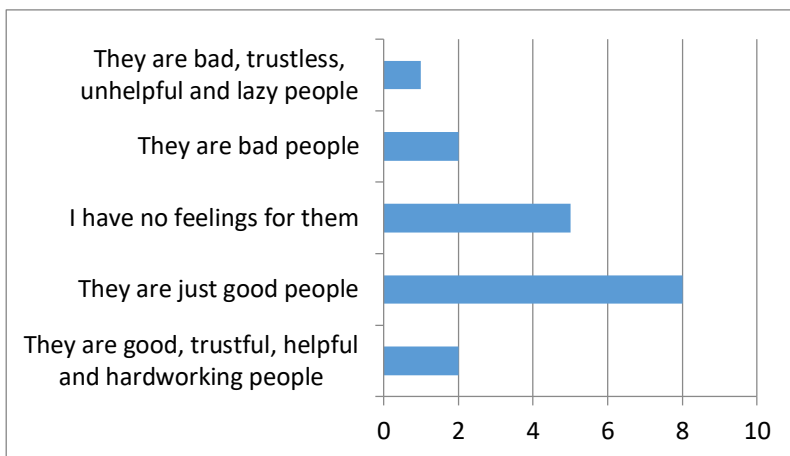
Table 142: Pupils' opinion about Maronite

Table 143: Pupils' opinion about Latins

Table 144: Pupils' opinion about the foreign workers in Cyprus

Table 145: The coexistence of people from different countries
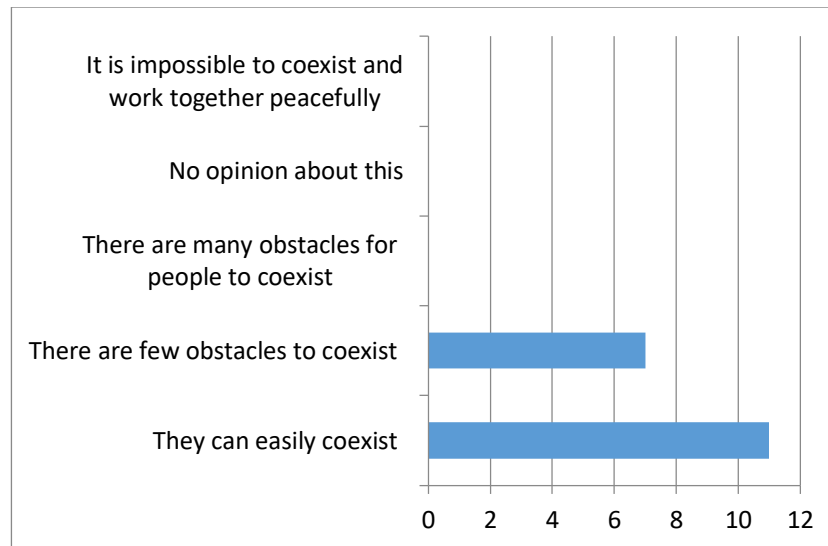
Table 146: Waking through their own neighborhood
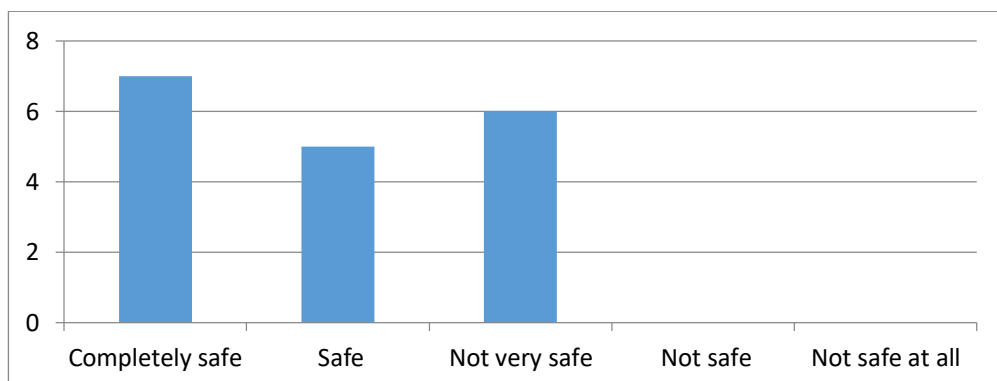
Table 147: Walking through areas where another community is in the majority
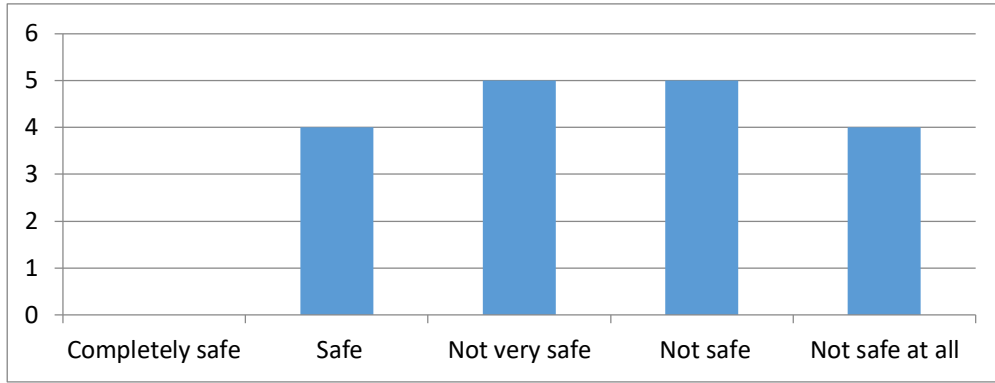
Table 148: Contact people with different religious background
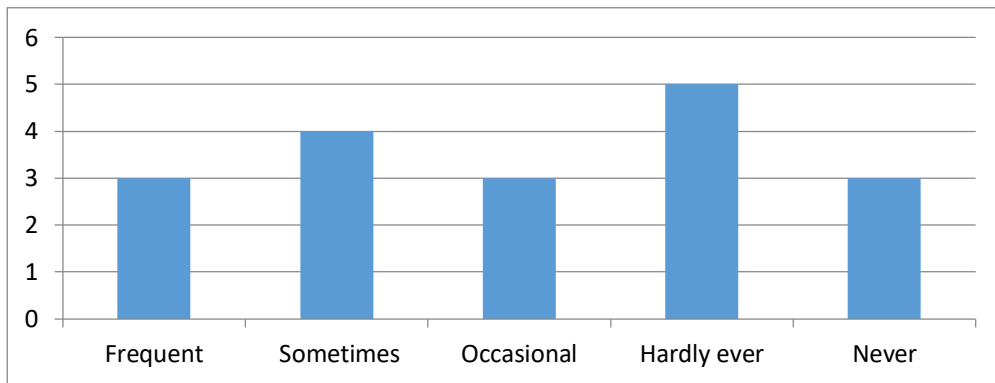
Table 149: Friends with different religious-ethnic background
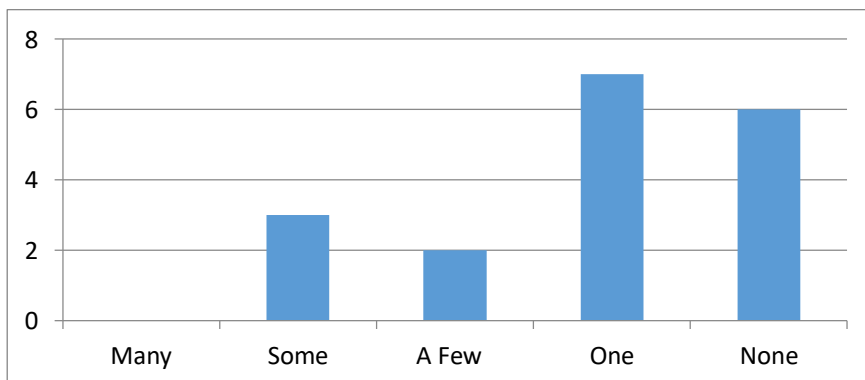
Table 150: Friends
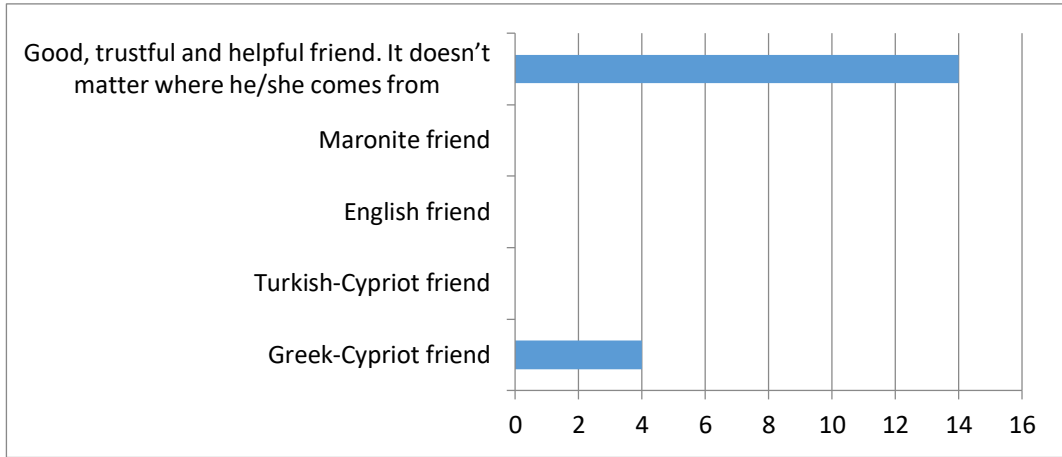
Table 151: Visiting North Cyprus
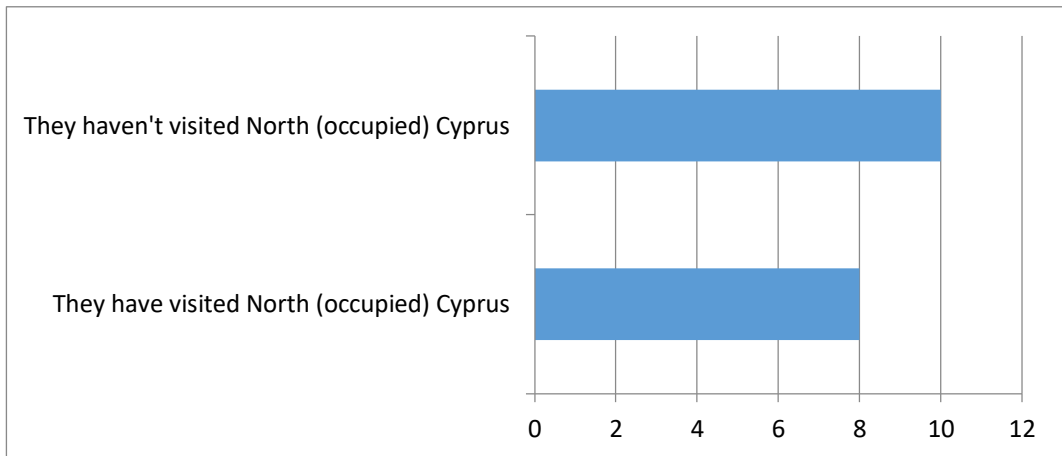
Table 152: Frequency of visiting North Cyprus
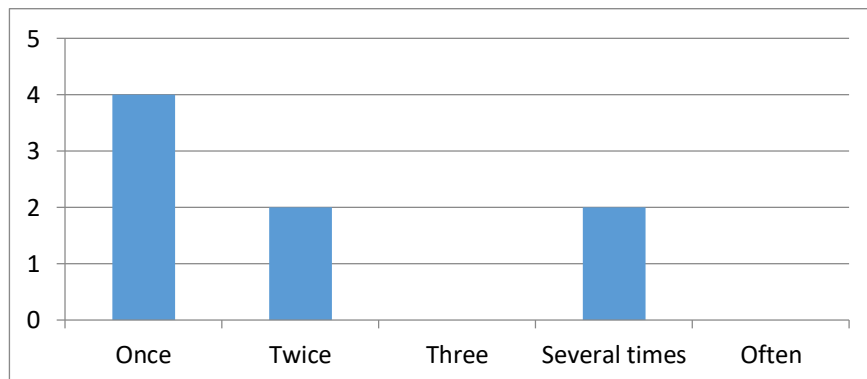
Table 153: Feelings about visiting North Cyprus
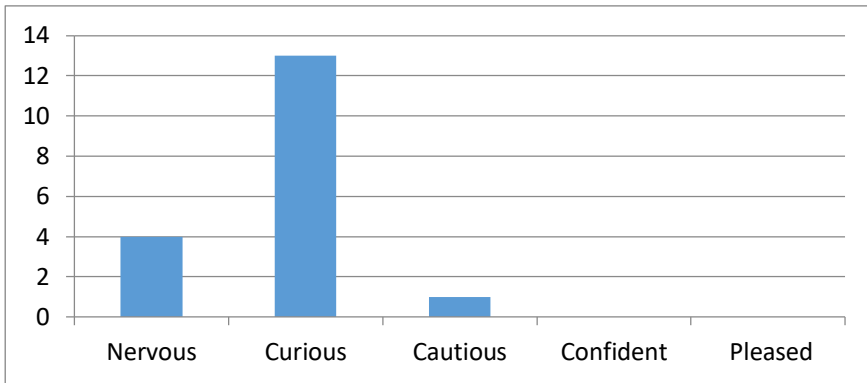
Table 154: The creation of the universe
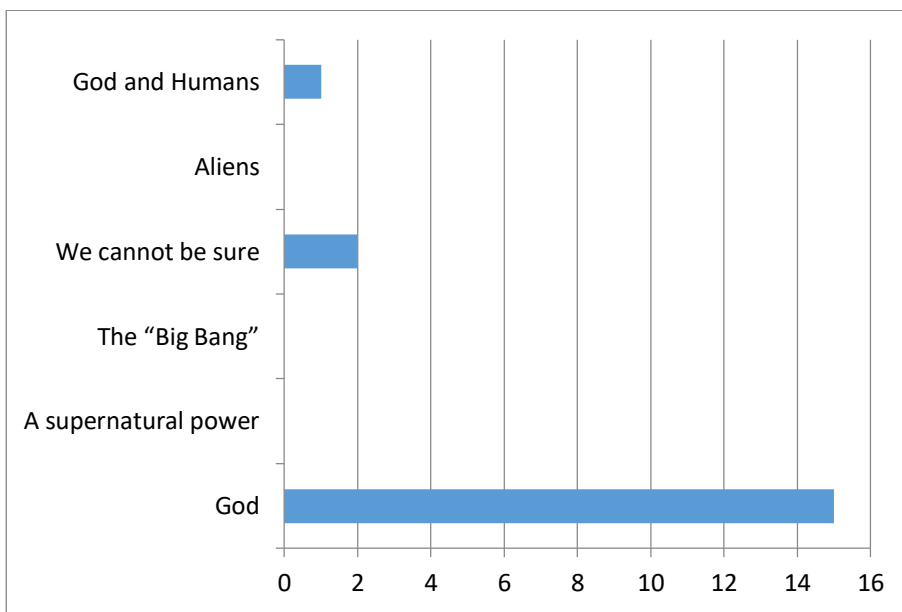
Table 155: Participation in cultural-religious activities
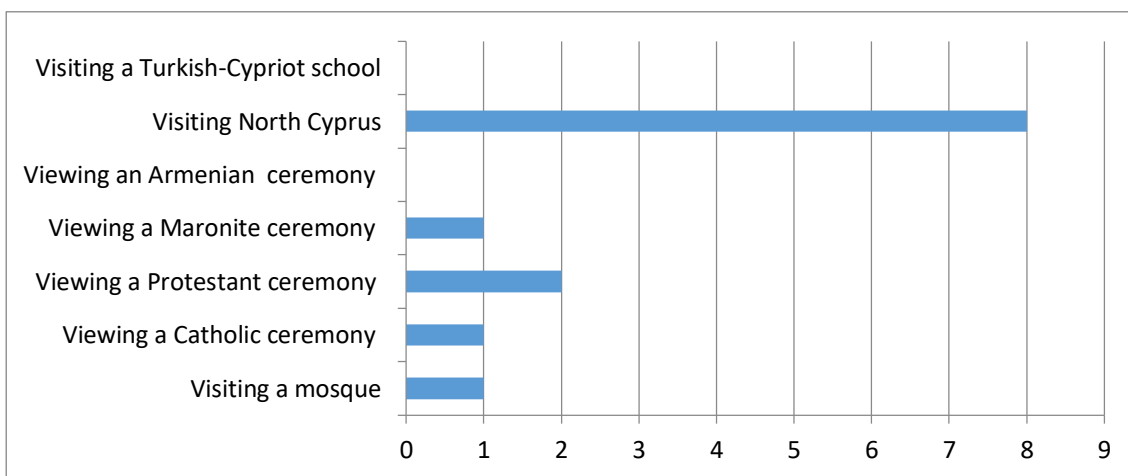
Table 156: Wish to participate again in cultural-religious activities
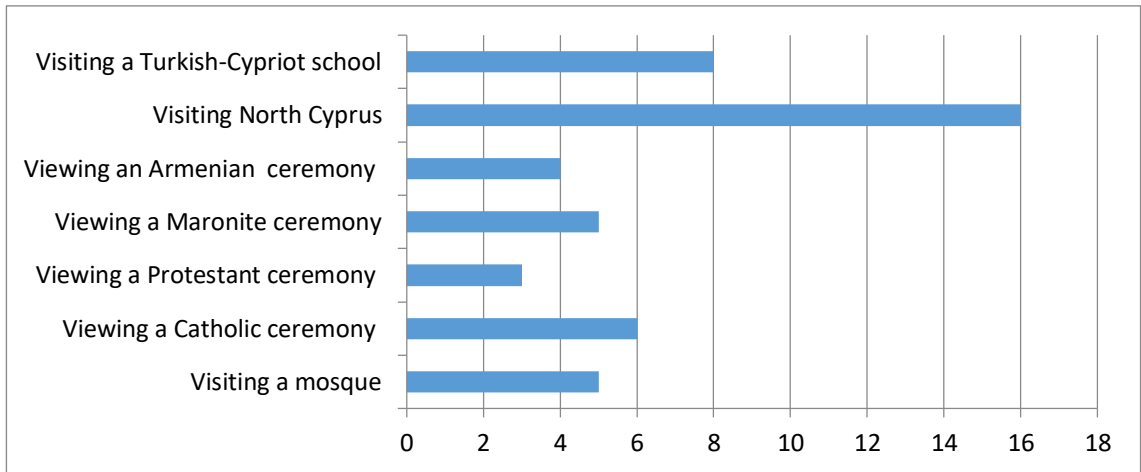
Table 157: World religions that pupils are aware of
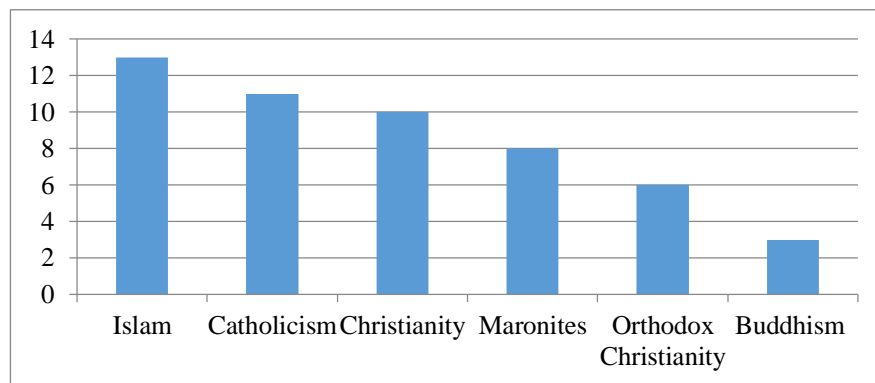
Table 158: Pupils' knowledge about the different religions
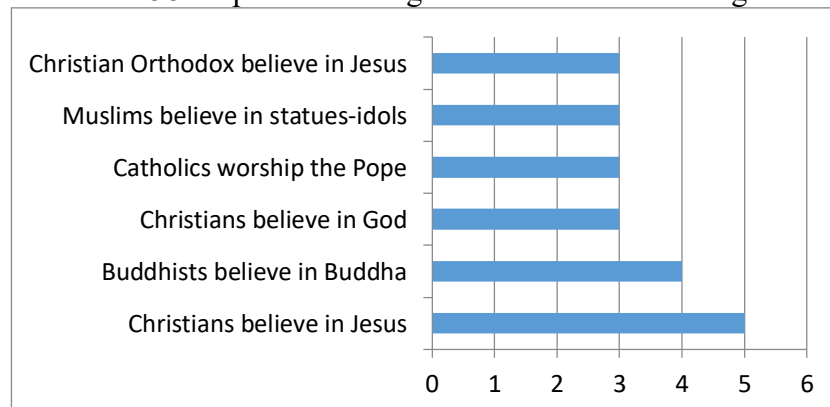
Table 159: Pupils wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend
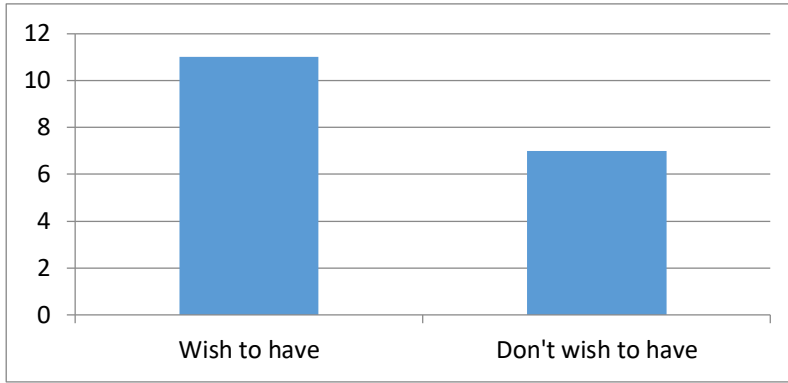
Table 160: Reasons why pupils wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend
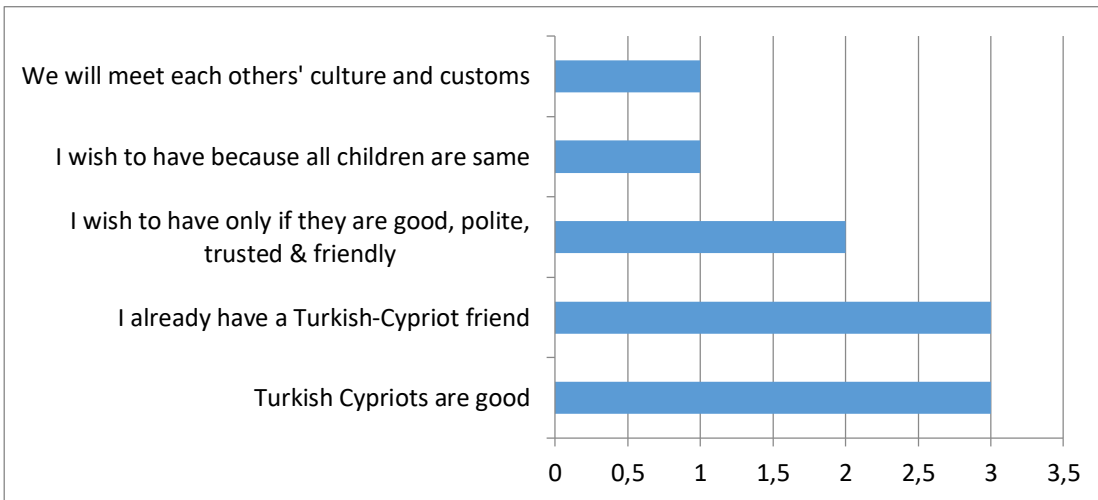
Table 161: Reasons why pupils do not wish to have a Turkish-Cypriot friend
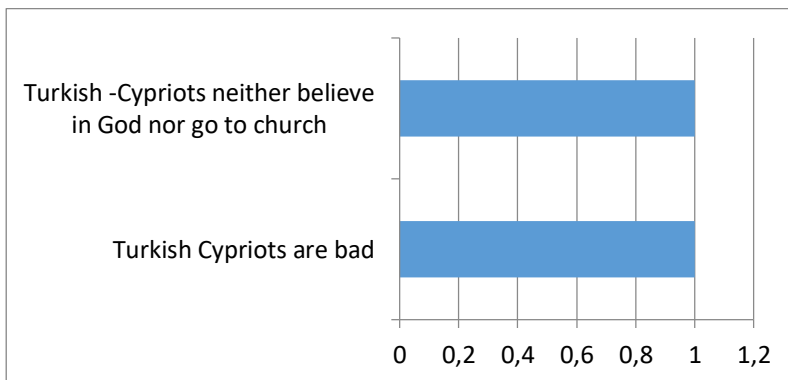
Table 162: The meaning of peace
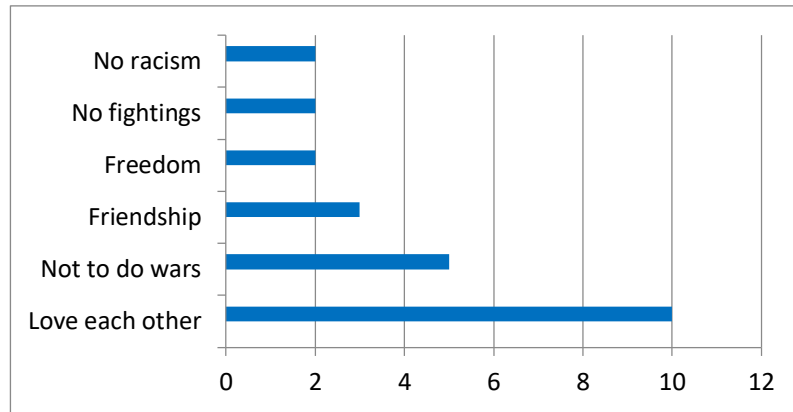
Table 163: The meaning of peaceful coexistence
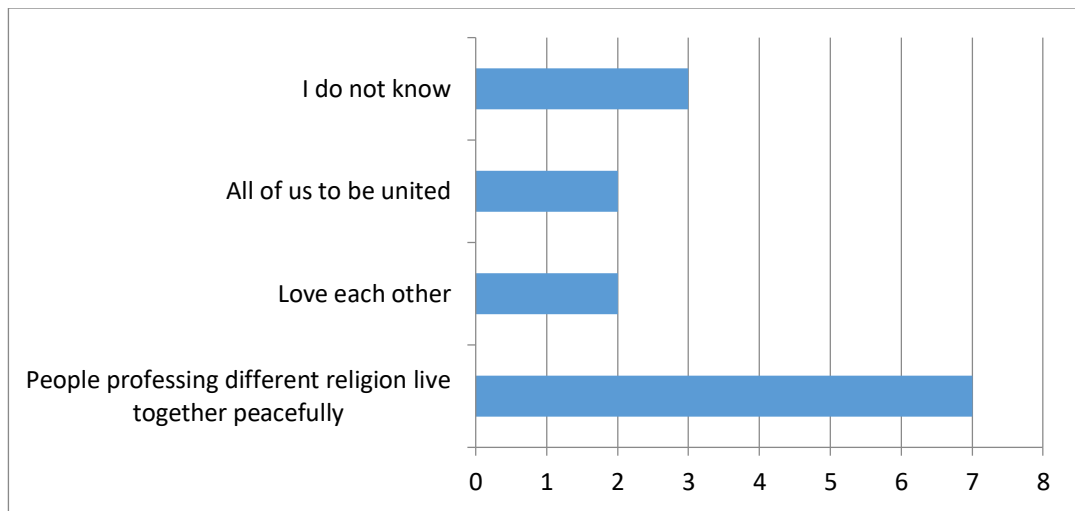
Table 164: Actions that can make our world more peaceful
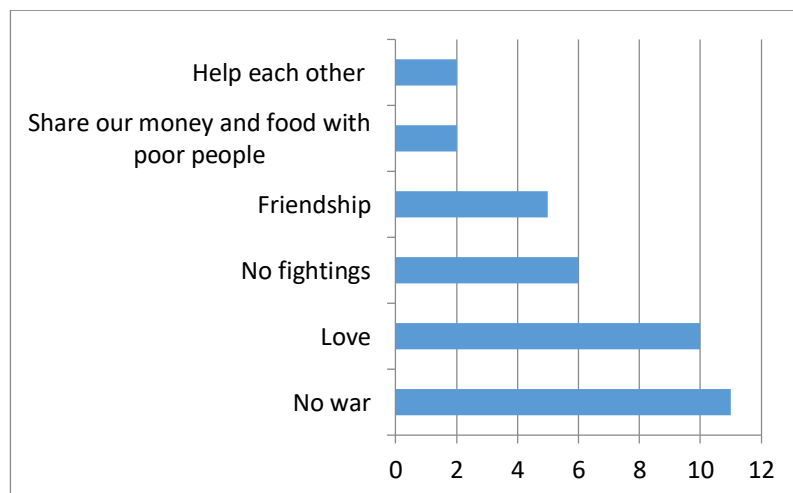
Table 165: Pupils' involvement in voluntary work activities
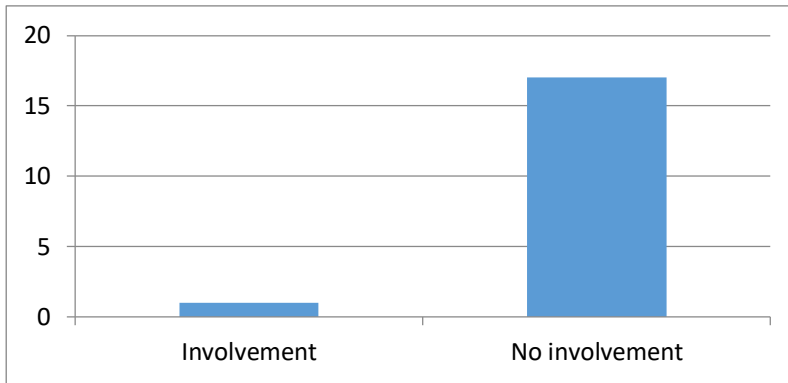
Table 166: Type of voluntary work activities

Only one pupil was collecting clothes for poor children.

Table 167: Pupils' opinion about euthanasia
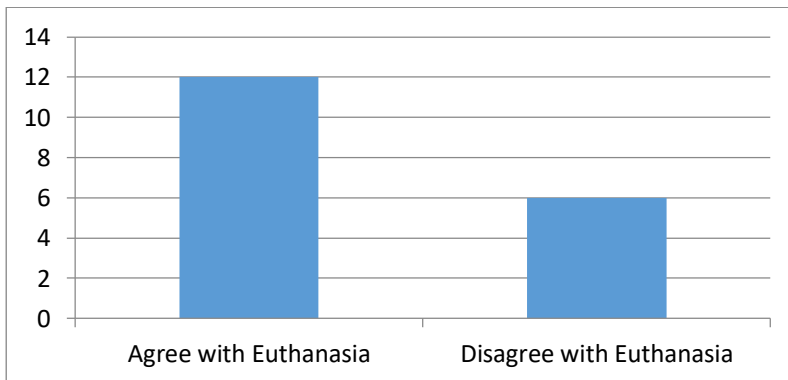
Table 172: Reasons why pupils agree with euthanasia
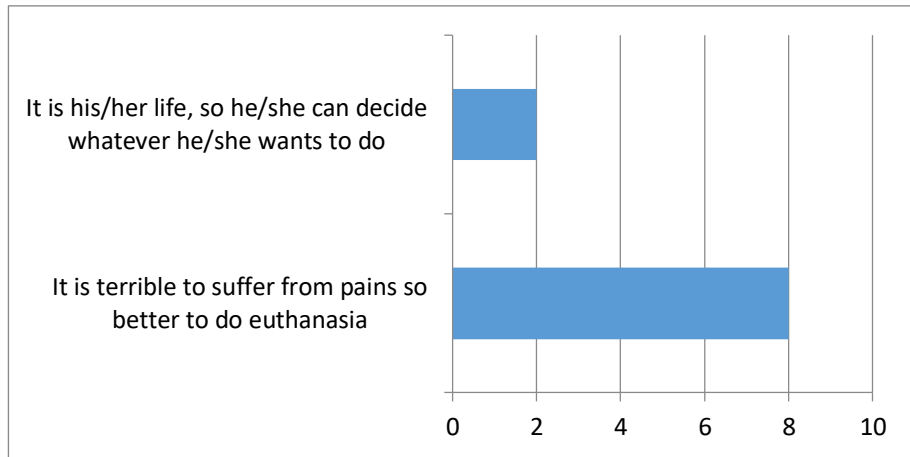
Table 173: Reasons why pupils do not agree with euthanasia
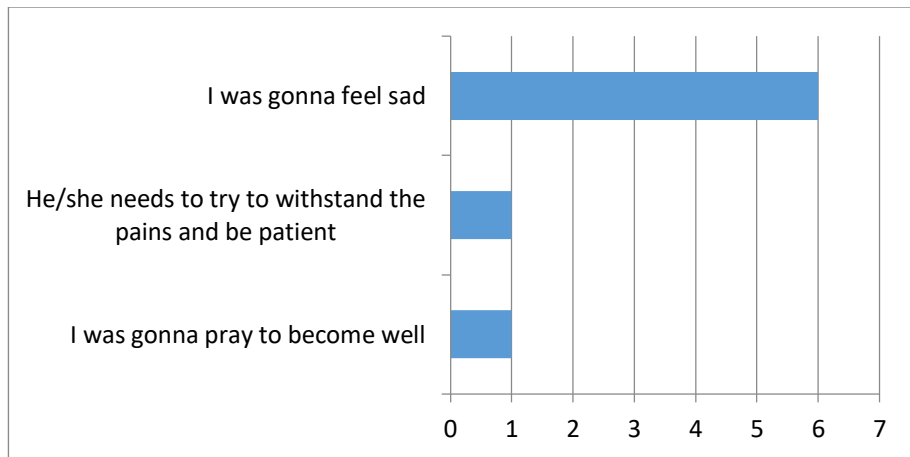
Evaluative Questionnaire

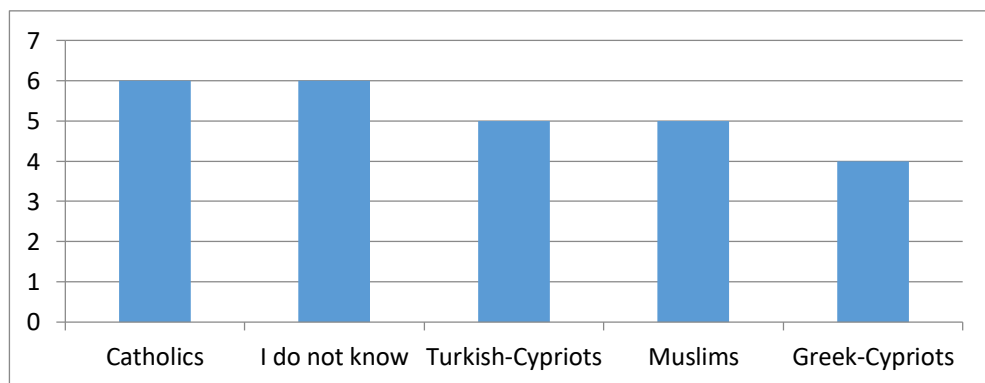Table 174: The religious communities of Cyprus

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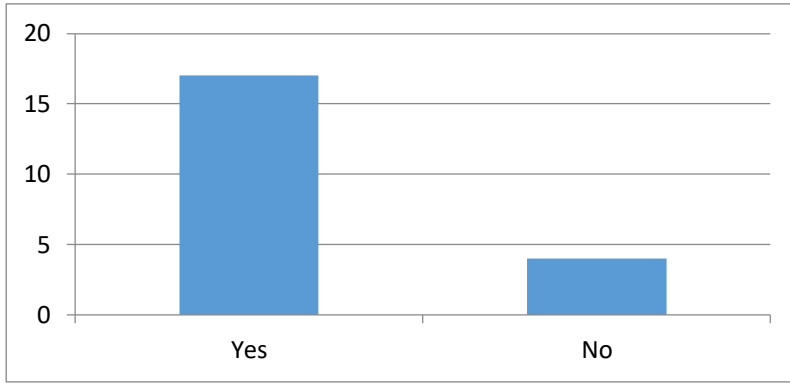Table 175: The peaceful coexistence of the religious communities of Cyprus

Table 176: The religious community of Cyprus that I like the most
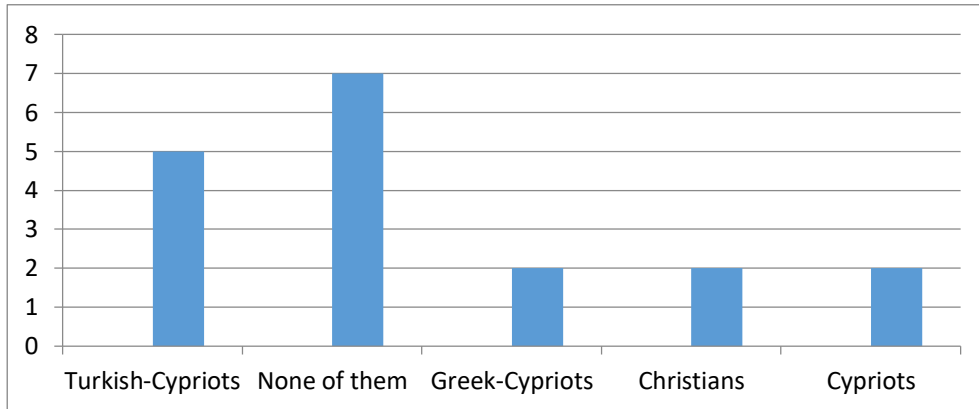

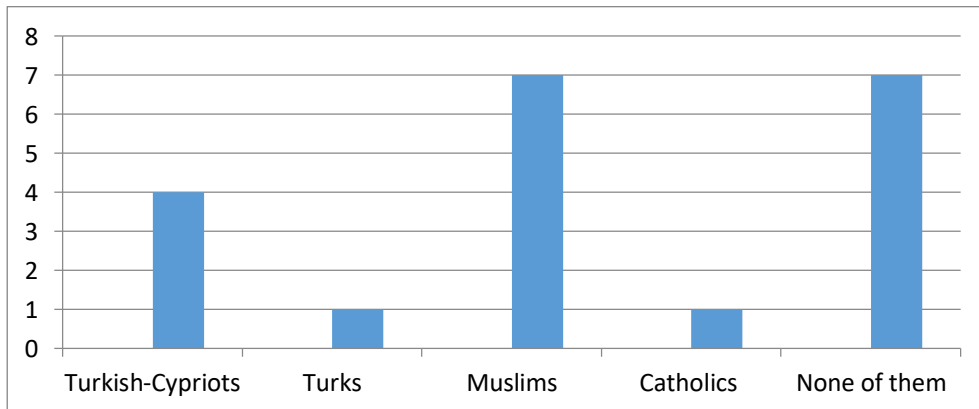Table 177: The religious community of Cyprus that I like the less
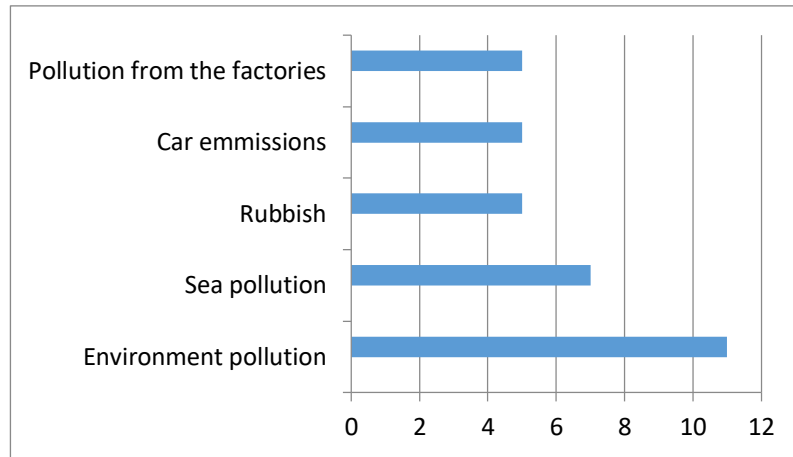
Table 178: Environmental problems

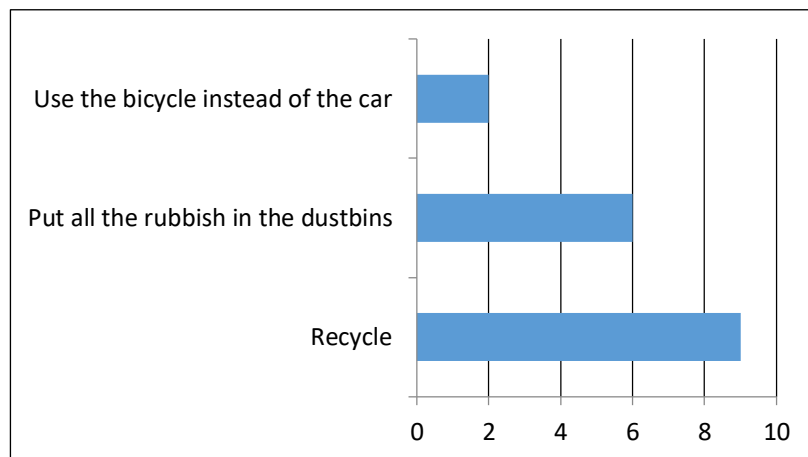Table 179: Ways to protect our environment

Table 180: Social problems that affect people's health seriously

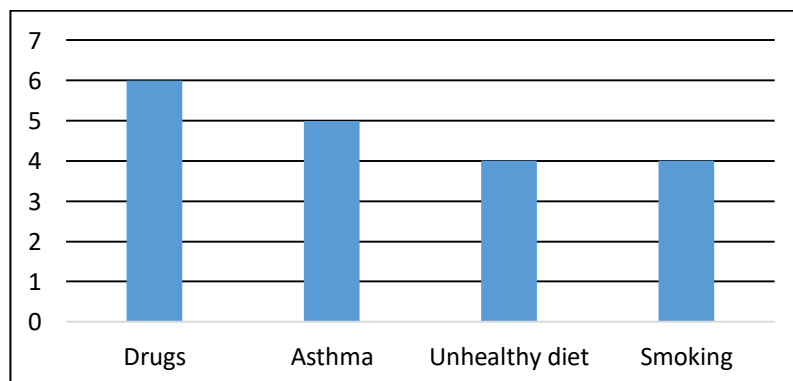Table 181: Ways to combat the social problems
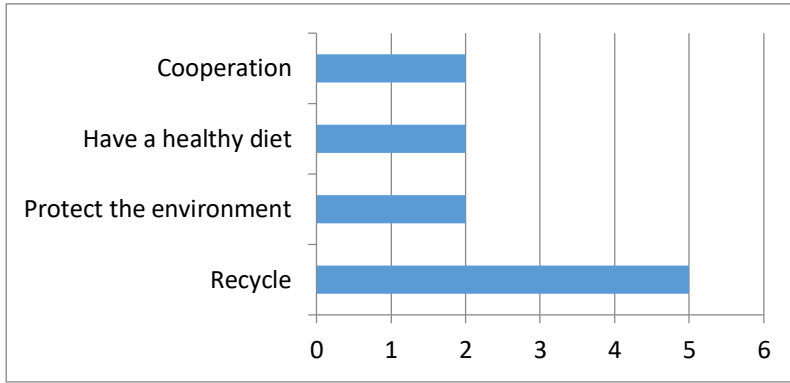
Table 182: Good actions that can make our world better
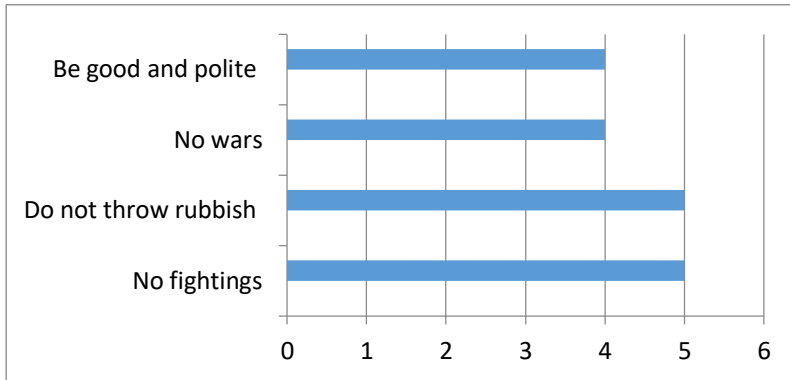
Table 183: Bad actions that make our world worse
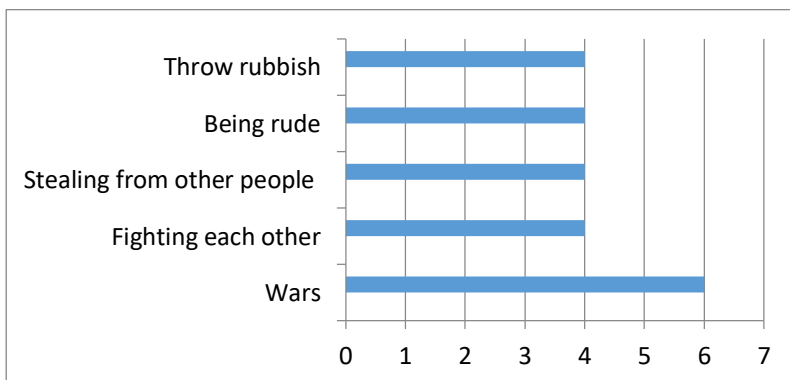
Table 184: Universal Values
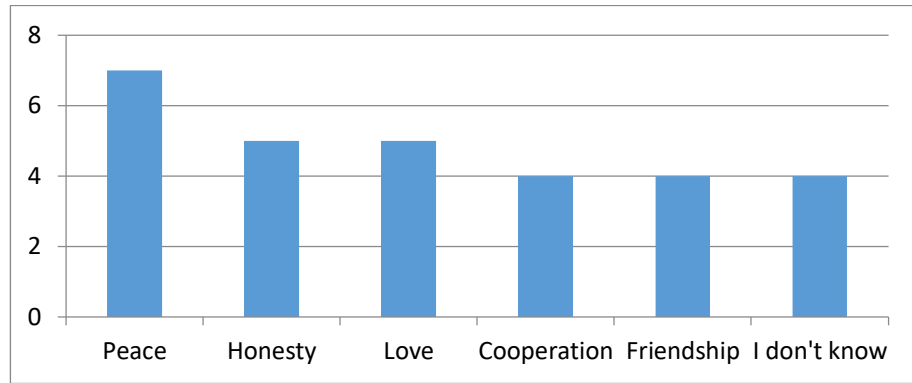
Table 185: The advantages of the peace
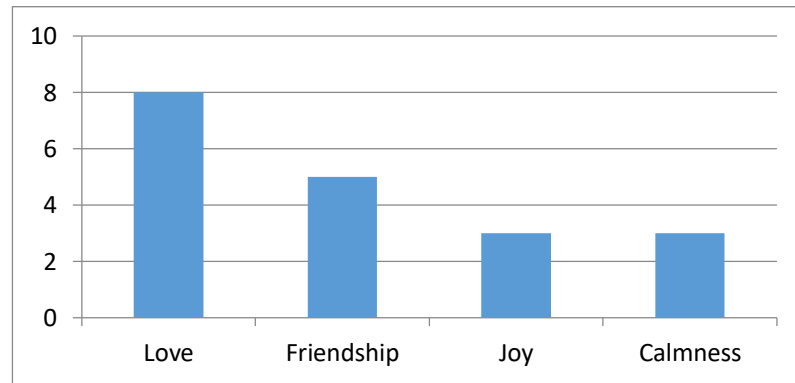
Table 186: The disadvantages of the war
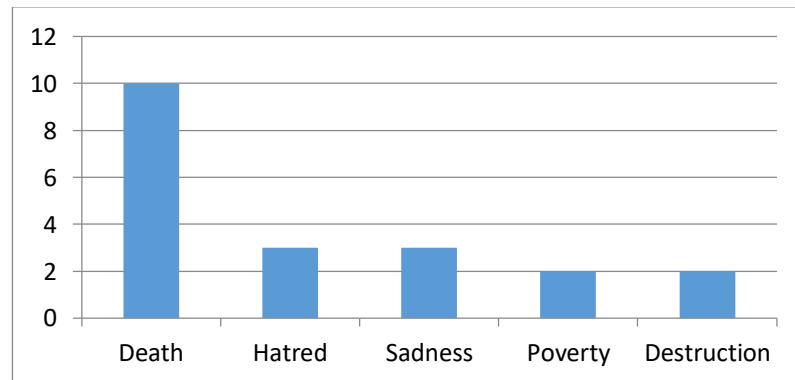
Table 187: Ways to help the poor and sick children around the world
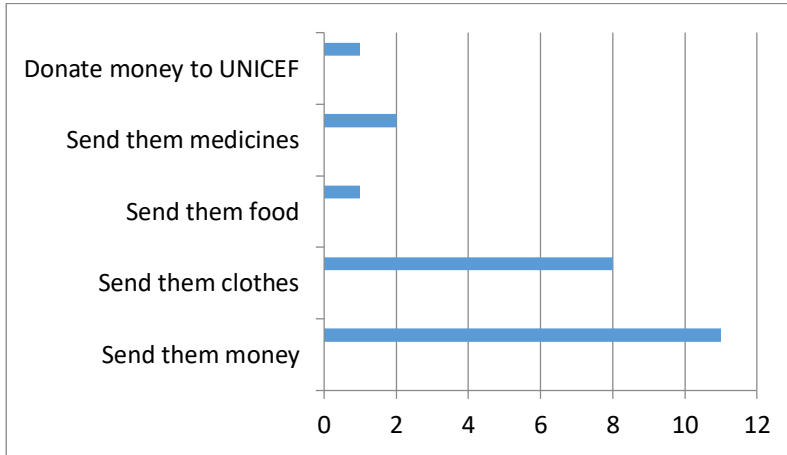
Table 188: Ways to combat racism
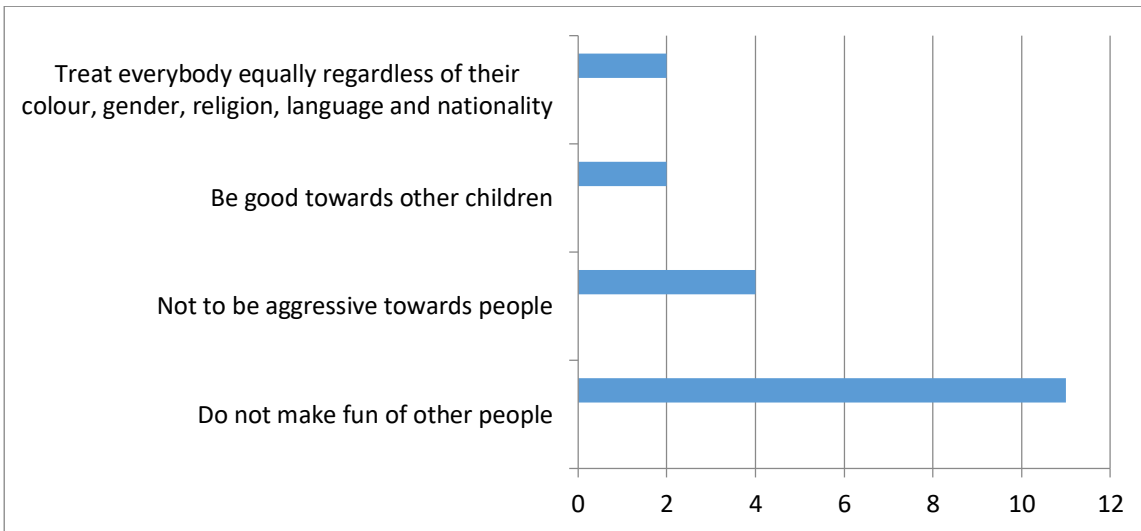
Table 189: The creation of the universe
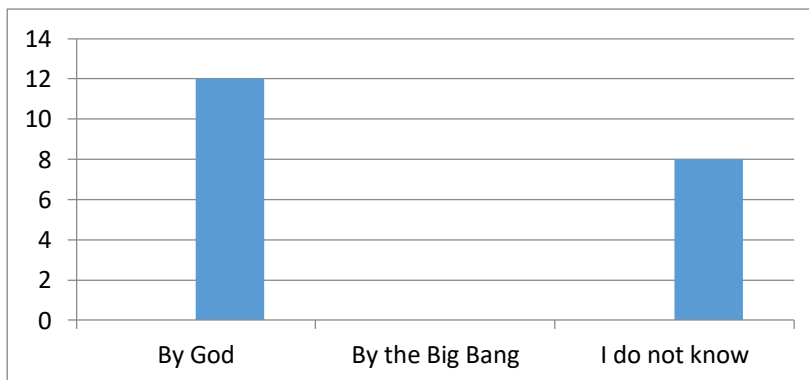
Table 190: Believe in life after death
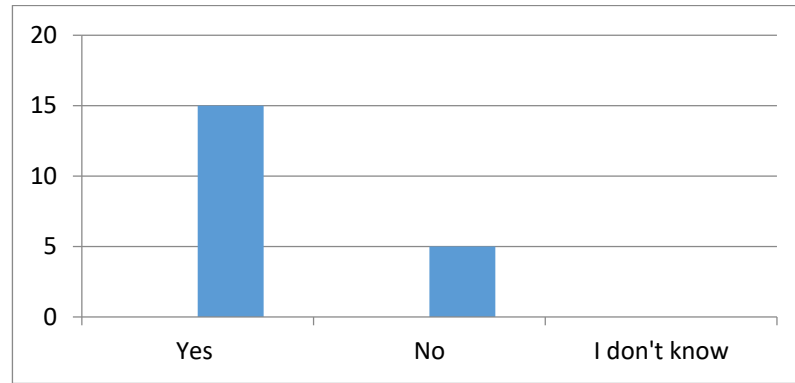
Table 191: When a person is seriously ill, we should be hoping to
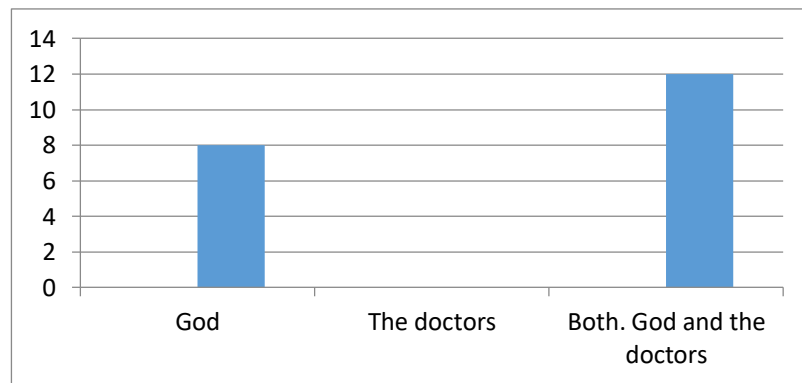
Table 192: Religions that pupils are aware of
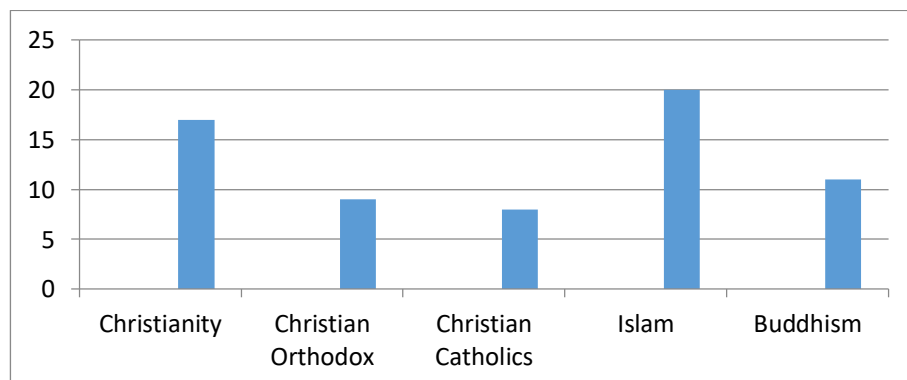
Table 193: The most impressive religion
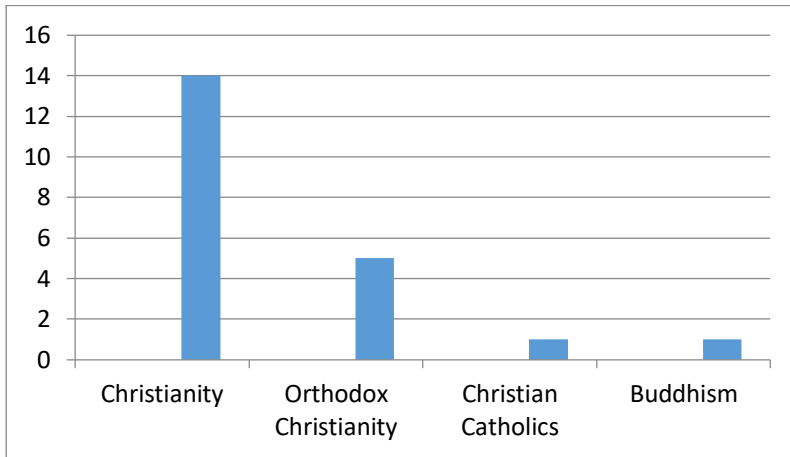
Table 194: All religions have something to teach us
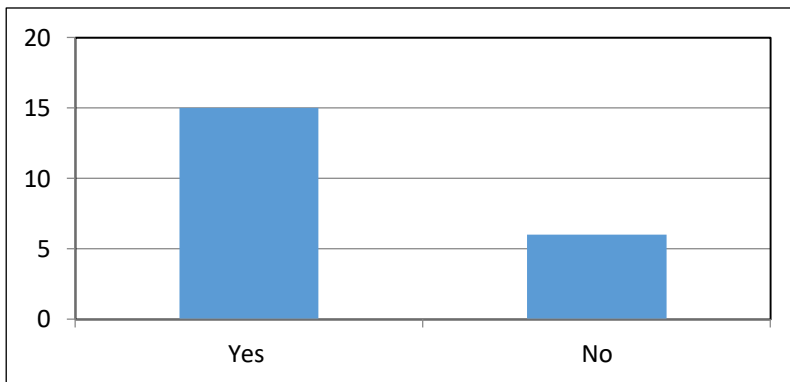
Table 195: It is good that there are so many and different religions around the world
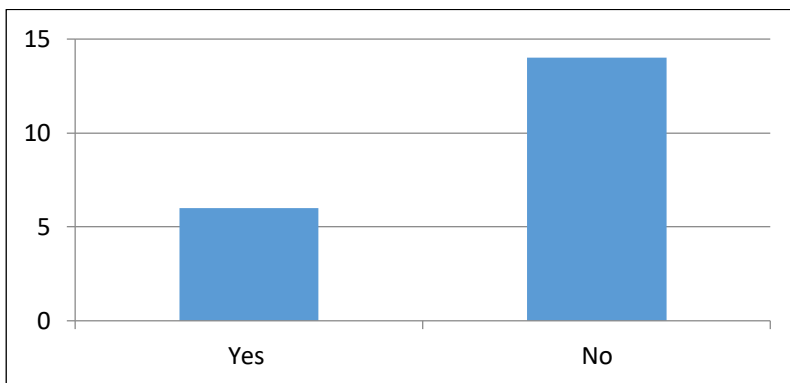
Table 196: What pupils like the most in RE this year
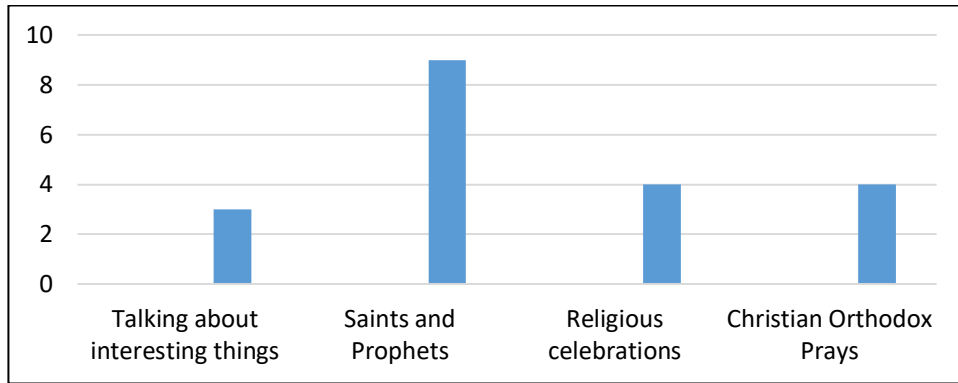
Table 197: What was different in RE this year
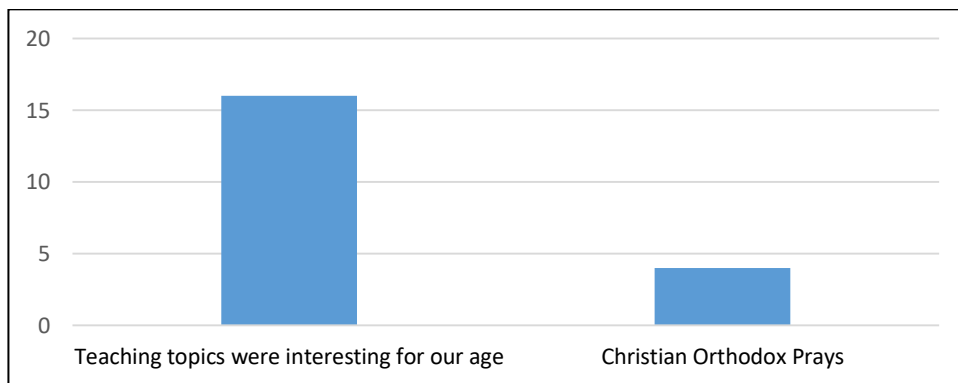
Table 198: What else would pupils like to be taught in RE
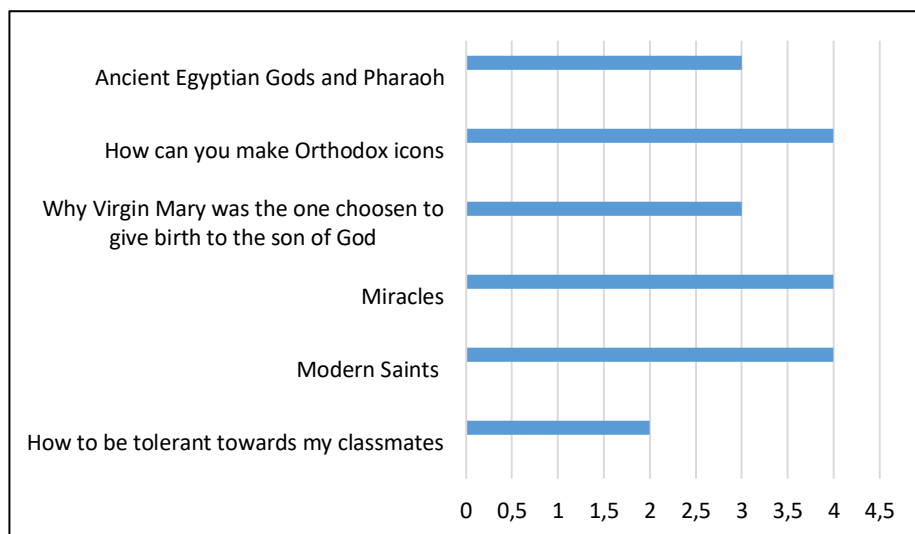
Table 199: How much interesting were the RE topics this year
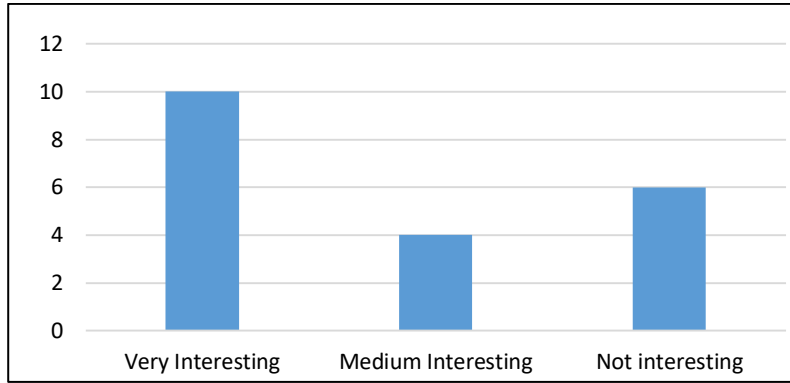
Appendix G

Interview Transcripts

Pupils' Transcripts

Research – Protocol Questions:

1) Do you find Religious Education an interesting subject? Explain your answer.
  (a)Tell me something that you find interesting.
  (b)Tell me something that you don't find interesting.

2) What would you like to be taught about during RE lessons? Would you like to be taught about something extra? If yes, what?

3) Would you like to be taught about other world religions? Yes/No? Explain your answer.

INTERVIEWS YEAR 1

(Boy, age 7)

1) I like a lot RE subject. I like it a lot because we are drawing and coloring pictures all the time! And because we are learning so many prayers. I like everything about RE. There is nothing that I don't like.

2) I would like to be taught more prayers and coloring more Saints' icons! I like to cut and paste more Saints' icons in our notebooks!

3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other religions because I want to find out what they do in their own religions and countries. To learn about their own God and traditional food.

(Girl, age 7)

1) Yes, I like religious education subject because we talk about Jesus. Also I like it because we draw and color Jesus' pictures and icons.

2) I would like to be taught about the environment and earth protection.

3) Yes, I want to be taught about other religions. I want to learn others' people language to communicate with them.

(Girl, age 7)

1) Yes, I like RE, firstly, because I like the teacher who teaches RE and secondly, because is one of the good subjects. We are taught how to do the sign of the cross when we pray. We draw crosses in our notebooks. I like everything about RE because we talk about Jesus all the time.

2) There isn't anything else that I want to be taught during RE.

3) Yes, I want to be taught about other religions because I don't know anything about other religions, so I want to learn about them. I like foreign religions. It's good to learn about other religions in other countries. Also, it's good to be taught foreign languages.

(Boy, age 7)

1) Yes, I like RE because we do nice things. We learn interesting things about God.

2) I want to know when Jesus was crucified. What date did he crucify?

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3) I want to be taught about other religions because I want to know whether other people believe in God and Jesus as well and to find out if they love Jesus.

(Girl, age 7)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about Church and Jesus Christ.
2) I would like to be taught about Easter.
3) Yes, I like it when we learn about other religions because we learn about other countries.

(Boy, age 7)
1) I like RE because we talk about Jesus Christ. I don't like it when we have to do assignments. It is boring when we do assignments.
2) I would like to do more drawings during RE. I love drawing and coloring pictures.
3) I like to learn about other religions. To learn and coloring religious symbols and pictures. I liked the star and moon symbol (Islam) and the candles (Judaism).

(Boy, age 7)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about Jesus Christ and about our country.
2) I would like to learn more about Jesus life, especially how He was crucified.
3) I would like to learn about other world religions.

(Girl, age 7)
1) Yes, I like RE because we are drawing and we are writing. Because we are learning very interesting things. Sometimes I feel bored especially when we write.
2) I would like to learn more about Jesus, how he was born, how he was baptized.
3) Yes, I want to learn about other religions.

(Girl, age 7)
1) Yes I like RE because we are taught about so many things! Teacher is so good and teaches us so many nice things. We are drawing and coloring in pictures.
2) I like to color in and draw more pictures.
3) Yes, I want to learn about other world religions.

(Girl, age 7)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about Jesus and Virgin Mary.
2) I want to learn more about God because we just have been taught only about Jesus and Virgin Mary.
3) No, I don't want to learn about other religions because I don't like it.

INTERVIEWS YEAR 2

(Boy, age 8)
1) Yes, I like RE subject because we are coloring Saints' icons and other pictures and because we cut and paste in our notebooks pictures and then we are coloring them. I like

it when we write information about Saints. There isn't anything that I don't like. I like everything about RE subject!

2) Some extra things that I want to be taught during RE subject is about Jesus' life. How Jesus was born and how He was died, how Virgin Mary was baptized and how she got married. I also want to learn more about Saints and Angels.

3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other world religions because I want to learn how other people believe to God and about the Saints of other religions. And learn how the other religions were created.

(Girl, age 8)

1) Yes, I like RE because we are learning about Jesus when he was little and about Virgin Mary.

2) There isn't anything else that I would like to be taught about in RE.

3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other world religions so that I learn more about Jesus and Virgin Mary.

(Boy, age 8)

1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about Saints.

2) I would like to draw and color in more Saints' icons. To draw more pictures in our notebooks.

3) Yes, I want to learn about other religions because I want to know in what they believe.

(Girl, age 8)

1) Yes, I find RE subject an interesting subject because we learn about Jesus, Virgin Mary and about Church. Mostly I like it because the teacher reads poems and also we do interesting assignments about Jesus in our notebooks. I love everything about RE. There is nothing that I don't like.

2) During RE I want to be taught also about the animals created by God.

3) Yes, I want to learn about other religions, especially about Islam which is the religion of Syrian people. Because my new father, new husband of mum is from Syria. Sometimes he makes jokes to us and does his cross even though he is not a Christian. You know, in Syria, he has ten brothers and ten sisters! I want to learn about other religions. I want to know in what they believe in other countries. People from other religions they speak different language and they act different.

(Boy, age 8)

1) I like RE because we talk about Jesus. We learn about Saints. Mostly I like it when the teacher says stories to us and when we do assignments.

2) I would like to learn more details about Jesus' crucifixion and when Judas betrayed Jesus.

3) No I don't want to learn about other religions. I know that other people in other countries, they believe in other Jesus, different than our Jesus.

(Girl, age 8)

1) I like RE for many reasons. We are learning so many things about Jesus, God and Saints.

2) There isn't anything extra that I want to be taught. We learned everything in RE subject.

3) Yes, I want to be taught about other religions because I am curious to learn what other people believe in. I want to learn what they believe about their own God.

(Girl, age 8)

1) Yes, I find RE subject interesting because we do interesting things: we write. Also the head teacher, who teaches us the RE subject, he says many jokes and we laugh. I like it because we learn about Jesus, the Saints and the Churches. Also we are taught about the different religious celebrations.

2) I would like to write more about God. Maybe to write a poem about God. And to learn more about Jesus' life.

3) Yes I would like to learn about other religions because I want to know how other people are. To learn about their saints. I want to know what they feel about their own God.

(Girl, age 8)

1) Yes, I like RE because it is a nice subject. We do so many things. We write, we talk about Jesus, Virgin Mary, about Saints, about so many things, about everything.

2) I want to draw all Saints. To talk about all Saints.

3) Yes, I want to learn about other religions because it is nice. I want to know why they believe in Jesus and to God.

(Boy, age 8)

1) Yes, I like RE because we talk about Jesus, how he was born. Re is so nice. RE teaches us how we can become good people. I like it because we write and we make drawings.

2) In RE I want to be taught more about how we can be better people.

3) Yes, I want to be taught more about other religions because I want to know in what they believe in other countries and what they do in other countries. Also, I want to know how they talk, how their language is. To find out about their own churches and how their churches look like. How their own priest is doing the liturgy! To find out about their own icons in their churches and if they also light candles.

(Girl, age 8)

1) Yes, I find RE subject an interesting subject because we learn about Jesus Christ and about how can we be polite towards other people.

2) I want to learn more about Jesus Christ, how he was crucified.

3) Yes, I want to be taught about other religions because I want to know in what other people believe.

INTERVIEWS YEAR 3

(Boy, age 9)

1) Yes, I find RE subject an interesting subject because we learn about Jesus Christ and about the different religions of other people. We also learn that Jesus was crucified for us (we have to respect and worship Jesus because he was sacrificed for us) and that Muslims are the ones who crucified Jesus for no reason. Muslims are idolaters. Something that I

don't like in RE subject is that the teacher writes so many things on the board and she wants us to copy all those information in our notebooks! And that we have to do so many assignments in our books and notebooks. Also, the teacher talks a lot!

2) During RE lessons I would like to be taught mostly about others' people religions and faiths, more stories from the New Testament and to do more assignments on the Christian Saints. Also, I would like to know, how do we know for sure that Jesus' story (about being the son of God) is really true? Are Jesus' miracles true? Did he do those miracles for sure? Did he really say those parables? What did he really mean by telling parables? Did all those happen for sure? Who wrote Jesus' stories? How do we know that they are telling the truth? In what language were they written? If they were written in an ancient language, how can we understand them nowadays? How do we know that those scriptures were translated correctly?

3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other world religions because I would like to learn and understand how other people believe and pray to God. To find out about their own religious symbols. To learn why they have chosen to believe to that specific religion and why they have chosen those symbols. Each religion has its own God and Saints.

(Girl, age 9)
1) Yes, RE is interesting because we are taught about God and Saints.
2) I would like to be taught about Saint Spyridonas because he did a miracle for me. Once I was having a problem with my ears, so I prayed to him and he helped my ears to cure. He did a miracle for me.
3) Yes, I love to learn about other religions. Because I only know about Christianity, so I want to learn about other religions! In this way, when I meet someone professing a different religion, I will be able to talk with her and understand her better.

(Girl, age 9)
1) I like RE because we are taught about Jesus and we learn about our religion. Mostly I like it when we are taught about the world religions and what people eat.
2) I want to learn more about world religions.
3) I want to learn more about world religions because I want to know whether people from around the world are happy.

(Girl, age 9)
1) Yes, RE is interesting because we learn stories about Jesus and Saints. We also learn stories about other Gods.
2) I would like to learn more about other religions and other Gods.
3) I want to learn more about other religions because I like it to learn about new things and stories. The other religions are more interesting than our religion because we already know so many things about our own religion.

(Girl, age 9)
1) Yes, I like RE because we are taught about other religions and it's really nice! We learn about other religious symbols and it's also nice!
2) It would be nice to invite kids from other countries that profess different religions to speak to us about their countries, religions and way of life.
3) I like it to learn about other religions different than ours. It's interesting.

(Girl, age 9)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about Jesus and other Saints.
2) I want to learn more about other religions.
3) I want to learn about other religions because in this way is like we meet other people around the world! When I started learning about other religions I realized that other people are also friendly. Before, I thought they were bad and unfriendly! I also realized that they similar to us and we have so many things in common!

(Boy, age 9)
1) I like RE because we learn about our religion. I like it also when we learn about the different religions.
2) I would like to be taught more about religions.
3) I like learning about other religions and find out what other people worship and what they do in their everyday life.

(Boy, age 9)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn things about Jesus and about the religions of other countries.
2) In RE subject I want to learn about poor countries all over the world and try helping those countries.
3) Yes, I like to learn about other religions because we learn about other people's lives and how they live and what they do.

(Girl, age 9)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about the different religions.
2) I would like to be taught about my own religion, the Danish one, because I am from Denmark.
3) I would like to learn about other religions, because I discover things I didn't know before and we learn about the religions of other people.

(Boy, age 9)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about Jesus and about other religions. Especially I like it because we are taught about other religions. I like everything about RE.
2) I don't want to be taught about anything else in RE. All these are enough.
3) Yes, I want to be taught about other religions. I want to be taught about all the religions on earth! I want to know about other people's God, their churches and what their priest is called.

(Boy, age 9)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about different religions. Mostly I was excited during the lesson about Buddhism.
2) I want to learn other languages during RE subject. I want to learn how to speak English.
3) I like to learn about other religions. Especially about Buddha.

(Boy, age 9)
1) Yes, I like RE because we learn about God and also about other world religions.

2) No, there isn't anything else I want to learn in RE because I already have learned enough. Especially, in the afternoons, my grandfather talks to me about God and also he teaches me how to say the church orthodox psalms. I always go to church every Sunday and sometimes I even say the psalms and the prayers to all people there! So, maybe in RE I would like to taught some more psalms and about all Saints biographies. I want to know what all these Saints were doing for a job. What were their occupations? Also, to read many books those include Saints biographies. Mostly, I like the biographies of Sts. Cyprian and Justina. St Cyprian was a magician, and then he realized he was doing wrong, burn his magic books and converted to Christianity.

3) Yes, I would like to learn about other religions. Especially I loved the story about Buddha.

INTERVIEWS YEAR 4

(Boy, age 10)
1) Yes, I find RE subject an interesting subject because we learn about Jesus Christ and about all Christian Saints. We learn new words and we make many assignments on the Christian Saints. So I like it because in this way, we learn more about Saints. The only thing that I don't like in RE subject, are some difficult assignments. For example, some crosswords with difficult words.

2) During RE subject I would like to be taught about ways that can help us to become better children and more disciplined. Also, to learn more information about the Christian Saints: details about their biographies and the hardships that Saints had throughout their lives.

3) No, I don't want to be taught about other religions, because they might make me to believe in their own God and change my own religion! I want to be a Christian! I don't want to copy other religions' customs and ethics. I just want to keep and follow only the Christian ones.

(Girl, age 10)
1) I like RE because we are taught about our religion. I mostly like Jesus' stories, the parables and His miracles.

2) I would like to have an assignment notebook for RE, because we don't have now. If we have an assignment notebook we could do more written assignments in RE. I would like to do assignments about Jesus.

3) I want to be taught about other religions, not only about our own religion! I want to learn about other religions. I want to learn about their own Jesus, how their own Jesus was born. Who were the mother and father of their own Jesus? And what is the name of their own God.

(Boy, age 10)
1) I like RE because slowly-slowly I learn about their own religion (Christianity). I liked it once when we did something about Islam. I also liked it when the teacher said that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in Palestine. And I liked it because Palestine is my motherland.

2) I wish we could do more lessons about Islam and give me the opportunity to talk more about Islam. I want to tell my schoolmates how we pray and how many times we pray and that we call our God "Allah".

3) I don't want to be taught about other religions. I want to be taught only about Islam and Christianity because I like only these two religions. I think I will get confused if I am

taught about more than two religions! I prefer to learn only about two religions and learn them in more depth!

(Boy, age 10)
1) I like RE because we are taught about our religion. I like it because we are taught about Jesus and His miracles, about Saints and the different religious celebrations. I really don't like it when we have to do written assignments or to reply in written questions! I don't like this because I have to search within the textbook for the answers. And this is really boring!
2) I want to be taught about my own Saint-Protector, Saint Constantine.
3) I want to be taught about other world religions. I want to meet other civilizations, how they live in their everyday life, how and when they pray.

(Girl, age 10)
1) Yes, I like RE because I learn interesting things about my religion.
2) I can't think of anything extra that I want to be taught about.
3) Yes, I want to be taught about other religions, because I want to learn different and new things and not only about our own religion. I want to learn about their religious celebrations, their traditions and ethics and about their own God.

(Boy, age 10)
1) Yes, I like RE because I learn about Jesus Christ and His miracles.
2) I would like to learn more about Easter and about Jesus' crucifixion.
3) Yes, I want to learn about other world religions. I want to learn in which God other people believe and if their own God was sacrificed like our God did for us.

(Girl, age 10)
1) I like RE because we are taught so many stories about Saints. Especially I loved the story with Saint Christopher, who carried Jesus on his shoulders and helped him to cross opposite the river.
2) There isn't anything extra I want to learn.
3) Yes I want to learn about other religions and especially about the Lebanese religion because my dad comes from Lebanon. Also I want to learn about the Armenian religion.

(Girl, age 10)
1) I like RE because we are taught about Orthodox Saints and especially about the 12 Apostles. Sometimes I don't like RE because we have to do difficult assignments.
2) I would like to learn about Myrrh bearing women who take cared Jesus body with perfumes. Those women are the first to know that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. The angel told them.
3) Yes, I would like to learn about other religions. I would like to learn foreign languages so that I can talk with them especially because I am a volunteer in Red Cross Organization.

(Boy, age 10)
1) I like RE because we are taught about our Jesus and about our religion. About our Virgin Mary. I like it when we write small essays about Jesus. Sometimes though when I read a text in my book, I can't understand it. It is difficult to understand some religious texts.
2) I want to learn more prayers and do more essays and assignments about God.
3) I want to learn about other religions because we have to love other children that profess different religion than us.

(Girl, age 10)
1) I like RE because we are learning about so many things and stories. Especially during Christmas time we are learning about Jesus, about Easter traditional customs. RE is an interesting subject. Most interesting is the story of Jesus life. Especially when we are learning about the Passions of the Christ during Easter. I love to learn about our religion!
2) I would like to learn more about Jesus. I want RE lesson to be focused only on Jesus Christ, to learn more things about Jesus. I want to learn everything about Jesus' story.
3) I want to learn about other religions because there are so any children coming from other countries. So I want to learn about their own religion. I want to learn who is their own Jesus? How is their own Jesus? What are the regulations of each religion?

INTERVIEWS YEAR 5

(Girl, age 11)
1) Yes, I find RE subject an interesting subject because we learn about the life of different Saints: what Saints been through and suffered. Also, we learn how to become better persons. We learn how to correct our mistakes and then how to become better people. I love everything about RE! There isn't anything that I don't like!
2) During RE subject I would like to be taught more prayers, more about Jesus' parables and more about Christian Saints.
3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other religions. Of course, I don't plan to change my own religion but I would like to be taught about other religions! I would like to learn about other religious habits, traditions and customs. To learn about their own Gods and what they believe in.

(Girl, age 11)
1) RE is an interesting subject because this year we are taught different topics and more interesting than last year. The topics we are taught this year, respond more to our needs as teenagers since we are taught how to resist to smoking, alcohol, drugs and other addictions. Something that I found really interesting this year it was the lesson on human organs transplantation and the other one on drug addictions. We were taught that is very easy for a teenager to get addicted by drugs and then it is very difficult to quit this bad habit. Especially when a teenager is facing a problem, then is easier to get addicted by drugs. But this is wrong because there are other ways for people to solve their problems than turning to drugs use. Something that I don't find interesting about RE is when are taught all the time about Christmas and Easter. We do about those in all subjects. It is so boring to repeat all these every year. We have learnt enough about this.
2) Something that I would like to be taught in RE is about parents' divorce. What happens when a couple divorce? What is happening to children? How do they feel? How does this affect their emotional world?

3) Yes, it is very interesting. I would love to be taught about other religions. I am sure other people around the world they are taught about Orthodox Christianity, so is good that we are taught about other religions too. To learn how people practicing their religion and how they behave. How they pray, how they get dressed. Afterwards, we can compare their religious habits with our religious habits. In this way we can discover common religious customs among all religions.

(Boy, age 11)
1) Yes, I find RE interesting because is a relaxing subject. Teacher teaches us about our religion and she tells us stories that happened many years ago. There isn't anything that I don't like in RE.
2) I would like to know why Jesus is not still alive and be with us. And why God wanted him to be crucified and die.
3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other religions because I want to know in what other people believe. Not to be taught only about our religion all the time. I would like to learn about other's religious customs and ethics. To compare other's customs with our customs. Also to learn whether the other religions believe in someone, like we believe in Jesus. Do they believe in someone equivalent to Jesus or in something else?

(Girl, age 11)
1) Yes I find RE an interesting subject because is not taught like previous years. This year we are not taught all the time the same stories. I like it a lot when we were taught about drugs addictions. I like it a lot when Hatem, the Muslim boy from fourth class came in our classroom and talked to us about his religion, Islam. Especially, I liked it a lot when he brought the Holy Quran in the classroom and read few parts from inside and also wrote on the board few Arabic words included in The Quran.
2) Something that I would like to be taught in RE is about car accidents that happened because of speed driving. In Cyprus so many car accidents are happening with young people.
3) I would like to be taught about other religions, because until this year we were only taught about our religion, Orthodox Christianity and nothing else. It is useful to learn about other religions. I would like to learn about the way of living in other religions.

(Girl, age 11)
1) Yes, I like RE because this year we are not taught common topics but something different. I really liked the lesson on drugs addictions.
2) I would like to be taught about dangerous medications and what problems can they cause to human health.
3) I like it to be taught about other world religions. I want to learn about other religions not only about our religion. I like it because other religions have different customs and traditions than our religion. Also, we must respect and love people that they profess different religion than us. They are human beings also despite their religion.

(Boy, age 11)
1) Yes, I like RE because this year we do different things than other years. Most interesting topic it was about the life after death. I like it when all pupils in my classroom, said what they believe about life after death. They said their own thoughts. Previous years RE was so boring because all the time we were listening about Saints.

2) Something extra that I would like to learn is about hallucinations, about ghosts and spirits.

3) I want to learn about other religions because I want to know in what other people believe in. Also, I might decide one day to convert to another religion, so is good to know and make the right choice.

(Girl, age 11)

1) Yes this year I find RE an interesting lesson because this year we do different things. Other years we were taught about Saints biographies and about orthodox religious celebrations. This year we do different things: about drug addictions, about life after death, about euthanasia. The most important lesson was the one about drug addictions. Something that I find boring about RE is when we are taught about Saints biographies.

2) I would like to be taught about serious human illnesses and about case studies just the one we read about the two young boys that were drug addicted for so many years and they couldn't quit.

3) Yes it is interesting to be taught about other religions. To learn how other people live and what habits they have. I like to learn about all religious symbols and how they pray in each religion. Also, to learn about their dietary habits, what is allowed and what is not allowed to eat. For instance, Muslims are not allowed to eat pork.

(Boy, age 11)

1) Yes, I like RE because we are learning things that we didn't know before. They are so interesting. Mostly in RE I like Jesus' parables. The meanings of Jesus' parables they apply even nowadays. Something that I find bit boring in RE is when we are reading texts from RE textbooks. Those textbooks are a bit boring.

2) In RE lessons I want to be taught about how we can be good people, how can we improve our personality. This will help especially kids that they disobey their parents and teachers. RE subject will help disobedient kids to improve their behavior and character.

3) It is very very interesting to be taught about world religions because we learn about non-Christian people. This makes us realize that there are also other people on this earth that they profess something different than Orthodox Christianity. I want to learn about the stories of these religions. Especially, religions that are related to Christianity. To discover other religions' differences and similarities to Christianity. Also, some religions are bit odd to us. For instance, Muslims must do a religious pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life. This pilgrimage is so important to them but for me is so odd because I can't understand why it is so important to them.

(Girl, age 11)

1) Yes, RE is a very very interesting subject because we are taught about things that have never taught before. Some of the topics that I really loved to, it were the life after death, the organs transplant and learning about world religions. Previous years, I didn't like RE because every year we were taught repeated topics such as about Jesus and Saints' biographies. So back then, it was really boring.

2) Something extra that I want to be taught in RE is about serious human illness such as AIDS and cancer.

3) Yes, I like to learn about other religions because they are different than our own religion. It is very useful to learn about other religions because if I travel abroad I know what other people profess.

(Girl, age 11)

1) Yes, I like RE because we are learning different things than other years. We are learning about world religions, about drug addiction. Especially, I liked it a lot when the pupil from fourth class came to talk to us about his own religion, Islam. Also, I like it a lot because we can express our opinion freely orally and written when we do written assignments. I like it because we can write what we personally believe about a topic. During previous years RE was taught to us in a different way. We were taught all the time the same topics: about Jesus, Saints and Christmas. All the time the same things.

2) There isn't anything extra that I want to be taught about.

3) Yes, I love to learn about other world religions because is something different than my religion. We learn what people do in other foreign countries. For instance, which are their Holy Books, their prayers and other interesting things.

INTERVIEWS YEAR 6

(Girl, age 12)

1) Yes, I find RE subject an interesting subject because we must be taught about other religions. We must be taught about Jesus. During RE we learn about kids that live in other countries and have a different religion. I like everything about RE.

2) During RE subject I would like to be taught more about other religions and more things about Jesus.

3) I would like to be taught about other religions because we might meet someone that profess a different religion than us. So we must know about his/her own religion. And I think that in other countries children learn about Orthodox Christianity. So I thing is fair to learn about their religions too! Also, is really interesting to be taught about different religions.

(Girl, age 12)

1) Yes… It's ok… Sometimes is a bit boring though… It's a bit boring because we talk about the same things all the time. It's ok… Something that I find really interesting during the RE subject are Jesus' parables and miracles. And the fact that Jesus was forgiving everybody despite what he/she did, despite his/her serious sins. Something that I find boring in RE is when the teachers say all the time to be good people. We understand and realize that we have to be good people and we really want to be good people but we can't manage. We always do something bad at the end of the day. Humans can't coop with the temptations around them, so they repeat their sins all the time.

2) During RE I wish I could learn how to play the ecclesiastical instrument. The one that looks like a piano. I know that this instrument is Catholic but never mind. I really want to learn how to play it.

3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other religions. All religions have advantages and disadvantages, good and bad things. So is good to choose and pick what is good from one religion, and try to follow it. Maybe we can even choose the good parts from other religions and add them in our own religion! I also want to know about the history of other religions. All religions have the same purpose, and that is to be "Good Human Beings"!

(Girl, age 12)

1) Yes, I find RE an interesting subject because we learn about our lives. We learn about Jesus' passions and about Saints. The most interesting part of RE is when we learn how to love each other and how to become good Christians (go to the church often).

2) I want to be taught about the creation of the universe and how human beings were created. I want to know the exact date and year that Jesus was born.

3) Yes, I would like to be taught about other religions because I want to know how other people are worshipping their own God. To learn about the way of their life. If they go to church too, if the celebrate Christmas and Easter, like we do.

(Boy, age 12)

1) I don't really find RE an interesting subject… OK we are taught about our religion, about Jesus' life, Saints' life, about our civilization, our traditions… But still, sometimes is a bit boring because there is no fun in it!! It's mostly a theoretical subject… Theory, theory all the time! The most interesting part of RE is when we are taught about Jesus' parables.

2) I would like to be taught about churches and they way they are built. How a church is built? What procedure they follow?

3) No, I don't want to be taught about other religions because I know that Orthodox Christianity is the true religion, so no need to be taught about other religions!

(Girl, age 12)

1) Yes, I like RE because we are taught about the Church and the Saints. RE is a nice subject.

2) I would like to be taught about Byzantine music: about Christian Orthodox psalms and how they are sang.

3) Yes, I would love to be taught about other religions because I want to know in what other people believe. And what kind of music and psalms they have and to compare them with our psalms. To find out whether they go to church every Sunday, like we do, whether they worship icons and how they are dressed. To learn how they get married and how they are baptized.

(Girl, age 12)

1) RE is an interesting subject because we talk about other people emotions, how they feel. We talk about Saints. I like it because is a relaxing subject.

2) I would like to be taught more about friendships between people. How can we develop and improve our friendships, not to be jealous of our friends and to behave them good.

3) Yes, I want to be taught about religions because I want to know in what other people believe, how they pray and the way of their everyday life.

(Girl, age 12)

1) RE is an interesting subject because we are taught about the history of Christianity and about the life of the Apostles and Saints. Apostles and Saints played an important role in Christianity. I find amazing how some people were sacrificed for Christianity. I also find amazing the meaning of "forgiveness" and that Jesus said to forgive everyone, even our enemies! However, something that I don't like in RE is that always there is the evil in every story! Always something bad is happening by something evil.

2) During RE I would like to be taught about calmness, tolerance, patience and volunteerism. How can we become calm, tolerant, patient and volunteers?

3) Yes, I like to be taught about other religions. To learn if they have similarities and differences to our religion. To learn about other religions' history, about their God.

(Boy, age 12)

1) I like RE because we are taught about Jesus' and Saints' lives. I like RE because during this subject we have the opportunity to search for the truth, to find out things and truths that we didn't know before! Something that I don't like in RE is that sometimes there are many difficult and complicate religious texts that pupils can't understand. Also, most of the teachers, they teach RE in a rush! They always hurry when they teach RE because they want to finish and move quickly to the next subject! Or sometimes we don't have enough time for RE. Thus, we don't have enough time neither to talk about interesting things, nor time for teacher to reply our questions.

2) I would like to be taught more about Jesus' parables because I really like parables! Parables aim to teach us something and they have a deep meaning.

3) I love to be taught about other religions and search about other religions! I like to learn about other religions that are different from Christianity. For instance, Hinduism and Buddhism are so different from Christianity, so is interesting to search and find out things about them!

(Boy, age 12)

1) RE is an interesting subject because we have the opportunity learn more about our own religion. The most interesting part of RE is when we are taught about some examples of how can we become better people. Something that I don't like in RE is the teaching books. Books are sometimes a bit confusing and not well structured. It would be nice if the teaching topics within the books were structured in a different way, according to the season. For instance, Christmas, Easter and summer unit. So, teaching topics related to Christmas to be included in that unit, others in Easter unit etc. In this way, RE subject will become more structured and more interesting for pupils.

2) I would like to be taught more about Saints' lives.

3) It's good to be taught about other religions because we will learn about other people: about their own religion and way of life.

(Girl, age 12)

1) RE is an interesting subject because we are taught about how to behave. We are taught about "truths" that we didn't know before. We are taught about supernatural things. We learn about Jesus' parables. During RE we talk about "love", about our "fellow-man", volunteerism, compassion and forgiveness. For example, the other day the subject was about forgiveness, to forgive our "fellow-man". The story was about someone who murdered the brother of a monk. The monk forgave the murderer and he didn't report him to the police. The murderer regretted for his sins, so God had forgiven him for what he did. This story aims to teach us to forgive our fellow-men even if they did something really bad to us. Also, I like RE because is a relaxing subject and we don't have to rush ourselves to do things like we do in Maths or Greek!

2) I would like to be taught more about Jesus' life and what He did throughout His life.

3) I want to be taught about other religions, but I don't want to be taught many things and details about other religions. This because other religions believe in unrealistic things, unreal things, things that never existed. Other religions sometimes are very complicated. However, all religions teach us how to LOVE each other.

(Boy, age 12)

1) I like RE because we are taught about interesting things and about different religions. Also, the written assignments included in the textbooks are really easy!

2) I want to be taught more about other religions, different than Christianity.

3) I want to be taught about other religions because I am curious to know what other people around the world believe in. For instance, I know that there is a religion that says that if someone kills many people that profess different religion, then he will go directly to Heaven! And I want to know which this religion is! Also, I want to learn about other religious traditions and customs. For example, I want to know if they celebrate Christmas or Easter and if they do, then how they celebrate it?

(Girl, age 12)

1) I like RE because we do very interesting topics, so different than other subjects. Mostly I like it when we do about other religions. We are learning about other people's churches, how they worship, in what they believe. Previous years, RE was boring because all the time we were learning about Saints and same Saints all the time. And the textbooks were very boring as well.

2) I would like to learn about new Saints. Saints that became (declared) Saints recently, maybe last few years.

3) I like to learn about religions. How many times a week they go to church, what kind of people they are, if they worship or not the icons, how they pray, about their own priests.

Teachers' Transcripts

Research – Protocol Questions:
1) What do you see as the main teaching purposes of Religious Education in the Primary School?
2) What do you see as the main difficulties and challenges that teachers face in teaching religious education in primary schools in Cyprus at the moment?
3) What changes do you think should be made to the teaching of religious education? Do you think that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum? If so, what?
4) How can multicultural education be promoted through Religious Education?
5) Would you like to have the opportunity to teach non-Christian religions?

Interview 1 (Female, 60 years old)
1) The main teaching purpose of Religious Education in the Primary School should be the development of love. Firstly, the love towards God and then the love towards other people and towards the universe. If you love God, that results that you love all people around you and the universe. If you love God then it means that you love environment, because environment was created by God. Other purpose of Religious Education is the development of human values. We should also encourage pupils to love worshipping God. Pupils should worship God and participate in the Holy Sacraments. Participating in the Holy Sacraments is one of the basic values of Orthodox Christianity. Once someone participates in the Holy Sacraments is connected to God. Holy Sacraments develop people's love towards other people and universe.

2) The main difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education is that nowadays in schools there are pupils professing different religions and heresies. However, if we teach pupils to respect human difference and human personality, then children will respect and accept pupils professing different religions. In this way, there will be no problem in the teaching of religious education. For instance, for many years now there are many pupils supporting Jehovah's witnesses and we had many problems in schools because they were refusing to be taught religious education and they wanted to be excluded from the subject. But if we learn how to respect them, then there will be no problem. Another difficulty that teachers face in the teaching of religious education is that many teachers lack of knowledge regarding religious matters. Thus, because of their ignorance and lack of religious experience they do not know how to approach religious matters, they can't teach religious education.

3) One important change that it needs to be made in religious education is the respect of each person's individuality. Teachers must learn how to respect each pupil identity and views. Of course, a real Christian knows how to respect other people, because the meaning of Christianity is love and respect towards all people despite their color, ethnicity or religion.

4) Multicultural education can be promoted in many ways. For instance, we can ask from pupils professing different religion, to bring information about their own religion and to talk about their own religions. Also, the teacher must be aware and informed about the different religious traditions. They must see all pupils equal despite their religious beliefs. However, teachers must be careful not to do all these at the expense of Orthodox Christianity. They should not teach about other religions at the expense of Orthodox Christianity.

5) I don't have a problem to teach non-Christian religions, as long as I don't teach them at the expense of Orthodox Christianity. I believe that if someone is aware of his/her own religion, then it is easier to approach other religions, with a greater respect. But if someone is not aware of his/her own religion, then he/she feels insecure to teach other religions because he/she might say something wrong or do a mistake. I think that religious fundamentalism can be found in those people that are not aware of their own religion. Because if you know your own religion, then you feel secure and open to other religions and views.

Interview 2 (Female, 35 years old)

1) The aims of RE in the primary school should be various. The first aim should be to teach children about the important universal values such as love, friendship, appreciation, equality and antiracism. Secondly, to teach them the religion of the specific country, which means the religion that is professed by the majority of the people living in that country. For instance, if the country is traditionally a Christian country, then we should focus on the teaching of Christianity. Of course, this does not mean to teach only about Christianity. If one country is traditionally Islamic, then we should focus on the teaching of Islam. For instance, England is a traditionally Protestant country and therefore, RE should be focus on the teaching Protestantism, in Cyprus to focus on Orthodox Christianity, in Italy on Christian Catholicism, in Turkey on Islam, in Iran on Islam and so on. So in my personal opinion, it is important to give emphasis on the religion of the majority. We also need to take into consideration the religion that is professed by the majority of the students within a school. Of course, it is also very important the teaching of other religions and beliefs. That means not to be taught only about their own religion but also for other religions as well, because it is essential to learn and know what people believe in other countries. Thus, it is essential for students to be taught firstly about universal values, secondly about their own religion and thirdly about other religions. In addition, it is vital to be taught about different social issues and problems but we always need to take into consideration the children's age. For instance, teenagers can be taught about drug addiction or about school bullying or about racism. The teaching topics need to be interesting for the children and to be appropriate for their age. The teaching topics should apply to children's everyday life and not to be just theoretical. Therefore, in this way, they will become able to face any problem effectively if it happens to them. Finally, every RE lesson should include topics from different aspects of everyday life: religious, social, spiritual, emotional and psychomotor.

2) The problems that teachers face in teaching RE within the schools of Cyprus are several. Firstly, the RE curriculum is not appropriate neither the RE textbooks. For this reason, children cannot be taught effectively the RE lesson. I believe that it is necessary to reform and develop the RE curriculum and textbooks, because the present curriculum and textbooks are focusing mainly on the teaching of Orthodox Christianity and also on topics that they are not really interesting for young children. Therefore, the first problem that teachers face is the RE curriculum and textbooks. The second problem that they face is the teaching time and the fact that this lesson is taught only twice a week, 40 minutes per time. Therefore, time is not enough to cover all the necessary teaching topics. At the same time, many teachers use the RE teaching time to teach other subjects which they consider as more important, such as Linguistic, Mathematics and Science. They "steal" time from RE, which they consider as a secondary lesson and less important, in order to teach the important ones. Also, I believe that there is not any effective and sufficient training for teachers regarding the teaching of RE. For example, when we were studying at the university, there was not any teaching subject about RE. It was only one subject

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called Christian Orthodox Education and it was focus obviously only on Orthodox Christianity. It was not training us how to teach RE, what strategies to follow and nothing about the methods of teaching RE. During our studies it was only that subject about RE and nothing else. However, I believe that is not enough just one lesson to train and educate future teachers of how to teach effectively the RE lesson. So our training regarding the teaching of RE was insufficient. Moreover the Ministry of Education does not organize any supportive seminars regarding the teaching of RE in the primary school. Seminars could update teachers' knowledge and way of teaching.

3) Some changes that could be made regarding the teaching of RE is firstly about the teachers' education and training. During their university studies teachers should be taught about how to teach the RE subject. It has to be a university lesson regarding the teaching of RE in the schools. Teachers should be taught the teaching strategies about the RE lesson and not just to be taught how to teach a specific religion (i.e. Orthodox Christianity). The lesson should be focus on a variety of topics and not only just on the teaching of Christianity. Topics such as, world religions, social issues, spiritual and emotional issues; topics that they are interesting for children. So future teachers should be well and efficiently trained for teaching this lesson. In addition, teachers and Ministry of Education should be aware of how RE subject is taught in other European countries, since Cyprus is a member of the E.U. as well. In this way, they can get some fruitful ideas of how RE is taught in the different countries and thus, teachers can enrich their knowledge and they can improve their way of teaching. Furthermore, Ministry of Education should often organise seminars for training the teachers about RE. Another important change, is that the RE Syllabus and textbooks should be reformed because they are old style and they do not include interesting topics for the children. The topics included should change as well and new topics should be added such as: the teaching of different religions and interesting social issues (i.e. divorce, alcoholism, drugs, smoking, gender relationships, racism, peace, war, xenophobia, environmental issues and different controversial issues).

4) Multicultural education can be promoted through RE by teaching topics such as the world religions, because children in this way they will meet other religions, other cultures and in this way, they will respect other people and hopefully they will become less racists towards other people. They will realise that all people are equal, that every person has the right to profess their own religion, culture and beliefs. Children should also become able to understand the meaning of democracy and equality. So when they understand these two important universal values they will then be able to promote multicultural education, because multiculturalism means love and appreciation of other cultures.

5) Yes of course, I would like to have the opportunity to teach non-Christian religions because it is very important for children to meet other religions as well and to have knowledge and appreciate them. Also, it is something interesting for me as well, as a teacher, because while I will be teaching different religions, I will enrich my own knowledge and learn even more interesting and new things. Before I teach other religions it will be necessary for me to search, to study and to investigate about them, so in this way I will learn as well. Therefore, teachers will be developed professionally, enrich their knowledge and develop their cultural skills. So the teachers themselves will be improved and developed professionally even more. Also, I believe that students will find the teaching of other religions really interesting and not boring at all.

Interview 3 (Male, 27 years old)

1) The most important aims of RE in the primary school is to teach primarily the principles of Christianity and afterwards moral values such as love and friendship. I believe that these should be the most important RE teaching aims. Also, the teaching of other religions so the children to realize that all people are equal and that God loves everybody despite their religion. Jesus had taught to love each other, so this is what we need to teach to our students as well.

2) I think that one of the problems that teachers face is the RE textbooks. The RE textbooks do not promote the meaning of love but they focus mainly on the teaching of various principles and regulations regarding the Orthodox Christian doctrine and about the various Saints of the Christian Church. Therefore, the teaching of love and other universal values are being neglected within these textbooks. But the main thing is to teach about love and not about principles and regulations. However, teachers can plan and teach their lessons as they want. That means they can focus on universal values and not on regulations. While they teach about Orthodox Christianity, at the same time they can teach the children that Christianity is based on love.

3) Yes, RE lesson should be change and it should focus on the teaching of important values and not to promote just the memorization of different information. Maybe books should not include so much Saints' biographies because not all of them are necessary. It is better off to be taught more about Jesus' parables because they teach children more useful things than the biographies. In addition, textbooks need to include units on the teaching of other religions, because nowadays Cyprus has so many other nationalities that have different cultures and profess different religions. Children should learn not to be prejudiced towards other people. They should realise that Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion and it is not the only correct and true religion. It is not right to teach that the only true religion is Christian Orthodoxy and all other religions are wrong. Even the world Orthodox derives from the words "ortho" and "dogma"; "ortho" means correct and "dogma" means doctrine. That means Orthodoxy is the only correct doctrine, which this sounds a bit selfish. I acknowledge that it is not easy for the teacher to put on the side the RE Syllabus or textbooks. It is compulsory for teachers to follow the RE Syllabus and textbooks and even if they do not like them, they still need to teach from them. Also, teachers might be scared not to teach from the official textbooks because the either school inspectors, head teachers or the parents may not like this. The Syllabus is something that all teachers need to follow whether they like it or not. Finally, religious issues in Cyprus are a bit sensitive and some people might not like it if the teacher tries to do something different. Many people still believe that Greek-Cypriot students must be taught the Greek History and the Christian Orthodox religion. These are the most important aims within the educational syllabus.

4) The RE syllabus needs to be changed. For sure one unit on other world religions should be included. For instance, students should stop thinking when they hear the word "Allah" that is something evil but to realise that for Muslims Allah means God. And this is very important, especially nowadays that in the Cypriot schools attend many Muslim children. In this way, they will not be xenophobic and prejudiced towards other people. Of course all these are depending on the teacher. Every teacher can always teach something extra, apart from the official textbooks. Also, the present textbooks are not appropriate for children that profess a different religion than Christianity. Teachers cannot use these textbooks to teach children that are not Christians. But if the books were focusing on universal values such as love and friendship it would have been appropriate for any child despite their origin or religion. Moreover, we need to consider that within the classrooms

there are children from other Christian denominations, such as Catholics or Maronites. I remember when I was a young pupil in my classroom it was one Catholic child and in every lesson the RE teacher was always arguing with him regarding his beliefs. In my opinion, this is unacceptable. Especially RE teachers should be educated and trained efficiently and not arguing but accepting the different views.

5) Yes, I would like to have the opportunity to teach non-Christian religions because it is very important for children to meet other religions as well. Cyprus nowadays has so many other nationalities that have different cultures and profess different religions. Children should learn not to be prejudiced towards other people. They should realise that Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion and it is not the only correct and true religion. It is not moral to teach that the only true religion is Christian Orthodoxy and all other religions are wrong. For instance, students should stop thinking when they hear the word "Allah" that is something evil but to realise that for Muslims Allah means God. And this is very important, especially nowadays that in the Cypriot schools attend many Muslim children. In this way they will not be xenophobic and prejudiced towards other people.

Educators' Transcripts

Greek-Cypriot Primary School Teacher (Male)

1) What do you see as the main teaching purposes of Religious Education in the Primary School? In your own opinion, what is the most important teaching purpose?

The main teaching purposes of RE in the Primary School should be triple: knowledgeable, emotional and behavioral purposes. The knowledgeable purposes should aim to transfer knowledge to pupils. This knowledge should involve the teaching of world religions and beliefs, the different ceremonials of those religions and the teaching of Orthodox Christianity (obviously because is the religion of the majority in Cyprus). The emotional purposes should be aimed to develop pupils' emotion and compassion. They have to learn how to understand the needs of people around them and to accept and appreciate people that they are different than them. The behavioral purposes depend on the emotional purposes, because the human behavior is a result of human emotion. Pupils must be taught to behave using their logic and emotion at the same time. They must become able to balance their logic and emotion in their everyday behavior and thoughts. In my personal opinion, the most important teaching purpose of religious education should be the behavioral one. Teachers should aim to help pupils improve their behavior.

2) How do you think that the way that religious education is taught might promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds?

The way that RE is taught at the moment surely does not promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds. At the moment RE in Cyprus is mainly focused on Orthodox Christianity. To teach pupils about Orthodox Christianity. Mostly is like indoctrination. But to achieve the promotion of mutual understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds, the teaching topics should be upgraded. New and modern teaching topics should be added. Pupils must be taught in depth many world religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and others. Pupils will then be informed about other people's beliefs and values. They will be informed that some people in this world they profess different religion and there is 'something different out there'. That there are human beings with different religion, civilization, values and beliefs. So when they meet others they will become able to coexist peacefully with them.

3) To what extent do you think is it the job of school to help pupils to understand and respect one another's religion and culture?

Of course, it is the job of school to help pupils to understand and respect one another's religion and culture. But in order to achieve that, firstly they have to meet the different religion and culture. Thus, the school has to teach pupils to accept different religions and cultures. And especially in Cyprus, where the social phenomenon of cultural and religious diversity are quite new. Cypriots are neither ready nor socially matured enough to experience and tolerant something different than their own. For this reason, the role of school is crucially important. The school has to train pupils and develop their personality, because those pupils are the future citizens of Cyprus.

4) Do you think that the Cypriot Educational System should face as a challenge the cultural and religious diversity in modern Cypriot society? If yes, how this can be achieved?

Of course, the Cypriot Educational System must face cultural and religious diversity in Cyprus as a challenge. The Educational System must upgrade and revise the Curriculum

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and the teaching textbooks. Teaching topics that promote multicultural and multireligious education should be added in the Curriculum and textbooks. The Educational System should also train teachers to respond effectively within a classroom where kids professing different religions and cultures are attending. They should support, especially, kids that come from political refugees or immigrant families. Extra Greek language lessons should be added, in order to help foreign children to be integrated smoothly and more effectively within the Cypriot society. Finally, the Ministry of Education should sponsor many educational programs, seminars and tutorials about intercultural dialogue. Those programs, seminars and tutorials should be carry out within schools in order to give the opportunity to all pupils to keep their own culture, civilization and religion.

5) How effective do you think that primary school teachers currently are in the teaching of religious education?

I believe that primary school teachers are not so effective in the teaching of RE. Especially in primary school where there aren't specialized teachers for teaching RE. Teachers usually do not pay so much attention in the teaching of RE, because they consider it as a second class lesson. Sometimes the teacher even teaches other lessons, such as Greek or Mathematics, at the expense of RE. Also, the textbooks are not so helpful for teachers to help them teach RE effectively. As I mentioned before, RE textbooks are mainly focused on Orthodox Christianity and they put aside other religious traditions. The books are usually focused on the ritual details of Orthodox Christianity, for example Holy Sacraments, Holy liturgies and others. But those topics are not interesting at all for small kids. Religious education teachers can become effective only if they specialized in RE. They can specialized either by attending seminars or by doing postgraduate studies. Finally, RE textbooks must be upgrade and revised in order to help teachers be more effective in the teaching of RE.

6) What do you see as the main challenges and difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education in primary schools in Cyprus at the moment?

The biggest challenge that RE teachers face is that they have to deal with the new social phenomenon of multiculturalism in Cyprus. This is the biggest and most important challenge that they have to face. Indeed, it is a challenge because multiculturalism is so new in Cyprus.

7) What are the difficulties that teachers face in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious background?

Teachers face so many difficulties when they try to promote multicultural and multireligious education. The first difficulty that they face is the textbooks. There are no appropriate religious education textbooks. The teaching topics included in the textbooks have nothing to do with the modern Cypriot society and multicultural reality. Secondly, the existing Educational Curriculum doesn't respond to the modern Cypriot society and to the multicultural reality. Thirdly, teachers are neither educated nor trained enough in order to become able to promote multicultural and multireligious education. Finally, the different Cypriot governments do not support economically the promotion of multicultural and multireligious education. They do not organize many seminars or educational programs for the promotion of multicultural and multireligious education.

8) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious education textbooks in use in primary schools in Cyprus? If you think that revisions or updating are needed, which areas would you prioritize?

The religious education textbooks of Cyprus haven't got so many strengths! The only strength that they have is that they teach effectively to pupils Orthodox Christianity. Also,

they are easy to use by teachers. They are not really complicated. On the other hand, they have so many weaknesses. Their first weakness is the teaching topics that are included in the textbooks. There is a problem with the teaching topics. They lack of teaching topics. The books are mainly focused on Orthodox Christianity. A second weakness of those books is that they include religious details that are not easily understandable by small pupils. For instance, they include details about the liturgies which are so difficult for kids to understand. A third weakness is that those books do not include enough pictures and electronically teaching material. More pictures and electronic material could be more interesting for young kids age 6-12. Also nowadays is so important to have electronic material and hardware for supporting a lesson. Or even websites for RE. And of course, religious education textbooks need revision and upgrading. The teaching topics included in the books need revision and upgrading. A variety of new teaching topics should be added. Those topics should involved everyday social problems, such as drug problems. Also they should include the teaching of the various religious systems and beliefs. Those teaching topics should be aimed to develop mutual understanding between people.

9) What changes do you think should be made to the teaching of religious education? Do you think that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum? If so, what?

Yes, I believe that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum. For instance: (1) The teaching of the various world religions. (2) Social problems (i.e. drugs). (3) Controversial issues. (4) Human relationships. (5) Environmental education. All these topics should be taught using case studies. Only then kids will experience and understand better. Through case studies and real examples they will experience what they taught. For instance, when they will be taught about drug addiction, this can be done using a case-study. Let's say, one teenager boy is drug addicted. Pupils will experience, through the case-study, how this boy started using drugs, what he been through while he was addicted and how difficult was to stop using drugs. Only then the kids will experience and realize the real problem of drugs and it might stop them to start using drugs when they grow up. They will understand how dangerous drugs are.

Turkish-Cypriot School Inspector (Male)

1) Why the Turkish-Cypriot community has chosen to exclude the Religious Education subject from schools?

We have a subject similar to RE but we called it "Religion and Morals". In this subject, children are taught, generally, about good behavior and morals. They are taught how to become good people. This subject is starts at the fourth and fifth year of the primary school. It is a compulsory subject. We also have it in lower secondary education (sixth, seventh and eighth year) as a compulsory subject. Most of the teachers prefer to teach only the part about morals and they exclude religion from their lesson. But sometimes they teach some parts from The Quran. They are also taught the basic values of Islam but the very basic ones. During this subject, pupils have to visit a mosque about five times. Class teachers are the ones who teach the subject "Religion and Morality". Some of the teachers choose not to teach that lesson sometimes. They usually use the teaching time of this subject to teach other subjects, more important for them, such as Turkish and Mathematics. In Lyceum (upper secondary education) the subject of "Religion and Morals" is not compulsory but optional. Pupils do not usually choose to do it. They prefer to choose lessons that they will help them get in the university. The AKP (the religious political party of Turkey) always is complaining that Turkish-Cypriot kids are not aware

of their religion and that teachers do not encourage them to choose the subject of "Religion". I think that we don't have to teach the typical religious education, because if someone is a good person, this is in his/her heart and it doesn't depend on his/her religion. You don't have to go five times a day to the mosque to be a good person. I don't know, maybe I am wrong… Kemalism might be a reason for excluding RE. Maybe is a part of all these ideas.

2) Are you aware if Religious Education is taught in any other form of teaching? (for instance, the teaching of Quran in summer schools?)
Yes, during the last three years they teach The Quran in summer schools in Turkey but illegally. They put kids into airplanes and take them to Turkey in order to teach them The Quran. Those kids are Turks only, because Turkish-Cypriot parents do not allow to their kids something like that. The parents who allow something like that are uneducated people. They are fanatically Muslims laborers. Legally, there are no Quran teachings in our schools. But AKP, the governmental political party in Turkey, keeps pushing the Turkish-Cypriot Government to approve the teaching of Quran (in translation) at least once a week. The reason is because in North Cyprus there are many kids coming from Turkey. Some of them their families came in 1974 but most of them their parents are laborers from Turkey. Most of them are coming from East part of Turkey and they are very religious. In East part of Turkey, kids at school are attending Quran lessons. Yes, there are illegal Quran lessons in summer schools but also some of them are taught The Quran in afternoon lessons. Now the teachers unions we are facing a problem. We are arguing with the Turkish-Cypriot Government because they want us (school inspectors) to inspect The Quran lessons. But we rejected the Government's request to inspect Quran lessons, because if we agree to inspect them, then Quran lessons will become legal. The teachers unions are in a continual conflict with the Ministry of Education for this issue. Those Quran lessons are usually taught by educated imams. These imams are educated people who have attended a special university for imams, called Imam Hatip Schools. So, the Turkish-Cypriot Government started bringing those imams from Turkey to teach Quran lessons, but all teachers don't agree with this action and we refuse to inspect them. In general, Turkish-Cypriots are not religious people.

3) What should be the teaching purposes of Religious Education? In your own opinion, what is the most important teaching purpose?
The teaching purposes of the "Religion and Morality" subject is to provide pupils with the principles to be good and loving people. To teach them to have good habits and be moral people. To love all human beings and to love peace. Another purpose should be to teach something from The Quran. Maybe the most important parts of The Quran. In this way, when there is an important religious day, to know how to pray to Allah. I believe that pupils should go to the mosque and pray sometimes but not to be fanatics. There are people that they are fanatical. For instance, some Imams from Turkey are telling to people don't do this, don't do that, don't allow your wife this and that, girls when they became 12 they should wear a scarf. According to our constitution is not allowed to girls wearing a scarf in schools. But in universities is allowed. People can be religious if they want. They are independent to choose, but not to put any pressure on young pupils. Religious fanatical put pressure on their families. Turkish-Cypriot teachers are against all these and we are fighting against any religious fanaticism. All these have nothing to do with the Turkish-Cypriot culture. School inspectors refuse to inspect or assess any Quran lesson. In North Cyprus (Turkish side) almost all teachers are left-wingers, so they are more open minded, more intellectual and claiming for their rights but in South (Greek side) most teachers are supporting the right political wing.

4) How do you think that religious education can promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds?

We can achieve this if we teach pupils about the different religions and beliefs. Maybe a brief teaching of all religions. In this way, they will know what religion each person professes. For instance, if they visit Israel they will know that people are Jewish. If they visit Romania to know that they are Christian Orthodox. And the most important, to be taught about the religion of the Greek-Cypriots. They should be aware of the religion of their neighbors. They should know about Christianity and about Christians' habits. That Christians go to the church and that church has the same role as the mosque has. Pupils should be taught about the main principles of the most important religions. They must be aware of those principles. Only in this way they will learn how to respect each other.

5) Do you think is it in the job of school to help pupils to understand one another's religion and culture?

Above all, it is in the job of the curriculum to promote religious and cultural understanding among pupils. And of course, it is in the job of schools and teachers to help pupils to understand one another's religion and cultural. I think that kids are taught about those matters mostly in school than in any other place. Of course the family plays a vital role as well in the shape of kids' characters. But school has the first and most important role. Nowadays, both parents are working for many hours and they come home late, so they don't have a lot of time to spend with their children. For this reason, the school has a vital role to play.

6) What are the difficulties that teachers face in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious background?

In secondary education is not difficult to achieve that because kids are older and they can understand easily. But we face some problems in Primary school because kids are younger and they can't understand easily. Thus, we mustn't teach them so many details but we should focus only on the basic knowledge. In primary schools we can't teach them so many details about other religions because they will get confused. We should give them only just brief information about each religion.

7) Do you think that people, that come from different countries and profess different religions, can coexist and work together peacefully? Please explain your answer.

Of course, it is possible. If they respect each other they can work and coexist together peacefully. However, it is not easy to achieve this. It depends if these people are educated and open-minded. The level of their education is so important. But nationalist neither can coexist nor work with foreign people peacefully. They can't accept foreigners.

8) Is the idea of peaceful coexistence between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots is promoted in the Turkish-Cypriot schools?

Yes, I think that the idea of peaceful coexistence between Turkish and Greek Cypriots is promoted in the Turkish-Cypriot schools. Teachers do not tell pupils that Greek-Cypriots are bad. They teach them that Greek-Cypriots are good and that before 1974 we all used to live together peacefully. They also teach them that in 1974 was been a war where everybody had a responsibility and many people were killed from both sides. But from now on we must learn to live peacefully together. Teachers in North Cyprus are not nationalist and for this reason are been accused by nationalistic political parties. These nationalistic political parties demand from teachers to teach pupils that Greek-Cypriots are bad and that they killed so many Turkish-Cypriots. Pupils usually accept and adopt these open minded ideas about the peaceful coexistence between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. But it depends on the family. If the family is nationalistic then it is difficult for

the kids to adopt these ideas. But the majority of the Turkish-Cypriots are non-nationalistic and they want a solution for the Cyprus problem. That's why the 65% of the Turkish Cypriots voted for "Yes", in 2004, to the Referendum for the solution. We suffered a lot! Enough! I was 12 years old during the war. I remembered clearly the bullets and the bombs. I don't want my son and my daughter to experience the same! That's why I joined this association for the peaceful coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Luckily most of the young people are not nationalistic. They want peace. But I am aware that the teachers' association in south is very nationalistic and most of the Greek-Cypriots teachers are very nationalistic, so this is a problem. How can we cooperate to promote the idea of peaceful coexistence in schools? We need open-minded people! We need open-minded teachers!

9) What do you see as the main challenges and difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education in schools in Cyprus at the moment?
The main challenges and difficulties that teachers face is the lack of teaching time. We don't have enough teaching time to teach effectively all lessons, including "Religion and Morals". That's why I believe that school hours must be extended until early afternoon. So that teachers will have enough time to teach effectively all subjects.

10) What changes have to be made in the educational curriculum of North Cyprus? Do you think that some extra teaching subjects should be added in the curriculum? If you think that revisions or updating are needed, which areas would you prioritize? Do you think that Religious Education should be added in the curriculum? Please explain your answer.
Teachers must teach the subject of "Religion and Morals" at least once a week and not avoid to do it or replace it with other lessons! Inspectors should inspect more effectively and more carefully this lesson and maybe provide the necessary guidance. The curriculum should be revised. The previous Turkish-Cypriot government, which it was left-winger, introduced the "Peace" subject in the curriculum. But unfortunately now, after the nationalistic government took over they excluded the "Peace" lesson. They changed everything. Everything has to do with politics! Also, they changed the history books. Before the books were really nice, non-nationalistic. But now they were changed. In my own opinion the educational curriculum of North Cyprus, should be focus on the "English lesson". After the solution Turkish and Greek Cypriots must communicate effectively. And the only way is to communicate in English. So pupils have to learn to speak good English. In North we have a problem with the teaching of the English language. Not too many people speak English. We have to focus on teaching people how to speak English effectively. Some Turkish-Cypriots choose to learn the Greek language because the government gives free Greek language lessons, which this is good. But I believe that the English language is more appropriate to be used as a communication language between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. We should find the way to teach English language effectively.

11) What do you see as the main educational problems that the Turkish-Cypriot community faces at the moment?
The main educational problems at the moment are the people coming from Turkey and residing permanently in Cyprus. Those people are uneducated and fanatical Muslims with different culture than us. They have different tradition. Their kids are attending in Turkish-Cypriot schools and this is causing so many problems. The teachers unions are keep fighting against them. Most of the people who move from Turkey to North Cyprus speak Arabic. They are Arabs, mostly coming from a Turkish area called Hatay, a south-eastern Anatolian region in Turkey. Turkish-Cypriot teachers are fed up with this

situation. Schools are full, hospitals are full because of all these people coming from Turkey. And Turkey does not help us financially. The Turkish government sends us all these people but they don't really help us financially! We have so many cultural problems because of them. And many of those people coming from Turkey, they gain the Turkish-Cypriot citizenship at the end of the day! That's why we need as soon as possible a solution for the Cyprus problem. Only with a solution we are going to stop them from coming illegally here! And send them back to Turkey! Send them back! Most of our problems in North are not educational but social. Many foreign workers, from Turkey, Turkmenistan, Nigeria, and China commit crimes, sell drugs. We have so many problems with drugs. Another educational problem that we face in North Cyprus is that the majority of Turkish Cypriots graduate from university. This is good but it can be a problem at the same time. Because considering the Turkish-Cypriot community population, the percentage of people graduating from university is huge! Maybe about 35%-40% of the population graduate from University. As a result of this, most of them are unemployed because they can't work neither as technicians nor laborers. So, most of them immigrate to the U.K., Canada, Australia or other European countries. Especially boys are choosing to enter the university because they want to postpone their military service.

Maronite Head Inspector (Female)

Introduction

In sociology, the Maronite community of Cyprus is considered to be a national group. The Cypriot Constitution of 1960 refers to the religious groups of Cyprus. But in sociology Maronites are considered to be a national group. The most important characteristics of the Maronite community that distinguish them as a different community of Cyprus are: their religion – Maronites are Catholics-, their origins – from Lebanon-their culture, tradition, ethics, customs, their different style of life and way of thought and their different temperament. And for Maronites that live in Kormakites village, a different language for them – an Arabic dialect.

Maronites manage to keep their own religion through the centuries. It's written that they arrived from Lebanon to Cyprus during the 8th-11th century A.C. during the Crusades times. Crusaders' had brought them to Cyprus because they wanted to change the demography of Cyprus in order to administrate the island more effective and easier. Greeks were more irritable and hot-tempered characters, so Crusaders wanted to balance the Cypriot population by bringing the Maronites from Lebanon.

Maronites, at the beginning of their arrival to Cyprus, they used to live in many different villages all over Cyprus. According to Nearchos Klirides, a Cypriot historical writer, Maronites used to live in 50 different villages. Throughout the centuries the population of the Maronites live in Cyprus decreased because many of them indoctrinated and converted to Orthodox Christianity. They choose to become Christian Orthodox for several reasons: to avoid high taxes, to escape from hardships and other difficulties. So after all these, left out only 4 Maronite villages! Those villages had their own schools and RE was taught by Maronite teachers and priests. But after the war and the Turkish invasion in 1974, it was difficult for Maronites to stay and live in their villages because their villages were located in North Cyprus under the Turkish occupation. That made the life more difficult so most of the Maronites moved to the South part of Cyprus and resident all over Cyprus. Therefore, the teaching of RE soon became a problem for the Maronite community. In schools where a large number of Maronite pupils were attended, such as Ayios Dometios, Anthoupoli, Terra Santa and English School, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus was financing the teaching of RE to Maronite pupils. Maronite priests used to teach the subject of RE within school, at the end of the school

day or at the afternoon, twice a week for 40 minutes each time. Few years ago an unmixed Maronite school was constructed, called St Maronite Primary School. After the construction of that school, the majority of the Maronite pupils were registered there. RE is taught by teachers now and not by priests. They follow the same Educational Curriculum as the Greek Cypriot schools. And they have the same RE textbooks. So Maronite pupils are taught RE from the Orthodox RE textbooks. It doesn't matter to be taught from the same textbooks because Catholics and Orthodox are almost the same. Maronites are Catholics. Orthodox and Catholics do not really have so many differences. They almost profess the same religion. Orthodox and Catholics have the same Scriptures, Holy Books, Old and New Testament and they also have the same seven Sacraments. The differences between them are only few. There are differences in their liturgies and psalms.

1) In primary schools where they attend children from the Maronite community, do they follow a different Educational Curriculum and use different Religious Education textbooks? Who teaches the Religious Education subject in Maronite schools?

In primary schools where they attend children from the Maronite community, they neither follow a different Educational Curriculum nor use different Religious Education textbooks than the Greek-Cypriots ones. Luckily, there aren't so many differences between Catholics and Orthodox, so that gives the chance to the Maronite teacher to use the same books as the Orthodox teachers. But in the cases where there are differences, then the Maronite teachers reform the lesson. For instance, in the case of psalms, liturgies and prayers where there are differences, the teachers reform the lesson according to the Catholic doctrine. However, soon is planed the Educational Reform, so it is aimed to be develop separate Educational Curriculums for all religious communities of Cyprus, including the Maronite community as well. The idea of developing different Educational Curriculums for all Cypriot communities is approved not only by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus but by the Archbishop of Cyprus as well. They already formed the groups with teachers responsible for developing those Educational Curriculums. But we are just doing the first steps! Recently, the Maronite Archbishop has start organizing Sunday schools again. Since last year 9 religious centers (Sunday schools) are operating all over Cyprus: in St Maronite school, Terra Santa school, the Maronite Archbishop Office, Panayia ton Chariton, in Limassol, in Larnaka, in Kotsiatis village and in Kormakitis village. These Maronite religious centers are operated either Wednesday or Saturday morning. People who teach in the religious centers are teachers, priests or other people who just volunteer. Before they start teaching in the religious centers, they have to attend some training seminars. For their teaching they use modern material that is prepared by the Archbishop office. The indoctrination in these centers is interdisciplinary, which means they combined the teaching of Christianity with other disciplines, such as Arts, Creative Activities, Theatre and others. The lessons in the Maronite religious centers are financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, because the Cypriot Government is obliged by the 1960 Constitution, to help all religious groups of Cyprus to teach and preserve their culture and religion.

2) What do you see as the main teaching purposes of Religious Education in the Primary School? In your own opinion, what is the most important teaching purpose?

The main teaching purpose of RE should be to develop pupils' knowledge about their religion. Because if they are not aware of their religion, they can't practice their religious duties effectively. Another purpose is to develop their religious faith and their ability to practice their religion effectively. Real Christians haven't got only the theoretical knowledge of their religion, but they also know how to practice their religion. A real

Christian goes to church often, attends to all holy sacraments and rituals. If someone wants to be considered a good Christian he/she has to practice his/her religion in a balanced way. Another important teaching purpose of RE should be the teaching of other religions and world views. To help pupils respect and accept other people who profess different religion. Only in this way people can deal with their selfishness, chauvinism and religious fundamentalism. The Cypriot Educational Curriculum lacks of lessons that promote the religious understanding among people. Maronites many times we are suffering in the Orthodox Cypriot community because we have the feeling that we are not really accepted in a community that Greek Orthodox are in the majority. Also, nowadays, all of us must feel universal citizens. Each one of us has many identities: religious, cultural, educational and others. We also have the Cypriot identity, we have the European identity and we have our religious identity. Thus, we have to learn how to live within this context, the context of the multi-identities and the context of the universal citizenship. We have to teach pupils to accept not only Christians but all other religions as well: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others. We live in a multicultural and multireligious society so we have to find common values, universal values. As Christians, we have to experience Christian love. Because the love and peaceful coexistence are the real meaning of Christianity. Therefore, the most important teaching purposes of RE should be the knowledge of the Christian identity and the mutual understanding between people that profess different religion. The purpose is dual. But unfortunately, RE at the moment is still narrow-minded.

3) How do you think that the way that religious education is taught might promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds?
The only way that religious education can promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds is to teach pupils to respect the other religions. For instance, if at the older times we were taught to respect Islam, maybe we would never end up having the war between Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots. If we were aware of Turkish-Cypriots religion and culture, we would have respected them. But we have to meet Turkish-Cypriots; we have to know them in order to respect them. Also knowing other religions, we realize that there are common values for all religions and world views. So, if we realize that all religions have common values, then we wouldn't have religious arguments and wars. Those common religious values can bridge the gap of our differences.

4) To what extent do you think is it the job of school to help pupils to understand and respect one another's religion and culture?
Yes, of course it is the job of school to help pupils to understand and respect one another's religion and culture. Few decades ago, this could be impossible to be achieved because in the Cypriot society there weren't people professing different religions or come from a different cultures. But nowadays, in the Cypriot society, they are residing people professing a variety of religions and public schools have become multicultural. Within a classroom there are kids from all over the world. Thus, through those foreign pupils we can meet and understand their culture, their religions, their beliefs and how they experience and practice their own religion. I believe that schools, nowadays, should aim to develop pupils' positive attitudes towards religious and cultural diversity. However, it is very important for teachers to be willing to promote those positive attitudes. Because, in many cases, teachers themselves have very negative attitudes towards religious and cultural diversity, so they are unwilling to promote multicultural education in their own classrooms. This kind of teachers refuse to follow the official curriculum. For instance, sometimes there are pupils belonging to another Christian denomination, different than Orthodox Christianity, and those teachers treat those kids in an unacceptable way. They

marginalize them just because they belong in a different Christian denomination. If they can't respect other Christian denominations, they surely can't respect other religions. For example, some fanatical teachers do not allow non-Christian Orthodox kids to attend a church service because they are not Christian Orthodox. Non-Orthodox parents report, all the time, cases of religious discrimination. Some teachers do not allow to some kids to go to church with their classmates. Those teachers use phrases such as: "You are staying in the classroom today", "Tell your parents to keep you home next time", "You are not allowed going to the church because you are not Orthodox". Teachers must not exclude any kid from any school activity. Education in Cyprus has always been excluded people just because they are different. Personally, as a Maronite, I also experienced religious discrimination during my school life. I was always feeling a complex of curiosity towards me. And none of my classmates or teachers has ever asked me: "What are you?", "What do you profess?", "What are your religious beliefs?", "What is your religion?", "What is the difference of your religion from our religion?". Greek-Orthodox have always marginalized us in school. There was always a religious fanaticism and dogmatism and this was causing big gaps between people.

5) Do you think that the Cypriot Educational System should face as a challenge the cultural and religious diversity in modern Cypriot society? If yes, how this can be achieved?

Yes, the educational system must see as a challenge the religious and cultural diversity in order to bridge the communication between people. At the moment, the educational system encourages the social marginalization for some people. But it is so difficult to change the negative attitudes of some teachers. That's why we have to 'invest' to the young teachers. Usually, the fanatical teachers are the ones who belong in the different church organizations. These teachers are very controlling regarding religious education. For example, few months ago a Greek-Orthodox teacher was reported because she didn't allow to a Maronite autistic pupil to receive the Holy Communion. She said to the child that he couldn't receive the Holy Communion in the Orthodox Church because he is a Maronite. That child was fasting for few days, so he was prepared to receive the Holy Communion. And his teacher said to him: "It's not allowed to you to receive the Holy Communion". So, after that, the next few days, the child was crying and refused to go to school. That teacher caused a really huge emotional damage to the autistic child, because of her religious fanaticism.

6) How effective do you think that primary school teachers currently are in the teaching of religious education?

The effectiveness of religious education teachers depends on what purposes had the teacher set. Is his/her purpose to give knowledge to pupils? Or wants to improve pupils' attitudes? Or maybe he/she wants to create reasonable citizens? His/her teaching effectiveness depends on his/her teaching purposes. To evaluate the effectiveness of a teacher, we must assess his/her lessons. In my personal opinion, RE is taught superficial by the Maronite teachers. One reason is because the church liturgy has not been translated yet. The liturgy is in Arabic and Aramaic. Thus, young children cannot understand and appreciate the meaning of the liturgy and psalms. Because of this, there is no spirituality in the Maronite community. And also because, for years now, the educational level of Maronite priests was so low, so they couldn't respond successfully to their spiritual role and responsibilities within the Maronite community. However, we are so lucky that our Archbishop is a gifted and a very educated person. He is aware of his spiritual role and he is a very promising religious leader. He is doing 'miracles' with Sunday schools! He is so near to young people. He also tries to introduce young and educated priests, in order

to be able to play an important role to the spiritual development of the Maronite community. Undoubtedly, a priest can pay a vital role in society.

7) What do you see as the main challenges and difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education in primary schools in Cyprus at the moment?
8) What are the difficulties that teachers face in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious background?

Teachers face so many difficulties because children's behavior and attitude is affected by everybody. School and teachers are not the only who influence children's attitudes. Their families and society are the first 'schools' for children. If a child's family is a deep religious family, then the child develops a strong religious identity. But if the child's family does not involve with religion, then the child does not experience his/her own religion. So even if the teacher tries to develop pupils' religious identity, there is nothing to be done if they don't experience their own religion at home. Also kids are influenced by their friends, by media and by Internet. Most of the times kids copy foreign attitudes. Those foreign attitudes have nothing to do with our culture and religion. The teacher has to 'straggle' with all these. So surely, pupils will not be influenced by their religious education teacher. Of course, this is also happening with the kids from all religions around the world. This is worst for our small community. The Maronite community numbers only 6000 people who are spread all over Cyprus. All these make everything more difficult. An average religious child is taking religious education lessons twice a week, goes to the church four times a month and to Sunday schools eight times a month, but the rest of his/her life is influenced by so many other people and things!

9) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious education textbooks in use in primary schools in Cyprus? If you think that revisions or updating are needed, which areas would you prioritize?

The religious education textbooks should be more human-centric. They have to transmit to kids important values. And especially universal values. The books have to use examples from our everyday life. For instance, if they want to talk about charity, they can refer the example of the Good Samaritan. They have to introduce stories and examples from the Scriptures and to relate those examples with the modern reality and everyday life. The teaching of RE should be practical and not theoretical. It has to be an everyday approach. And surely, RE books and Curriculum need lots of changes. The RE books are introduced from Greece. But this is wrong because in Greece there is a different style of life, different culture. Books need lots of changes in order to become contemporary. Only in this way they will become able to develop pupils' multicultural understanding. To teach pupils to accept and respect other people different than them. If we don't meet others, we can't enhance our personal religious and cultural identity. Through others we enhance our identity. Meeting others, we enhance our own identity.

10) What changes do you think should be made to the teaching of religious education? Do you think that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum? If so, what?

Religious education teaching approach must be changed. We should not teach pupils only knowledge. The teaching of RE must be based on a practical approach. We should improve each pupil's way of life, to improve their attitudes, to develop their deep faith and spirituality. To teach them the meaning of spirituality. In my personal opinion, no extra teaching topics should be added in the RE curriculum. The only thing that it must be changed is the teaching approach. The approach must be more human-centric. Pupils must be taught about everyday problems. RE must include teaching topics such as

environmental pollution, human relationships, racial equality, equality between men and women. We can also use the Scriptures. Children should be taught real, everyday stories. Only real stories have meaning for them. For small kids the stories that happened ages ago during Jesus years have no meaning for them, they can't understand them.

11) What do you see as the main educational problems that the Maronite community of Cyprus faces at the moment?

The Maronite community at the moment faces many educational problems. Maronites of Cyprus are spread all over Cyprus. That's why we need to find ways to enhance our cultural identity. Because our cultural identity is in danger to assimilated. The last years there are many mix marriages between Maronites and Greek-Orthodox. These marriages prevent the children relationships with their Maronite community. Another problem that the Maronite community used to deal with was the religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism was very common among the Maronite community. Back in time, many Maronite generations they were trying to develop the religious fundamentalism among Maronites. It was a way of survival of the Maronite community in Cyprus. Thus, as a Maronite community, we have to deal with this religious fundamentalism. We have to face it. But nowadays, we enhance our religious and cultural identity by learning about other and different cultures and religions. The educational problems that we face are when we try to change the human views. Few years ago, the Maronite community of Cyprus decided to create a Maronite school, called Saint Maronite Primary School. The purpose of this school was to develop multi-cultural education, but unfortunately, on the way, it end up to become a Maronite ghetto. It became a Maronite ghetto because Maronite parents have chosen to register their kids in order to be taught their own religion, culture and language (an Arabic dialect). So that school has ended up being a huge educational problem for us. We need to develop and improve Maronites educational level and to change their wrong, old and narrow-minded views. However, those views sometimes are like a tall wall that you cannot pass through!!

Armenian Teacher (Female)

1) In primary schools where they attend children from the Armenian community, do they follow a different Educational Curriculum and use different Religious Education textbooks? Who teaches the Religious Education subject in Armenian schools?

At Nareg Armenian Elementary Schools, the subject of Religious Instruction (RI) is taught by the priests of our church. Specifically, the resident priest of Nicosia teaches at Nareg Nicosia and the resident priest of Larnaka teaches at the two other schools (Larnaka and Limassol). The textbooks used are in Armenian language, published in Lebanon and Aleppo. Of course, the priests as teachers use additional material and notes that they prepare.

2) What do you see as the main teaching purposes of Religious Education in the Primary School? In your own opinion, what is the most important teaching purpose?

The goal of a religious curriculum should primarily be to familiarize students with their religion. The lesson should also act as the academic platform from which students learn the following:

a. The historical events from the beginning of Christianity.
b. The doctrines of the Christian religion.
c. Hymns and prayers of the Armenian Church.

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d. They should learn about the major differences in religions so that they may appreciate differences in people and be tolerant towards others.

e. In a way that is appropriate to children, to be able to distinguish between good and bad and build awareness of ethical issues that may exist in society and personal relationships.

f. Through questions and answer sessions the students should be allowed to develop their self- respect and to voice their concerns regarding human development, relationships and family, in a "healthy" and adequate way for each age.

3) How do you think that the way that religious education is taught might promote understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds?
As Mahatma Gandhi said: "God has no religion".
Learning about the religion, traditions, social and ethical standards of others allows children to develop an open mind at an early age, thus increasing their levels of tolerance and empathy towards other cultures and people with whom they will have to live both now and more so, in the future.

4) To what extent do you think is it the job of school to help pupils to understand and respect one another's religion and culture?
The school has a major role to play.

5) Do you think that the Cypriot Educational System should face as a challenge the cultural and religious diversity in modern Cypriot society? If yes, how this can be achieved?
Multiculturalism as well as religious diversity have become an inevitable part of our lives. Cyprus is no exemption to the rule and thus the educational system in Cyprus should consider it as a challenge to modify its RI curriculum. It should ensure that appointed teachers of RI are both knowledgeable and unprejudiced when it comes to other religions, allowing students to learn about each other's beliefs. Cyprus could imitate the example of Finnish schools or some other countries by catering for students of different religious groups during RI class. Each group could be taught about its particular religion for one or two periods a week.

6) How effective do you think that primary school teachers currently are in the teaching of religious education?
Some teachers are better than others, but overall, there is a degree of religious fanaticism which in many cases makes children who are not Greek Orthodox to feel marginalized. Also, I would like to see more teachers who are free of prejudice and complexes and who are ready to answer any question posed to them.

7) What do you see as the main challenges and difficulties that teachers face in teaching religious education in primary schools in Cyprus at the moment?
– A rising number of children of non-Greek Orthodox families in state schools.
– Also a rising number of children from families of weak or no religious orientation.
– Many children from broken homes who don't believe strongly in the institution of marriage and close family ties.

8) What are the difficulties that teachers face in promoting understanding among people with different cultural and religious background?
Although learning about others' religion and traditions with an open mind poses no threat to any faith, some families do not want their children to be subjected to this type of education.

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9) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious education textbooks in use in primary schools in Cyprus? If you think that revisions or updating are needed, which areas would you prioritize?

10) What changes do you think should be made to the teaching of religious education? Do you think that some extra teaching topics should be added to religious education curriculum? If so, what?

As mentioned above, different religions should be introduced with their diverse rituals and celebrations. Also the ethical issues of different religions should be discussed: issues which are mostly the same in every religion. This would make students aware of the fact that diverse does not mean different in every aspect. They could in this way learn to respect and accept others.

11) Do you have any further comments?

> "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another".

> (Jonathan Swift)