

## **PROFESSION OF PSYCHOLOGY IN CYPRUS: PAST AND CURRENT TRENDS**

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In 1995 the Cyprus House of Parliament passed the first legislation for recognizing Psychology as an independent profession. The first appointed Board of Registration for Professional Psychologists raised several objections regarding the applicability and usefulness of the legislation leading to the dissolving of the Body keeping the legislation inactive for almost a decade. In the year 2004, the original Act, in order to comply with EFPA's recommendations for EuroPsy, was modified again. However, the shortage of professional psychology training programmes in Cyprus, the fact that most Psychologists in Cyprus were trained in different countries with different philosophy, standards and years of training made it impossible for the new legislation and its grand parenting clauses to satisfy the needs of Psychologists in Cyprus. This led to the development of a new movement for further modification of the current legislation. The modified legislation was recently voted by Members of the Parliament. The main aim of the present paper is to look historically the development of Professional Psychology in Cyprus, the difficulties experienced in formulating a legal framework for Professional Psychologists and how the latest provisions of the amended law open new prospective to the profession.

**Keywords:** Cyprus psychology; professional psychology; law of psychologists.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The professional psychology in Cyprus is relatively new as it is just exceeding half a century since the day it developed in our small island. On the other hand, the institutionalization of the profession as well as the education of the profession at the Cyprus universities are in the second decade of life. As years went by, the number of psychologists in Cyprus have been steadily increasing. However, during the last decade a dramatic increase of the number of psychologists has been observed. Moreover, nowadays even more psychologists are hired in the public sector as clinical and educational psychologists. There is

also an increase in the number of psychologists who become private practitioners. At the same time, the institutionalization of psychology as a profession is facing many difficulties as the legislation was changing successively for up to fifteen years.

Up to this point there are no journals or any other kind of published text book that fully reviews the history of psychology in Cyprus. In the book “History of Insanity in Cyprus During the Times of Ottoman Control and British Rule” by Andreas Georgiades – the first psychologist who was hired in the public sector in Cyprus –there are some attempts to review the history of Psychology in Cyprus. The reports are mostly about the work of psychologists in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture (Georgiades, 1995). Recently, a second attempt took place in a journal by Adonis et al (2007) where they mostly discuss the issue of institutionalization regarding the profession of psychology. It is important to note that a lot of the reports they make are incorrect and not well documented.

The above study gathers data regarding the history of psychology in Cyprus and classifies it into three categories: a) the professional employment of psychologists in Cyprus, b) the institutionalization of the psychology profession in Cyprus, c) the evolution of organized psychology organizations in Cyprus.

### **THE PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN CYPRUS**

The most noteworthy attempts that took place in order to establish the professional employment of psychologists in Cyprus seems to be about the psychologists who work in the public sector (see Table 1). According to our research, psychology as a professional occupation in Cyprus dates back to 1960, which is the year that the British colonialism dissolved from the island and the Republic of Cyprus established instead. Andreas Georgiades was the first to be employed as an educational psychologist in the Ministry of Education. The main duties that have been assigned to Mr. Georgiades were aiming towards a better educational system where the psychological knowledge was more important than the implementation of practices to meet the psychological needs that emerged in the school population. In 1966, the Medical Services included a psychologist in their services for the first time. Again, Andreas Georgiades was the first psychologist who was employed by the Medical Services after working for the Ministry of Education and Culture. From the new professional position Mr. Georgiades practiced clinical psychological duties which at a later

stage were used as the foundation for the constitution of the Mental Health Services of the department of Clinical Psychology (Georgiades 1995).

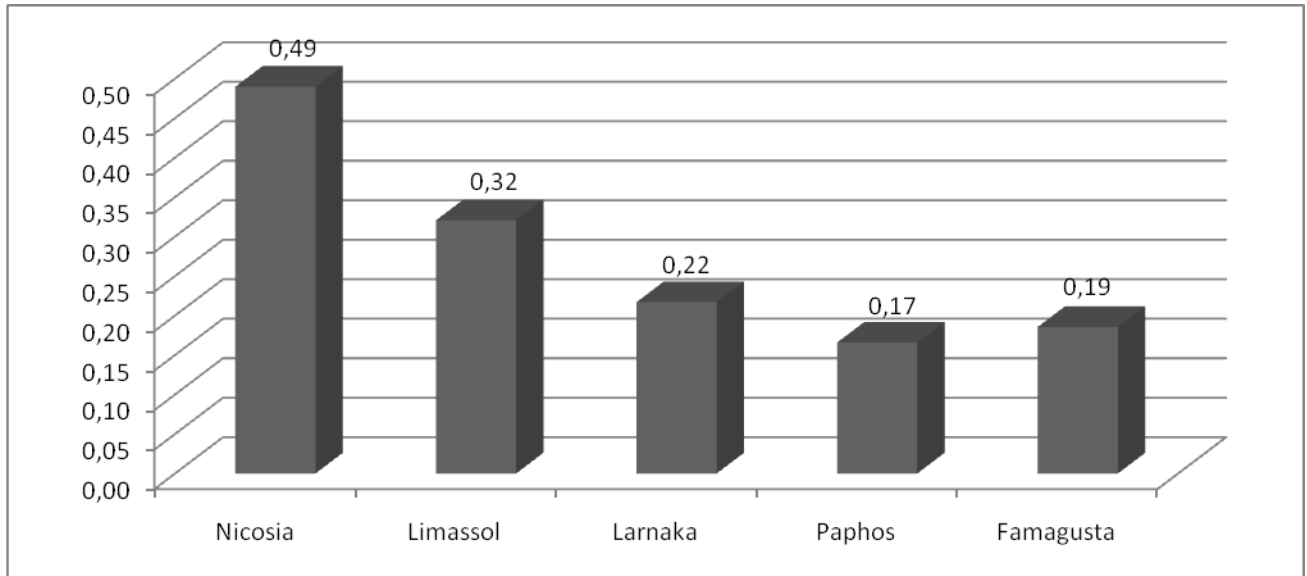
According to the records of the Social Insurance Services the official beginning of the psychology profession in the private sector started in the 1980's (Social Insurance Services, 2009). However, according to the information gathered during our research the profession of psychology in the private sector in Cyprus started at least a decade ago. As regards the public sector, the employment of psychologists is stable with the new vacancies of educational psychologists in the Ministry of Education and Culture to show a slight lead over the vacancies of the clinical psychologists in the Ministry of Health. Specifically, in the mid 1990's nine and eight permanent positions were held by the Service of Educational Psychology and the Clinical Psychology Department respectively. During the next years the aim is to enhance the psychological services in the public sector and their extension across the unoccupied Cyprus and the reconstruction of its hierarchical organisation. Therefore, by the end of January 2009, the employees of the Educational Office of Psychology raises up to 34 people, of which 19 of them are permanently assigned and the rest are temporarily assigned. At the same time the sorting of the positions of the educational psychologists is ensured in four groups (1X1, 2X2, 3X4, 4X27) and as a result a good hierarchical structure of the Educational Psychology Office is formed. The potentials of the existing structure and organization that the Services of the Educational Psychology offer are spread in all the district of the unoccupied Cyprus (Educational Psychology Service, 2009). During the October of 2009, the department of Clinical Psychology consists of three hierarchical levels (1X1, 2X5, 3X41), where 21 people work permanently and 27 people work temporarily. As we can see from our data, during the 2009 the Department of Clinical Psychology excels the Educational Psychology Service regarding the workforce, although it lags in hierarchical levels (Mental Health Services, 2009).

Nevertheless, both Clinical and Educational Departments ensure the provision of services throughout the territory controlled by the Cyprus Republic. Finally, an important milestone in the evolution of the employment of Psychologists in Cyprus is the approval of the announcement on the 17/07/2009 which declares for the first time, positions in other specialisations of the applied psychology, such as Counselling and Forensic Psychology. In addition the Department of Clinical Psychology has renamed in Department of Special Psychology (Cyprus Republic 2009a, p. 913-914).

**TABLE 1 MILESTONES OF THE PROFESIONAL EMPLOYMENT OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN CYPRUS**

1960	Educational Psychologists in the Ministry of Education and Culture
1966	First employment of a psychologist in the Medical Services of the Ministry of Health
17/7/2009	Endorsement of permanent positions in other than clinical specializations of an applied psychology in the Mental Health Services
2009 January	Hierarchy structure of the Educational Psychology Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture
2009 October	Hierarchy structure of the Clinical Psychology Services of the Ministry of Health

It is hard to know the exact number of the psychologists in Cyprus since not all psychologists are registered. The outcome of the recorded and analysed data we managed to gather from various sources (Council for the Registration of Professional Psychologists, 2007; Pancyprian Society of Psychologists, 2009) shows that the ratio of psychologists per 1000 Cypriot inhabitants is ranging from 0.49 in the capital and up to 0.19 psychologists in Famagusta which a part of it is occupied by the Turkish troops (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1 RATE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN CYPRUS PER 1000 INHABITANTS BY DISTRICT**

#### **ORGANIZED PSYCHOLOGY BODIES IN CYPRUS**

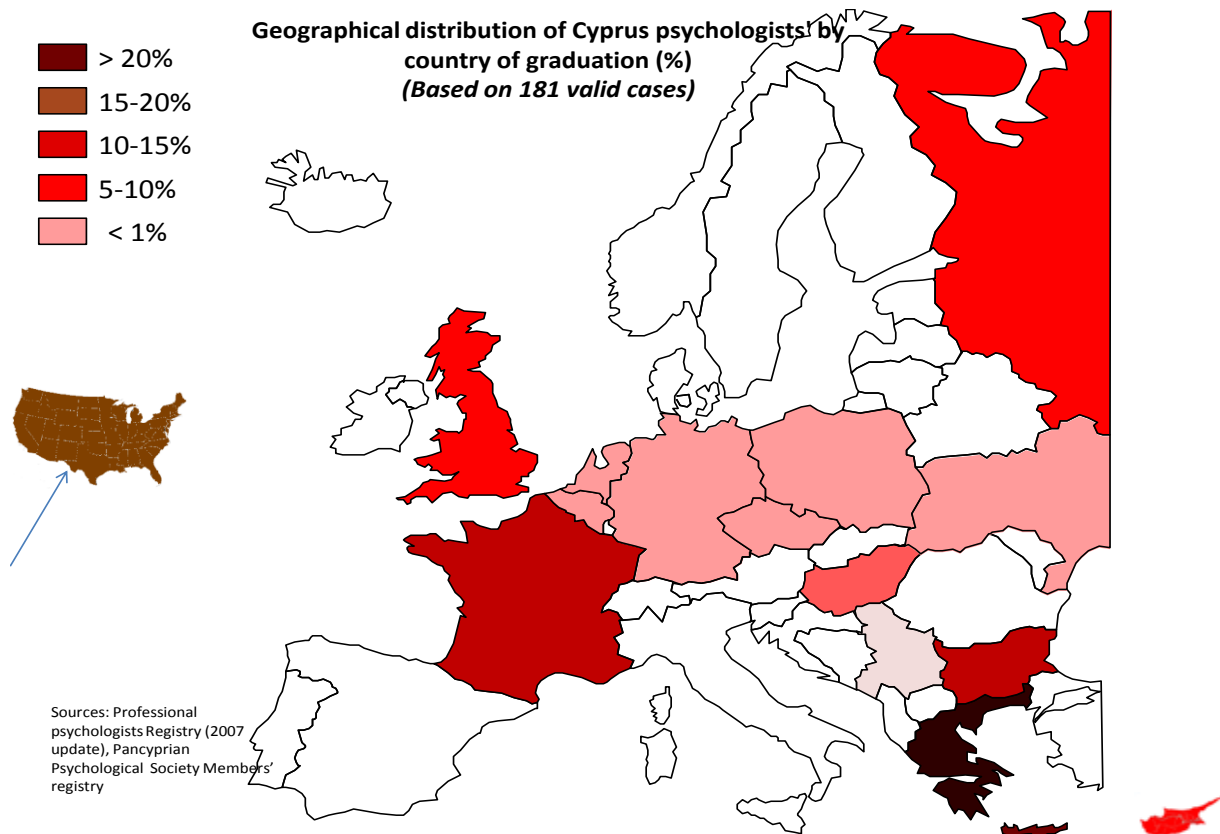
We used the term ‘organised bodies’ to refer to the organisations and institutions which aim in negotiating the scientific, educational, professional or trade union issues in psychology and we also recoded the key milestones (see Table 2). The establishment of the Cyprus Psychologists’ Association in 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1980 consists the beginning of the creation of an organised psychology body in Cyprus (Tziogkourous, 2009). The first Cypriot psychologists as well as other professionals who were working as psychologists, due to their postgraduate psychology-related education, were registered in this Society (Cyprus Psychologists’ Association, 1980). The first effort to organise psychologists into a labour union was recorded in 1983 when the educational psychologists who were working at the Ministry of Education and Culture merged with the Pancyprian Public Servants’ Trade Union (PASYDY), branch of Culture and Services. In January 25, 2005 the clinical psychologists of the Ministry of Health successfully achieved the establishment of a separate professional branch of psychologists in PASYDY (Pasydy, 2009). Mostly, due to the transformation of the institutionalisation of the psychology profession in Cyprus a new psychological society is established in 2007- the Pancyprian Psychological Society. According to the Constitution, only those who are authorised to work as psychologists and only when the psychology qualifications they possess are exclusively obtained by a psychology degree can register in the Pancyprian Psychological

Society (Pancyprian Society of Psychologists, 2007). The main aim of the Pancyprian Psychological Society is to modify the institutional framework in order to a) ensure a high quality of psychological services that is offered to the public, b) fortify the duties of the applied psychology specialities and the graduate psychologists and c) to effectively combat the misuse of the profession by others (Platrites & Yiasemi, 2008).

**TABLE 2 MILESTONES OF ORGANIZED PSYCHOLOGY BODIES IN CYPRUS**

1980	Establishment of the Cyprus Psychologists' Association
1983	Educational Psychologists join the branch of Culture and Other Services of the Pancyprian Public Servants' Trade Union.
2000	Foundation of Department of Psychology of State University of Cyprus
2005	Establishment of Clinical Psychologists' professional branch within the Pancyprian Public Servants' Trade Union.
2007	Establishment of the Pancyprian Psychological Society.
2008	Foundation of Departments of Psychology in Private Universities in Cyprus

The Psychology Department of the State University of Cyprus is the first recognised educational entity in psychology founded in Cyprus. It opened for the first time in the academic year of 2000 and is part of the Social Sciences and Education School. Apart from the undergraduate psychology degree, the Psychology Department of the State University of Cyprus operates four graduate programmes- two on a Masters level and two on a Doctoral level- in applied fields such as educational and clinical psychology as well as in theoretical fields such as evolutionary and cognitive psychology (University of Cyprus, 2009). In 2008 two more psychology departments were established in the private sector - the University of Nicosia and the European University of Cyprus. Although the options to study psychology in Cyprus are increasing, Greece still remains the most preferred destination that Cypriots choose to do their psychology degree (see Figure 2).



**FIGURE 2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CYPRUS PSYCHOLOGISTS BY COUNTRY OF GRADUATION**

## **THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE PROFESSION OF PSYCHOLOGY IN CYPRUS**

Certainly the adoption of the 'Professional Psychologists Registration Act' in 1995 (Cyprus Republic, 1995) should be recognised as the most important step towards the institutionalisation of the psychology profession (see Table 3). Yet, statutes of the previous decades regarding the plans of the duties of the psychologists in the public sector paved the way for the institutionalisation of the psychology profession and undoubtedly they played a fundamental role in the formulation of important aspects of the original Act. For the record, the first service plan for psychologists adopted in 1960 and referred to the specificity of the Educational Psychologists (Georgiades 1995), whereas in 1966 the first service plan for Clinical Psychologists was adopted (Council of Ministers 1966). The key issues established by the original Act were a) the definition of the professional psychology, b) the formulation of a general framework of the duties of the professional psychologists, c) the formation of a

register of the professional psychologists, d) the establishment of the Provisions Record including the transitional arrangements and e) the foundation and operation of the Council for the Registration of Professional Psychologists (C.R.P.P). Even though the C.R.P.P. was founded, the original Act remained inactive. Nevertheless two amendments of the original Act took place in 1996 (Cyprus Republic, 1996) and in 1999 (Cyprus Republic, 1999) which at the end proved insignificant.

**TABLE 3 MILESTONES OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ENTRENCHMENT OF THE PROFESSION OF PSYCHOLOGY IN CYPRUS.**

1960	Passage of the educational psychologist service scheme
1966	Passage of the clinical psychologist service scheme
1995	Passage of the Registration of Psychologists' Law by the House of Representatives
2004	Passage of the third amendment of the Registration of Psychologists' Law
2009	2009 Registration of Professional Psychologists' Amended Law.

In 2004 was the third amendment of the Act (Cyprus Republic, 2004), due to the requirements of the EuroPsy –“the EuroPsy is a European standard of education and training which enables individual psychologists to be recognised as having a European-level qualification in psychology”, (EFPA 2009)- and the main outcome was the modification of the basic registration provisions. The C.R.P.P. began to give the first licenses to professional psychologists and published the first Professional Psychologists Registry (Cyprus Republic, 2006, 141-142). However, its function was postponed due to serious objections from the psychological community, which reached the climax in 2007, regarding the appropriateness of the Act to meet the modern educational requirements and practice of the psychology profession. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2009, after recurrent consultations between the professional organisations of psychologists and disputes with a part of the local academic community, the Fourth Amendment is adopted, and it renames the Act to “Psychological Registration Act” (Cyprus Republic, 2009b) and that leads to a radical restructuring and modernisation (see Table 4).

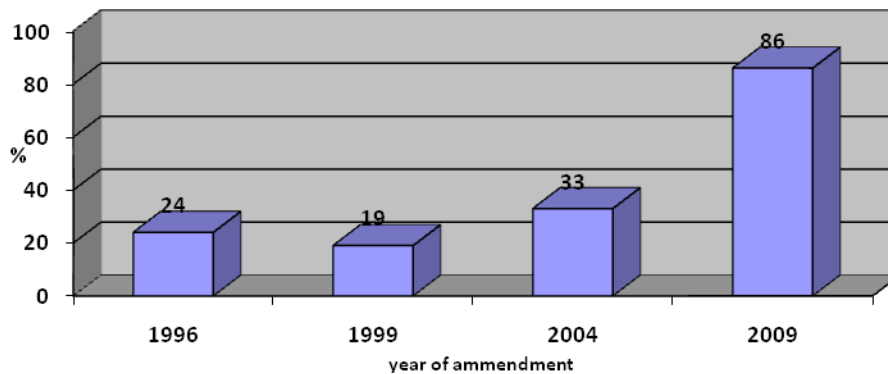


**TABLE 4 MAJOR FUNCTIONAL AMENDMENTS OF THE 2009 REGISTRATION OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' AMENDMENTS LAW**

<p><b>Registration of Psychologists</b></p> <p><u>Required qualifications for the registration</u></p>	<p>Registered psychologists:</p> <p>Bachelor in Psychology</p> <p>+</p> <p>2 academic years of studies in one of the following five specializations of applied psychology:</p> <p>clinical psychology</p> <p>educational/school psychology</p> <p>counseling psychology</p> <p>forensic psychology</p> <p>organizational/occupational/industrial psychology</p> <p>+</p> <p>1000 hours of supervised practical training</p> <p>All qualifications required should be accredited</p>
<p><b>Definitions</b></p> <p>Institutionalization and legislative entrenchment of definitions related to the science and profession of psychology</p>	<p>Applied psychology: science dealing with the study, diagnosis and treatment of human behavior, personality and mental processes; practiced exclusively and autonomously by registered psychologists, with the aim of improving individual, group and system life quality.</p>
<p><b>Professional practice</b></p> <p><u>Framework of duties</u></p>	<p>Registered psychologists= they exercise duties in accordance to the specialization of applied psychology approved by the Council for the Registration of Psychologists (C.R.P.)</p>

	<p>Framework of duties for each of the applied psychology specialization will be formulated within 12 months after the next formation of the C.R.P.</p> <p>Graduated Psychologists= they solely exercise duties such as teaching of psychology, first treatment demand management and any other duties which are not attributed to registered psychologists</p>
<u>Supervised placement</u>	<p>Organizations approved to provide supervised clinical placement by the Ministry Council, following the recommendations of the Registration of Psychologists' Board.</p> <p>Organizations should meet high scientific requirements.</p>

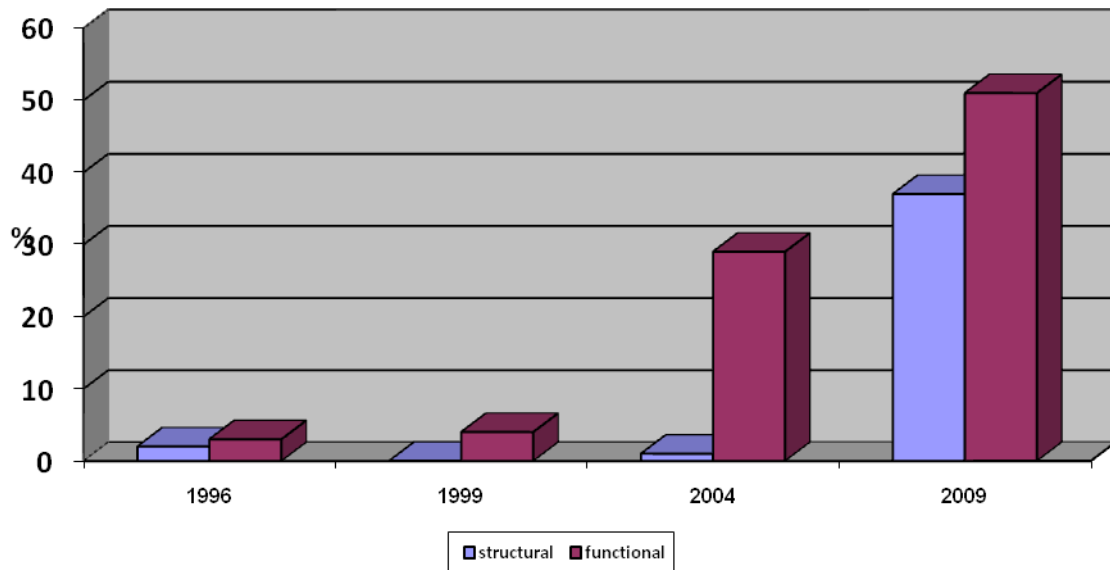
The Fourth Amendment of the Law has the most structural and functional changes that occurred chronologically in this legislation as 17 of the 21 articles had been modified, with a rate equivalent to 86% of all the articles (see Figure 3).



**FIGURE 3 REGISTRATION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS LAW 1996-2009 AMMENDED PARAGRAPHS**

In the analysis made, the term 'functional modifications' stands for the changes in the legislation which have an institutional value, while the structural modifications are those made to harmonise the negative alterations that resulted from modifications in the legislation in order to ensure consistency and understanding of the Act. It is obvious from the analysis

that in all four amendments of the legislation the functional modifications were predominant (see Figure 4).



**FIGURE 4 AMENDMENTS BY CATEGORIZATION TYPE**

## CONCLUSIONS

Psychology in Cyprus is going through all levels (employment, education, trade unionism, and institutionalisation) as a transitional stage. The quality of the existing legislation is both a challenge and a motivation in order to further develop psychology in Cyprus. The new educational opportunities which are offered in Cyprus make the psychology studies more popular. Nevertheless, the establishment of the applied psychology will be an obstacle for those who seek a quick job placement through short studies. The more psychological services are expanded in Cyprus and enriched in the public sector with new psychology specialties, the more positive perceptions will be adopted by the public regarding the social value of the psychology as a profession. Moreover, it is an advantage that the provisions of the last amended Act allow to psychologists to teach the subject of psychology in schools as it will directly enhance the new generation's perceptions regarding what the profession of psychology is really about.

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