GREEK CYPRIO\textsc{t} YOUNG PEOPLE: WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE ABOUT THE ‘OTHER’ COMMUNITY AND WHAT ROLE DOES THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM PLAY IN FORMING THOSE BELIEFS?

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In an era where humanity finds itself trapped in circumstances that seem to be unsolved, education can become an institution placing the foundations where a healthy society can be build upon it. The role of education in preparing youngsters to live in a multi-cultural society becomes even more crucial in the case of the island of Cyprus, where the two main communities grow up living separately. The Cyprus problem affects the lives of the youth in a major degree, but their views and perceptions have not been taken into consideration. A number of researchers tried to map the public opinion regarding the impact and potential solutions of the Cyprus problem, but no research was implemented to investigate the opinion of the youth in the peace and reconciliation process on the island. The current paper focuses on the attitudes and knowledge of the young Greek Cypriots regarding the Turkish Cypriots and the role the educational system plays in constructing those attitudes. The current study utilized stratified clustered sampling and collected data from thirteen schools across the island. 350 Greek Cypriots (12-18 years old) who attend public and private schools of Cyprus have participated in the study by filling out a questionnaire. The results indicate that the young Greek Cypriots have minimal knowledge regarding the history of the Turkish Cypriot community and have more positive attitudes toward the members of their own ethnic group. Findings from this study also indicate that the young Greek Cypriots feel unprepared to live with the Turkish Cypriots. The vast majority of the young Greek Cypriots reported that the educational system affects their attitudes and beliefs regarding the other community and believe that their opinion is not taken into consideration in the decision-making process. While the Cyprus problem has many layers of complexity, inter-ethnic acceptance, multi-perceptivity, and cross-cultural collaboration can be considered the foundations for peace and reconciliation on the island. Through this paper, practical implications and recommendations will be discussed on how the home-school-community partnership can serve as a platform to break the cycle of reproduced stereotypes and hatred on the island.

\textit{Keywords:}\nHuman Rights Education, Cyprus problem, Conflict Resolution, Stereotypes, and Multi-perceptivity.