

# School Psychology in Cyprus

## 1. Context of School Psychology

### A. Geography

Cyprus is considered as the third largest island in Mediterranean and has the following geographical characteristics:

*North:* Egypt (386 kilometers)

*West:* Syria (97 kilometers)

*South:* Turkey (64 kilometers)

*Crossroads:* Africa, Asia and Europe

*Land Area:* 9, 251 square kilometers

*Climate:* Subtropical

*Terrains:* Troodos Mountains, Pentadaktylous Mountains

### B. Demographics

*Population:*

0.7878 Million as of 2004 (International Handbook of School Psychology, 2007)

1, 129, 000 as of 2012 (World Health Organization)

*Ethnicity:*

Greek (77%)

Turkish (18%)

Others (5%)

*Life Expectancy:* 79 (Male); 84 (Female) (World Health Organization, 2012)

### C. Economy

As a result of Turkish invasion, Cyprus has experienced division of country. With such, the economic affairs are open free, market and service-based. Along with this, the following are the economic characteristics of the country:

*Gross Domestic Product:*

Republic of Cyprus: US \$15.71 Billion per US \$20,300 per capita (2004)

North Cyprus: US \$4.5 Billion per US \$7,135 per capita (2004)

*As of 2012 (World Bank):*

US \$22,766,912,960 per US \$26,070.4 per capita

*Labor Forces:*

Services (76%)

Industry and Construction (19%)

*Unemployment Rate:*

11.8% (World Bank, 2012)

#### **D. Educational System**

*Student Population:* 174,062 during School Year 2003-2004 comprising of:

- 25, 674 – Pre-Primary School
- 61,731 – Primary Greek Community School
- 65, 480 – Secondary Level
- 20, 849 – Public or Private Universities
- 17, 631 – University Students Studying Abroad

*Educational Levels:*

##### **I. PRE-PRIMARY**

- Compulsory
- 4 years 8 months to 5 years 8 months
- Day classes

##### ✓ *Nursery School Categories*

###### **1. Public**

Established by the government and supported partly by the government and partly by communities or parents' association.

###### **2. Community**

Non-profit private schools supported by government subsidies or by parents' association. It is supervised by Ministry of Education & Culture and Department of Welfare Services.

### 3. Private

Established and supported by the owners of the schools on a profit basis. . It is supervised by Ministry of Education & Culture and Department of Welfare Services.

## II. PRIMARY

- Free
- Compulsory
- 5 years 8 months to 12 years
- Grades 1 to 6
- Day classes

## III. SECONDARY GENERAL

- Composed of two stages
  - *Gymnasium*
    - Compulsory
    - 12 to 15 years old
    - Grades 1 to 3
    - Day classes
    - Evening classes are offered to young people and adults for the completion of their secondary education
  - *Lyceum*
    - 15 to 18 years old
    - Grades 4 to 6
    - Leading to a certificate (apolitirion) upon completion.

## IV. SECONDARY TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL

- Accepts only who finished the second stage of secondary general education.
- It is composed of two departments namely:
  - *Technical Schools*
    - Emphasis on theory and practice in science and technical skills.
  - *Vocational Schools*

- Provides training for craftsmen and service trades.

#### V. UNIVERSITY LEVEL

- University of Cyprus (Public)
- Private Schools
- Universities outside Cyprus

#### *School Categories:*

- *Public* – mainly financed by public funds
- *Private* – primarily funded from the tuition

#### *Public Education System:*

- Centralized
- Head teachers and teachers are appointed by the Educational Service Commission
- Regulation of laws, creation of syllabi, curricula development and review of textbooks are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture

*Number of Full Operating Schools:* 1,233 (School Year 2003-2004)

*Number of Teachers:* 14, 290 (School Year 2003-2004)

*Teacher-Student Ratio:* 1:12.2

#### *Average Class Sizes:*

- 24. 7 – Public Primary Education (25 minimum; 30 maximum)
- 25 – Public Secondary Education (30 maximum with the exception of the third grade in Lyceum where the maximum number of class is 25)
- If there are students with special needs which are included in a regular stream class, the average number of students must be lower (Public Law for Education and Training Children with Special Needs, 1992)

#### *Status of Students with Special Needs:*

- A recent innovation in the integration policy which started in 1992.
- Usually served in a regular stream of education.
- In school year 2003-2004, it had opened 11 special education schools catering 328 students.
- 4,000 students received special education services from the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2004.
- Three hundred and ninety-six (396) primary education teachers were trained to specialize in different cases such as deaf, blind and children with disabilities.
- One hundred and thirty-seven (137) secondary teachers, on the other hand, offered special education for both gymnasium and lyceum stages.
- Services offered include music therapy, work therapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy and psychological support.
- The enactment of Public Law for Education and Training of Children with Special Needs (1999) enables the implementation of educational psychology programs in a unified educational system that refers to the needs of all students with and without disabilities.
- It also been a mandatory order that all children with handicaps will receive a free and appropriate education in a less restrictive environment.

*Other Pertinent Facts:*

- 50% of Cypriot high school graduates sought university education outside the country particularly Greece, United Kingdom and United States as being the top destinations.
- When the University of Cyprus has been established in 1992, it added the student population by about 2,500
- University of Cyprus offers baccalaureate, master's and doctorate degrees in many disciplines.

## **2. History and Current Status of School Psychology**

### *Historical Perspective*

- Upon establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960, psychology positions were held at Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health which two psychologists were appointed.
- History is closely related with vocational counseling.

- Services were offered through the Counseling and Career Education Service under Ministry of Education from 1974 to 1989 with only six members.
- Educational Services Section under Ministry of Education and Culture was established in 1995 and has now 35 members and counting to serve public schools.
- The practice of educational psychology started upon the establishment of Cyprus Psychological Association (1980) and professional efforts of psychologists teaching in the Department of Educational Studies in University of Cyprus (1992).

### ***Current Status***

- School psychologists were mostly employed in the government and public schools.
- Only few school psychologists were employed in private and special schools.
- School psychologists aim to provide application of psychology and basic psychological principles to the educational system.
- There is an existing Educational Psychology Service under the Ministry of Education and Culture which aims to promote mental health and academic enrichment and facilitate learning to students.
- The Educational Psychology Service is open for any consultation and support.
- In the practice, professional terms used are EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS and EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES.
- Most of the practitioners are females with age ranges from 25-58 years old (Jimerson, et.al, 2004).
- Cypriots travel abroad to obtain higher degrees in the absence of a local university before 1992.
- Current ratio is 1:5,000.
- Salaries depend on number of experience and psychologists earn as equal as of teachers and other professionals working at schools.
- Most of the psychologists do administrative and psychoeducational tasks.

## **3. Infrastructure of School Psychology**

### ***National Professional Organization***

- ✓ Cyprus Psychological Association (1980)
  - 21 were the first number of members.
  - As of 2005, there were 185 members.
  - Members are joining different local and international professional organizations.

- Members were restricted to psychology programs.
- It has a primary aim to support and promote practice of psychology as a profession and as a field and to serve the interests of its members.
- It also aims to improve mental health.
- Membership is accepted if the candidate is a university and post-graduate degree holder of psychology.
- Developed the code of ethics of psychologists.

### ***Regulations and Laws***

- ✓ Public Law for Consolidation of Professional Psychology (1995)
  - Has set the qualifications for professional psychologists.
  - No one can practice professional psychology without fulfilling the criteria set by the law.
- ✓ Public Law for Consolidation of Professional Psychology (2004)
  - Law that governs the credentialing and licensing of psychologists.

### ***Qualifications***

- Degree in Psychology
- 3 years of post graduate studies in a specialized area including at least of 1,500 hours of training

### ***Professional Journal***

- Not specified

## **4. Preparation of School Psychology**

### ***A. Scope of Training (Knowledge and Skill Areas)***

- Degree in Psychology in the undergraduate and post graduate levels.
- Must have a strong theoretical background.

### ***B. Field Experiences Required***

- Not specified

### ***C. Years of Study (Number of Credit Hours Required)***

- First degree in Psychology requires completion of 134 credit hours with 33 compulsory courses for introduction of psychology.

- In selecting educational-developmental psychology, he/she must complete 57 elective credit hours and 18 credit hours.
- Additional 14 credit hours for subculture and 12 credit hours for education courses.
- Completion of graduate level requires 120 credit hours including 40 hours of credit hours of supervised training.
- 2 years is the nominal duration of the curriculum

#### ***D. Training Programs***

- Core academic knowledge of Psychology
- Assessment Procedures
- Intervention Strategies
- Statistical Designs
- Research Methods
- Code of Ethics
- Regulations of the Practice

#### ***E. Where Graduates are Typically Employed***

- School Systems
- Private Practice



## **5. Roles, Functions and Responsibilities of School Psychologists**

### ***Job Descriptions:***

- Individual consultation and assessment of students
- Counseling and consultation with teachers and parents
- Design and implements intervention programs
- Development of pedagogical research studies

### ***Main Function:***

- Support school personnel and parents to enhance academic adaptive and social skills for students

### ***Roles:***

- *Individual Referrals*
  - Assist referrals from school, parent and other professionals.
  - Informed consent from parent or legal guardian is secured.
  - Create assessments, diagnosis and recommendations based on the concern handled.



- Either in a group or individual counseling manner.
- *Testing and Assessment*
  - Done before the student can be eligible for special education services.
  - Mostly done through interviews, observation and testing.
- *Organizational and Program Development Services*
  - Developing preventive and intervention programs in schools/
  - Issues involved dependency problems, school violence, self-esteem and crisis intervention
- *Supervision*
  - A need for no existing supervision program exists.
- *Other Activities*
  - Research
  - Training for teachers and other professionals
  - Collaboration, Planning and Administration of Educational Programs

## 6. Current Practice Impacting School Psychologists

### *Major Issues*

- Human Resources
- Insufficient funding for programs
- Recognizing the primary role and contribution of educational psychologists in the school systems,
- Lack of research and evaluation.
- Test development and standardization of testing materials.
- Lack of theory-based interventions addressing specific needs of students.
- Lack of supervision services.
- Professional burnout

### *Action Plans*

- More researches in the field/
- Further professional trainings.
- Developing short-term and long-term efficacy of intervention programs

