

*Peace Education in a Conflict-Affected Society: An Ethnographic Journey*. Michalinos Zembylas, Constadina Charalambous and Panayiota Charalambous. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 274 pages. \$110. ISBN 9781107057456

Michalinos Zembylas, a Greek-Cypriot, has spent nearly two decades examining implications of and around peace education in societies impacted by conflict, including this recent work, *Peace Education in a Conflict-Affected Society*. Zembylas and co-authors, Constadina Charalambous and Panayiota Charalambous, share backgrounds as refugees exposed to conflict narratives, and the ramifications of growing up in the conflict-affected communities of Cyprus following the 1974 war—as the authors name it—that solidified rifts between the various ethnic and religious communities within today’s Cyprus.

An earlier work from editors McGlynn, Zembylas and Bekerman, *Integrated Education in Conflicted Societies*, tackled a broader view of integrated peace education, sampling cases of peace education practitioners in a global setting (Aguar 2014 par. 1). There is a clear connection between this earlier work and the refinement Zembylas leads in establishing a context for peace education as a combination of policy and practice, with a stronger sense of the barriers to implementation within localized, institutional life.

What Zembylas, Charalambous and Charalambous outline is an unpacking of educational and peace theory, underpinned by intersectional theories from anthropology, linguistics and cultural study. There appears to be an intentional examination, utilizing feminist theory that draws the reader into considering the innate difference between intent and impact: developing policies of and for peace education are so much more than words that appear on a page. This is where their research unfolds.

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The work is a mixed-methods study aimed toward refining methodologies within local institutional and organizational research in educational and peace theory. The inclusion of a thoughtful design and methodological section provides an example of how to build a case and framework for social sciences. Echoing their own assertions about peace education, the authors' research developed over time, within mixed and recursive methods, creating a comprehensive view of key points: how educational policy is received and executed; the efficacy of support across multiple contexts for educators and in-field professional development; and the impact of policy in the classroom.

In each phase of study, epistemological and ontological considerations hold weight in theoretical analysis, focusing discourse around being and knowing as psychological and anthropological phenomenon, a nuanced approach to cultural values and traditions; it challenges basic assumptions within the fields of Peace Education and Peace and Conflict Studies which often lean toward the sovereignty of culture as both collective representation and a collective bargaining tool. As the authors develop their work, they move away from utilizing culture as a catchall for identifying personal and shared practices within the contexts of the educators and the classrooms they studied, providing a clearer picture of how participants try to teach and learn peace within their society.

Through their ethnographic approach, the authors are able to center local meanings and practices, utilizing discourse analytics to document teacher attitudes toward new education policies (236) that deal specifically with peace and conflict, the coexistence of multiple populations with various identities, brought together

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What is revealed is unlikely to be new to any classroom educator: new policies can be interpreted to be at odds with previous policies and, it appears, that the educators received no structural or systemic support to facilitate the transformation in either their pedagogy or their practice. Many appear to have been left to their own devices as they attempt to enact these new policies.

A particularly salient assertion introduced early on, indicates the power and agency of classroom educators as gatekeepers or stewards of collective memory. As we untangle the implications of dynamics in the classroom, the connection of embedded peace practice in teacher education and professional development becomes clearer, alluding to a shift in, or a clarifying of the more traditional transactional role of teachers in the classroom. As the authors repeat throughout the work, the localized impacts of peace processes are under-documented in academic literature. How these larger efforts manifest on the micro level are indicative of what peacekeeping efforts leave behind, framing the question of “Where do we go from here?”

Politicization of memory is not a new phenomenon, but an awareness of how collective memory impacts both world-view and conflict proceedings, is something wrestled with in academic literature. Such is the case with the teachers in this study. The sample set, narrowed from the entire population of educators in Cyprus, clearly highlights the importance of establishing a relationship to collective, or cultural, memory. Through the authors’ field notes, it becomes clear that teachers are political actors as much as they are major components of socialization within a

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society. How these individuals craft their discourse and accept the discourses of students becomes a function of superdiversity, a term describing shifts in more traditional definitions of what illustrates diversity in a setting.

Data analysis presented throughout the work highlights a nuanced, multiplex approach to following logical strands of possibility, plausibility and reality across the layers and levels of building sustainable peace within a post-conflict era. The study highlights factors and barriers, like the limitation of individual or personal perspectives to envision the plausibility of re-tooling education, as a socializing institution, to serve reconciliatory purposes. Additionally, the study indicates that personal feelings toward the “other” have little connection to systemic transformation: data sets showed a strong positive lean toward respect but did not correlate with positive stances toward reconciliation. In short, as can be seen in other societies, that there is no enactment of implicit bias or violence does not preclude the persistence of systemic oppression as dictated and reinforced by initial conflict proceedings.

The strands the authors are able to establish, lean into and pull to the forefront have been concerns within teacher education and preparation programs on a global level. It is appreciable that they minimize use of typical language traps including culture, diversity, equity and so on; in some ways, that diction creates and reinforces asymmetries that policies like those of Peaceful Coexistence and Intercultural Education seek to dispel. The continued focus on localized meaning within the study serves to separate trope from truth and platitude from action,

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developing effective interventions to guide development of all constituencies.

What can be gleaned and theorized is that examples of acquaintance, learning and acknowledging the “other” as is implied with Intercultural Education is received in a stronger, positive light when compared to policies like Peaceful Coexistence, which can be interpreted as charting an entirely new direction, necessitating relinquishing a multitude of paradigms for all groups involved. This transformative process, directly confronting hurt and trauma generated by conflict proceedings, is cited as being much more difficult, the resistance creating impetus to abandon the enactment of challenging policy. As with reconciliation processes across the globe, vertical alignment and local parity are desirable conditions, as difficult as they might be to achieve.

The implementation of action research principles by these authors, whose lived experience within a conflict-affected community—the very community centered within their extensive study—influences not only the beneficence of their research but also their methodologies. The care the authors use to execute their research is an indication of the importance connection plays within peace education. In their Epilogue, the authors express a desire to affect educational research methodologies:

Our hope is that this book will encourage research approaches that understand peace education as a practice embedded in local sociopolitical spaces, recognizing that local historical, emotional and

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cultural resources should be taken into account for the design of effective pedagogical practices (240).

In many ways, for the seasoned practitioner, this is common sense. The clarity and influence of context play major roles in developing the essential elements of sustainable peace. What can sometimes be lost in translation often exists between policy-makers and those who enact the policies; even sound policy is often untested prior to implementation. This is especially true in conflict-affected societies and Zembylas, Charalambous and Charalambous document such impact within their work.

Additional research would be necessary to fully grasp the import of this work, particularly as relates to the society and policies examined. While the authors provide a brief historical sketch, there is likely to be a desire to learn more of the “facts” as they relate to the conclusions drawn by the authors. The in-depth nature of this study, along with the density of the text and time spent on data analysis, make this a more than suitable text for graduate and post-graduate studies. Students just beginning in the field or practitioners not versed in academic forms of research writing are likely to struggle with this material. What makes the largest impression is the design and implementation of the research itself; that the authors were not only able to glean the meaning-making exhibited by their study participants but also allow those conclusions to inform the further development of their work is truly emblematic of how meaningful and lasting research in educational and peace theory might need to be accomplished.

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