Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024

Education, Citizenship & Social Change:

BUILDING BRIDGES

Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024 :: Malmö University, Malmö Sweden

Editor: Michael John Katsillis

MALMÖ UNIVERSITY

CiCea Children's Identity & Citizenship European Association

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Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges

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Michael John Katsillis

ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9

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Registered Office: Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire UK

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Editor's Note

As is (hopefully) always the case, time passes and life goes on. Societies adapt and evolve to deal with challenges, expected or otherwise, they are called upon to face.

It could be argued that, as societies evolve, so too must their educational systems; so too must the criteria which dictate belonging to the social whole -the defining characteristic of a society itself. In an ideal world, the order of these operations would be reversed. We would advance knowledge and understanding in order to form a better whole -or, if you prefer, society. This new, more enlightened society would then usher in the change it had been taught to perceive as good, if not outright inherently necessary.

The reality probably lies somewhere between the two perspectives. We strive to be better but the often unexpected and unpredictable fits and starts of reality frequently drag us along, forcing adaptation and change upon us. We then evolve our societal mechanisms to conform to and represent the new educational and social reality they must prepare future citizens to be a part of.

We bridge the gap between the reality which informed our education, the reality we currently live in, and a future somewhere between what we perceive to be coming and the idealized existence we hope to shape for those who will follow. Part of this effort must also extend to bridging the metaphorical gap which is frequently perceived to separate seemingly disparate societies. Whether we perceive globalization as an ongoing phenomenon or argue that it is already here and must be dealt with, education, citizenship, and society at large are concepts which can no longer be exclusively examined and approached at a micro scale. One way or another, as social scientists and humanists, the world is (and must be) our playground.

This is not to say that there is no value in localized studies or the in-depth examination of a particular region or phenomenon -quite the contrary. Like threads in a tapestry, each person, group, or area of interest is part of a larger whole and, while there is merit in appreciating details of the tapestry, it only derives its true meaning when we place them in the context of the whole.

In this light, these proceedings, like the conference they represent, embody a wider gamut of interests, fields, and locales than our association's name might lead one to expect. We examine discrimination among educators in Greece, juxtaposed against the democratization of schools through student engagement in Japan. We present the contrast between the infrastructure of individual and social policy decisions in Northern and Southern Europe. We investigate motivations of social change in teacher education as it applies to Civics education in India but also the civic realities of a refugee laden Greece; sustainability in Italy and Spain; media as social education in the North, and the cultivation of active discourse in the South. These and other studies contained herein, although distinct and seemingly unrelated, paint a picture of common concerns and similar core issues -of a world that already has more in common that we frequently perceive to be the case.

So, with each passing day, the world gets a little bit smaller. For some, this is a terrifying prospect and, lacking guidance and care, one might argue rightfully so. For us, it is a challenge to ensure education and inclusivity bridge the gap from a world where borders draw closer each day to a future in which we are all, quite simply, citizens of the world.

Michael John Katsillis, Editor

Children's Identity & Citizenship European Association

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Means of Identifying Anti-discrimination in Educators to Begin Building Bridges[1]

Asimina Bouchagier[2] & Michael John Katsillis[3]

Abstract

Occurrences of racism and discrimination targeting groups identified as "different" manifest within the realm of education. This prompts the inquiry into whether educators in schools are cognizant of racial incidents within the school environment and the methods through which manifestations of racism occur among their students. Schools and educators among others, bear the responsibility of bridging divides and fostering unity among all students. Therefore, looking into their stance on certain issues may assist in developing effective strategies to offset certain issues. The purpose of this paper is both present and elaborate on the processes we employed in such an instruments development and its feasibility to identify teachers attitudes towards racism and diversity. We developed a questionnaire after a comprehensive literature review with the conviction that educators ought to be equipped to preempt and address instances of racism within their classrooms. This questionnaire was subsequently distributed to educators in primary education across Western Greece. We sought to acquire descriptive data for a descriptive classification of educators' attitudes towards racism and its mitigation through closed-ended questions. The functionality of the questionnaire was assessed through a pilot application to identify and rectify any errors and/or omissions and generally contributed to the refinement of the research tool (02/2019-03/2019). Thereafter, the questionnaire was piloted a second time (05/2019-06/2019) to gather experiences and insights that would enhance the effectiveness of the main research and as such sought to determine whether the tool was characterized by practicality and efficiency. The main research was conducted from October 2019 to January 2020. The questionnaire developed, tested and employed proved an effective tool in collecting data thus laying the groundwork for future research in the specific scientific field of racism, aiming to assist scholars in exploring and furthering the discourse on the topic.

Keywords: questionnaire; racism; education; diversity

Introduction

The educator, both within the classroom and in the broader school environment, experiences all the contradictions and conflicts that arise in society. It is evident that the school needs a different orientation so that the superficial and uninternalized racist perceptions of children do not become the ideology and practice of tomorrow's citizens. Within this framework, the school and the teacher can play a significant role in mitigating stereotypes and fostering respect for diversity. A fundamental question that arises is how this can be achieved and what practices are used in the school environment to accomplish this (Tsiakalos, 2006).

The phenomenon of racism revolves around the stigma of otherness, such as skin color, national origin, religious beliefs, physical disability, and, in general, around the diversity of the "Other." It manifests in practices of contempt, rejection, intolerance, degradation, exploitation, marginalization, discrimination, and violence, as well as in behaviors and actions

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Bouchagier, A. & Katsillis, M. J. (2024). Means of Identifying Anti-discrimination in Educators to Begin Building Bridges. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, (pp. 1–21). Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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aimed at purifying the social body of foreign elements to preserve the identity of "Us." In reality, otherness among peoples, genders, and classes is a social and historical construct. Racism consists of a multitude of individual conscious or unconscious actions that marginalize individuals with different characteristics and allow for the continued subjugation of these individuals (Harper, 2012; Kyriakakis & Michailidou, 2005).

In its resolution for the elimination of racism, the United Nations General Assembly reiterated that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and prosperity of their societies. In many parts of the world, racial and social discrimination remains widespread, even within the school environment. These discriminations take many forms, often dramatically violent. Educational institutions are called upon to recognize the forms of racism in schools to understand the extent of the problem (UNESCO, Associated School Network, 2019).

In a study conducted in 2012 involving 294 educators and 178 students from Pedagogical Departments in Greece (future educators), an open question was posed regarding the types of racism that Greek educators encounter in the classroom among their students. According to their responses, the most visible form of diversity concerned ethnocultural differences (74.8%). Another noticeable form of diversity related to the educational background and mental abilities of the children, including intellectual disabilities (48.6%), while 33.3% of the responses referred to physical disabilities. Several educators described social factors such as the different social backgrounds of the students (29.9%) or the economic level of their families (22.1%) (Triliva et al., 2012).

Additionally, in a recent study conducted in Thessaloniki during the 2015-2016 school year, interesting views of twenty-eight (28) primary education teachers were captured through interviews. Specifically, these teachers did not admit that the daily life in their school is affected by the stereotypical images and prejudices of students, nor did they acknowledge the existence of racist incidents in their schools. According to the researchers' assessments, it is very likely that they did not want to create a negative impression or potential problems in their workplace. They also mentioned that some racist episodes are mainly due to the impulsiveness of children rather than perceptions of superiority (Zachos & Demosthenous, 2018).

In California, USA, a study involving 7,534 students revealed that they were victims of racist violence due to their school performance, gender, and national origin. More than half of the students reported being intensely teased by their classmates and subjected to harsh language. One-third of the students revealed that due to their differences, they were victims of petty theft and destruction of personal belongings (Furlong et al., 2014).

In a culturally diverse society, it is imperative to conduct training seminars on combating racism for all citizens, especially those involved in counseling and education. By raising awareness about issues of racism, such as the concept of racism, its forms, and the delineation of racial identity, individuals can be prompted to reflect on anti-racist education (Pack - Brown, 1999).

Studies indicate that teachers must create an anti-racist climate in the classroom based on discussions and the screening of films on diversity topics. This helps students understand the concepts of racism and discrimination. Specifically, the educator should use storytelling to open different worlds to their students. Through games, students can approach the perspectives of others and become sensitive to these issues. Successful teachers should not

be afraid to teach the core values of a community, which are based on freedom, equality, and justice, as these principles are crucial in preventing racist tendencies. It is also very effective, especially for older students, to be able to counter a racist's arguments by creating their own text (Wormeli, 2016).

It is emphasized in studies that when an incident of racist violence occurs in schools, the educator must be ready to show videos related to such topics to the students to sensitize them. It is advisable to have a coordinated program within an educational structure so that the entire teaching staff can focus on the problem and address it immediately (Bhavnani et al., 2003).

Due to all the above, we were led to create a questionnaire to investigate the opinions of educators on racism in schools in Western Greece. Below, a part of the questionnaire and the procedure followed will be presented.

Methodology

Procedure

For the data collection, a questionnaire was developed based entirely on a literature review and distributed to primary school teachers in Western Greece. The questionnaire primarily aimed to provide a descriptive classification of teachers' attitudes toward racism using closed-ended questions.

The functionality of the questionnaire was tested through a preliminary application to correct any potential errors or omissions, which helped refine our research tool (February - March 2019), as well as through a pilot application of the questionnaire (May - June 2019). The goal of the pilot application was to gain experiences and conclusions that would aid in the more effective implementation of the main research. The pilot application also aimed to determine if the tool was practical and economical. The main research was conducted from October 2019 to January 2020. Before distributing the questionnaires, the researcher was informed by the Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Western Greece about statistical data (population, etc.) that would aid in the research sampling.

We received information from the Directorate of Western Greece, and the sampling was done by mailing the questionnaires to primary schools so that teachers could receive them. Initially, telephone communication was made with the school principals to provide the necessary information about the research and to inform the researcher about the schools' curriculum. Principals were asked to ensure that the questionnaires were given to all teachers working at their schools. It was particularly encouraging that some schools, although they had the structure of 12-class schools, operated as 13-class schools. Inside the envelope, there was a letter with a complete and honest written report of the research and the researcher's contact information. Additionally, the envelope contained a prepaid return envelope so that the completed questionnaires could be sent back to the researcher without any financial burden on the participants. The introductory note of the questionnaire clearly stated the purpose and aim of the study, as well as the use of the questionnaires. It was made clear to the participants that the researcher protected and guaranteed their anonymity (American Education Research Association, 2011; Creswell, 2016).

The sample of the present research emerged from the schools that were randomly selected. Specifically, the sample is a smaller group of the population that the researcher intends to study to generalize the results (Desu & Raghavarao, 1990). Our sample included 425 primary school teachers from the three regions of Western Greece. Of these, three hundred twenty-two (322, or approximately 75%) responded positively and participated in the research.

The Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire, comprised of a series of structured, closed-ended questions. Significant actions preceded the drafting of the questionnaire, such as defining the specific goal of the research, selecting the data collection method, and understanding the characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaire was clear, comprehensive, and included basic instructions and explanations for completion. The researcher ensured that the questionnaire was printed on high-quality paper to positively predispose the respondents. The questions were dichotomous, rating, ranking, scaled, and multiple-choice (Paraskevopoulos, 1999).

The length of our questionnaire was appropriate for the topic and purpose of our research without unnecessary elaborations or extensions. Completing it required approximately 15 minutes, an ideal duration according to studies to achieve a higher response rate from respondents (Siomkos & Mavros, 2008).

Our questionnaire consisted of four (4) parts. The first part concerned the demographic data of the respondents (nine questions). We chose to place this at the beginning because the first impression formed by the respondent is always positive. The second part concerned the respondents' perceptions of the phenomenon of racism in the school environment (ten questions). The third part dealt with the training of teachers on racism (twelve questions), and the fourth part focused on the practices teachers use to address racism (nine questions). As one can see, questions on related topics were grouped into sections so that the questionnaire had a logical sequence and appearance. All the questions were based on foreign, primarily, and Greek literature to ensure an appropriate scientific foundation and to be supported by reliable sources.

Specifically, as mentioned above, in the first section, respondents were asked to answer demographic questions essential for our research to make the necessary correlations between independent and dependent variables. The information included: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) employment status, (d) marital status, () higher education, (f) level of foreign languages, (g) years of service, (h) area of residence, and (i) area of the school.

The literature review revealed that racism is present in the school reality. The forms of racism are varied and spread across all schools, such as ethnic, religious, cultural, and socio-economic racism—gender, performance, social and economic status, etc. Additionally, the ways racism is expressed are numerous, including verbal, physical, relational methods, etc. Based on this, the structure of the second section of our questionnaire, which concerned teachers' perceptions of the phenomenon of racism in the school environment, was formulated. The axes were as follows: A. Frequency of occurrence of racist behavior in the school environment. B. Ways of expressing racist behavior in the school environment.

Based on the above, the reasons for discrimination in racism were also defined. Teachers were asked to respond to rating questions regarding the ways racism is expressed, such as: 1.

Gender, 2. Color, 3. Appearance, 4. Nationality/origin, 5. Religion 6. Academic performance, 7. Social and economic status

Table 1. Example Question from Section B of the Questionnaire.

At the school you work, students distinguish those who are "different" due to (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Gender					
Skin Color					
Appearance					
Nationality / Origin					
Religion					
Good performance in school subjects					
Poor performance in school subjects					
Socio-economic status					
Other					

The third section of our questionnaire focused on training on racism. The purpose of the training is to raise teachers' awareness on issues related to human rights, racial discrimination, equality, justice, and social inequality, which are parameters relevant to anti-racist education. Based on the above, the following axes of the section were formulated: (a) Necessity of Training, (b) Training Providers, (c) Types and Forms of Training, (d) Effectiveness of Training.

Table 2: Example of Section C of the Questionnaire

During your career you have been trained to prevent and tackle racism in the school environment through (Check the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Anti-racist programs					
Special teams					
Seminars/conferences/workshops					
Postgraduate studies					
Dissertation					
Other:					

In the fourth and final section of our questionnaire, respondents were asked about practices for addressing racism. As indicated by the research and studies mentioned earlier, teachers use various techniques and stimuli from all subject areas to combat discrimination and stereotypes. A teacher's self-awareness of their beliefs and the preventive measures they can take are sufficient to address racism in the school environment. The axes of investigation in the fourth section of the questionnaire were two (2), each with specific parameters:

A. Personal Actions of Each Teacher for the Prevention and Addressing of Racism

- Programs
- Interdisciplinary Approaches
- Self-awareness – Reflection
- Types of Activities at the Classroom Level

B. Actions Based on the Internal Regulations of Each School

- Recording Incidents
- European Programs
- Presentations - Participatory Actions, Activities

Table 3. Example of Section D of the Questionnaire

At the school you teach (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Interesting actions have been taken on racism				
There have been discussions - narrations with the students during the lesson about diversity				
Anti-racism programs are developed and promoted				
Excursions are promoted, cooperation programs with schools of foreign countries to promote equality, justice and respect for diversity				
You participated in international anti-racist educational activities				
Other.....				

The questionnaire, as provided to teachers is presented in Appendix 1.

Ethical Issues

Each questionnaire included an introductory note clarifying to the respondents that the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and the privacy of their personal data would be upheld according to the ethics of conducting research. Additionally, there was an accompanying letter for the principal of each school. This accompanying letter was essential as it influences, according to studies, the response rate of the sample. The letter was brief, presenting the purpose of the research and emphasizing the professional expertise of the respondent and the value of the information that only individuals with such qualifications could provide. Furthermore, all the contact details of the researcher were provided so that the participants could reach out to her if they wished (Gall et al., 2013).

Results of the Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

In all fields of scientific research where measurements are taken, the issue of the reliability of these measurements arises. Reliability concerns how well a test reflects the true magnitude of the characteristic being measured. The more reliable a scale is, the less likely it is that errors will affect the accuracy of the measurement (Cohen et al., 2008).

The validity of a quantitative study refers to the extent to which it actually measures what it is intended to measure. Measurement validity has various forms. Content validity pertains to the extent to which a measurement scale assesses the entirety of what it was designed to measure, i.e., whether the elements of the measurement scale are representative of the research subject. In this study, all the questions in the present questionnaire are derived from the literature references of the current study to ensure alignment between questions and content. Criterion-related validity involves searching for a criterion against which we can observe that the scale indeed measures the concept or data we designed it to measure (Robson, 2007).

For our research needs, we applied the Cronbach's alpha test, which measures the internal consistency of the measurement scale, i.e., how closely related the statements are overall. It is a reliability test of the scale in terms of the consistency among the scale statements and the concept we aim to measure. The values that Cronbach's alpha results take range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a more reliable scale.

For example, if a participant agrees with the statement "I like to play football" and disagrees with the statement "I hate football," then there is consistency in their responses, and the questionnaire demonstrates acceptable internal consistency reliability. If the responses to the elements of a questionnaire consist of two categories (e.g., "yes" and "no" or "true" and "false"), internal consistency reliability is estimated with the Kuder-Richardson coefficient. However, if the responses to the elements of a questionnaire consist of more than two categories (as in the case of Likert scales), internal consistency reliability is estimated with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Robson, 2007).

To test the validity, we applied content validity through our pilot study, i.e., the extent to which the scale indeed measures the concept. The Cronbach's alpha of the pilot study was 0.869, indicating good reliability of our questionnaire.

The values of the Kuder-Richardson coefficient and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient should be at least ≥ 0.7 (Table 4) (Galanis, 2011).

Table 4. Interpretation of the Values of Kuder-Richardson and Cronbach's alpha Coefficients, which are used to Estimate the Reliability of Internal Consistency

Value of the coefficient	Internal consistency reliability
<0,5	Unacceptable
0,5–0,59	Poor
0,6–0,69	Questionable
0,7–0,79	Acceptable
0,8–0,89	Good
0,9–0,94	Excellent

According to the data in the table, internal consistency reliability is excellent when the Kuder-Richardson coefficient or the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values range from 0.9 to 0.94. It

should be noted that values ≥0.95 are treated with skepticism and are not desirable, as they indicate that the various items of a questionnaire are almost identical, essentially repeating the same information without providing distinct insights. When the Kuder-Richardson or the Cronbach's alpha coefficients have unacceptable values, i.e., values <0.7 or ≥0.95, it becomes necessary to modify or remove some items to achieve acceptable values. It is noted that the number of items that can be removed should not exceed 20% of the original questionnaire items. For example, if the original questionnaire consists of ten items, up to two items can be removed (Galanis, 2011).

At this point, we will check the validity of our data by calculating the Cronbach's alpha value and observing how satisfactory and reliable the responses were from the individuals who completed the questionnaire. From SPSS, we have the following table for the reliability of the sample.

From the table below, we observe that the number of responses calculated was 278, meaning that 278 teachers' responses were included in the analysis.

Table 5. Sample Reliability Analysis

	Valid (%)	Excluded (%)	Total (%)	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items
Cases (278)	86,3	13,7	100,0	,910	,914

We observe that the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.910, with the highest possible value being 1. It is generally accepted that the Cronbach's alpha value should be greater than 0.69, so our value represents a quite satisfactory level of reliability for the responses provided. Having completed the description of our sample, we will now proceed to study the reliability of each factor using the Cronbach's alpha index.

Table 6. Reliability Analysis of the Sections of the Questionnaire

	Cronbach's Alpha
II. Perceptions regarding the phenomenon of racism	0,942
III. Training on racism	0,799
IV. Practices for addressing racism	0,833

Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency index was calculated for the factors of questions regarding perceptions of racism (see Table 7).

Table 7. Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the Questions in the Section on Perceptions of the Phenomenon of Racism

	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Complaints about discrimination due to factors	**,836**	,830	8
Frequency of use of stereotypical expressions due to factors	**,834**	,833	8
Expression of stereotypical behavior	**,722**	,732	4

	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Reasons for discrimination	**,847**	,849	7

We observe that the alpha index value for our study is greater than 0.7 for all the questions in the section on perceptions regarding the phenomenon of racism. This is a particularly satisfactory value as it indicates high reliability of the results. Similarly, the Cronbach's alpha index was calculated for the factors in the section on: Training on Racism.

Table 8. Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the Questions in the Section on Education about Racism

	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Organization of trainings by institutions	**,695**	,726	8
Best source of training	**,893**	,891	5
Dimensions of training	**,778**	,776	5

From the above table, we observe that the Cronbach's alpha value is satisfactory in terms of the reliability of the results. Finally, for the last section of the questionnaire, the following table shows that all questions have satisfactory result reliability with Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7.

Table 9. Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the Questions in the Section on Practices, Prevention, and Measures to Combat Racism

	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
School actions to address racism	**,705**	,707	5
Prevention and response to racism	**,727**	,729	9
Actions following a report of a racist incident	**,776**	,778	13
Actions to address racism in the classroom	**,786**	,787	4

Conclusions

Schools and their authorities, including educators, must actively monitor and identify instances of racism to take appropriate action against it. In a survey, educators did not acknowledge that daily life in their schools is affected by students' stereotypes and prejudices, nor did they admit to the presence of racist incidents. Researchers believe that educators might have been reluctant to admit these issues to avoid creating negative impressions and

potential workplace problems. According to a study, even when educators are aware of such incidents, they might overlook them due to their own biases and stereotypes. Because of these factors, we created a questionnaire to investigate educators' views on racism in schools in Western Greece.

The study used a questionnaire in a quantitative research approach with a sample of 322 primary school teachers from the Western Greece region. The functionality of the questionnaire was tested through a pre-pilot implementation. This was followed by a pilot implementation of the questionnaire, aiming to gather experiences and conclusions that would assist in the more effective implementation of the main research. The pilot phase also sought to determine whether the tool was practical and efficient. The main research was conducted from mid-October 2019 to January 2020.

Our questionnaire included a series of structured, closed-ended questions. Significant steps preceded its development, such as defining the specific research objective, selecting the data collection method, and understanding the characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaire was designed to be clear, comprehensive, and included basic instructions and explanations. It is divided into four parts.

Validity in the present study is evident. All the questions in this instrument were derived from tried and tested bibliographical references of the study, ensuring a correspondence between questions and content. We assessed the reliability of our data by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha value and observed how satisfactory and reliable the responses provided by the participants who completed it were. We note that the Cronbach's Alpha value for our research is equal for all questions in the section regarding perceptions of racism, exceeding 0.7, which is particularly satisfactory as it indicates the high reliability of the results. Similarly, the Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated for the factors of the questions in the last two sections, where all questions demonstrate satisfactory reliability of the results, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.7.

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APPENDIX - QUESTIONNAIRE

I. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY CHECKING THE CORRECT ANSWER IN THE CORRESPONDING BOX.

A. DEMOGRAPHICS

1) Gender:

Male ☐ Female ☐

2) Age:

Under 25 ☐ 25-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60 and over ☐

3) Staff Regulations:

Permanent ☐ Deputy ☐

4) Marital status:

Single ☐ Married ☐ Other.....

5) Higher Studies (Please note all that apply)

Pedagogical Academy ☐ Pedagogical Academy with simulation ☐ Graduate of the Department of Education ☐ Master's degree holder ☐ PhD holder ☐ Post Phd Holder ☐

5ii) You finished Teaching Center (Didaskaleio): Yes ☐ No ☐

5iii) Do you have a B' degree; Yes ☐ No ☐

6) Level of knowledge of foreign languages:

	0 (Zero knowledge)	**A1 (Elementary knowledge)**	**A2 (Basic knowledge)**	**B1 (Moderate knowledge)**	**B2 (Good knowledge)**	**C1 (Very good knowledge)**	**C2 (Excellent knowledge)**
English							
French							
German							
Italian							
Spanish							
Russian							
Other							

7) Years of service:

Under 3 ☐ 3 – 10 ☐ 11 – 20 ☐ 21 – 30 ☐ 30 and over ☐

8) Area of residence:

Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Rural ☐

9) School district:

Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Rural ☐

Appendix 1. The Research Instrument

B. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE PHENOMENON OF RACISM IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.

1) Do you consider that racist attitudes occur in the school environment:

Very often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐ Other .....

2) Do you think that the classroom encourages racist attitudes?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐ Other .....

3) Racism among students:

It exists strongly in many forms ☐ It exists to a moderate extent ☐ None ☐

Other.....

4) At the school you work, students distinguish those who are "different" due to (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Gender					
Skin Color					
Appearance					
Nationality / Origin					
Religion					
Good performance in school subjects					
Poor performance in school subjects					
Socio-economic status					
Other.....					

5) Do you agree with the view that the manifestation of racist behaviors by students is not accompanied by the corresponding intention, as some students may behave or express themselves racistly without realizing it?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

6) In the school where you work, how is racist behavior usually expressed? (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Gestures, pushing, beating					
Verbal attacks, insults, threats, slander, Blackmail					
Destruction of personal belongings, theft					
Exclusion and isolation from groups, group games and social activities					
Other:					

7) Show the frequency of use of stereotypical expressions and prejudices by students to their classmates, who "discriminate" them because of (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Gender					
Skin Color					
Appearance					
Nationality / Origin					
Religion					
Good performance in school subjects					
Poor performance in school subjects					
Socio-economic status					
Other……					

8) Do you think that the school community (teaching staff - parents) encourages equal behavior and respect among students?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

9) Have you yourself received complaints from students who believe they have been discriminated against or racist?

Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Always ☐

10) The students who made these complaints had been discriminated against or racially because of (tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Gender					
Skin Color					
Appearance					
Nationality / Origin					
Religion					
Good performance in school subjects					
Poor performance in school subjects					
Socio-economic status					
Other ……					

C. EDUCATION ON RACISM

1) Do you consider it necessary to train teachers on issues of racism in the school environment?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

2) During your career you have been trained to prevent and tackle racism in the school environment through (Check the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Anti-racist programs					
Special teams					
Seminars/conferences/workshops					
Postgraduate studies					
Dissertation					
Other:					

3) Note how often you have been trained on racism by the following organizations: (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Ministry of Education					
University					
Pedagogical Institute					
Certification of Educational Training (CET)					
School Advisor/Coordinators					
School unit					
Local Government					
Private Educational Institution					
Other:					

4) Do you think that any information or training that was given to you helped you: If you answered "Never" to all parts of the previous questions, do not answer the question

Significantly ☐ Enough ☐ Shortly ☐ At all ☐

Other.....

5) Any additional information or education on racism has been done primarily: If you answered "Never" in all parts of the previous questions, do not answer the question

On your own initiative ☐ Prompted by a third person ☐

From mandatory participation in training ☐ Other.....

6) The Educational Institution (University, Academy, etc.) from which you graduated, regarding the issue of racism:

Adequately engaged ☐ He needed to deal better with this issue ☐

He didn't bother at all ☐ Other.....

7) When you encounter racist incidents intensely in the school environment, what sources of information do you turn to? (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
University Study Books					
Media					
Books and Magazines of informative and literary content					
Internet					
I only act from my experience					
Other:					

8) What source of education do you think helps you to educate yourself in the best possible way about racism issues in the school environment? (Tick the appropriate box):

	At all	Shortly	Enough	Very	Ideal
Studies:					
Seminars-Conferences					
Workshops					
Long-term Training Programs					
Discussions-Briefings at school by specialized analysts					
Other.....					

9) What kind of training do teachers need to prevent and adequately address racism in the field? (Tick the appropriate box):

	Not good at all	A bit good	Pretty good	Very good	Ideal
Training on Multicultural-Intercultural Education					
Specialization in racism					
Training in teaching approaches related to racism					
Teaching practices in mixed-multicultural classrooms					
Other.....					

10) Which of the following dimensions was emphasized in any additional information or training you have participated in on racism (Tick the appropriate box)? If you have not been trained "Never" do not answer the question.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always

Improving knowledge of the concept of racism					
Improving knowledge to prevent racism					
Developing skills to tackle racism					
Links between anti-racist education and related educational fields (such as human rights education or peace education)					
Acquisition of knowledge of handling racially related teaching materials and corresponding teaching materials					
Other.....					

11) In your opinion, through any information or training you have received about racism, you have reached the point of getting rid of any personal prejudices and stereotypes in order to deal more easily with racist phenomena within the school environment:

At all ☐ Shortly ☐ Enough ☐ Very much ☐ I've never had ☐

12) How optimistic do you feel after any information or training you have received to prevent and deal with a racist incident?

Very optimistic ☐ Pretty optimistic ☐ A bit optimistic ☐

Not at all optimistic ☐

D. PRACTICES FOR THE PREVENTION - TREATMENT OF RACISM

1) Have you ever undertaken a health or cultural project focused on combating discrimination and racism?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2) At the school you teach (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Interesting actions have been taken on racism				
There have been discussions - narrations with the students during the lesson about diversity				
Anti-racism programs are developed and promoted				
Excursions are promoted, cooperation programs with schools of foreign countries to promote equality, justice and respect for diversity				
You participated in international anti-racist educational activities				
Other.....				

3) Does the educational material you have in your classroom e.g. teaching material, other digital educational material (cd, dvd) help you find stimuli to talk to your students about racism?

At all ☐ Rarely ☐ Several times ☐ Continuity ☐

4) In order to combat racism in the school environment, do you think you should: (Evaluate from 1-4 ranking from 1 as most important to 4 as least important):

Pupils who behave racially should be punished ☐

Group activities and awareness-raising activities ☐

Make simple recommendations to students who behave racially ☐

Set a good example with your attitude towards diversity ☐

5) In the school area where you work to prevent-deal with racism (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Reflect on your own views on diversity.					
Set high expectations and provide equal opportunities to all students					
Recognize all forms of stereotypes and challenge them wherever and whenever they are observed					
Encourage students to report racist incidents they observe					
Implement classroom activities related to issues of racism, diversity and discrimination					
Strengthen the role of students in the conflict resolution process, possibly through the creation of friendship and mediation groups					
Develop optional group activities that interest students and help cultivate closer bonds					
Communicate regularly with parents to raise their awareness so that they are close to their children and communicate dialectically with them.					

Organize information events, discussions, exhibitions that will promote peaceful relations and combat racism					
Other.....					

6) At the school where you work, when an incident of racism is reported, the teaching staff of the school (Tick the appropriate box):

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
It records the incident in a special manual created for this reason					
He intervenes and immediately interrupts it by making remarks to the abuser telling him not to do it again					
Provides advice to and support the victim					
Informs the headmaster who acts in accordance with the school's regulations					
Hold separate and joint meetings about the incident with all students involved					
Verbally reprimand the abuser					
Issue a written reprimand to the abuser with a signature from a parent or guardian					
Calls all involved members of the incident and informs parents					
It deprives the perpetrators of excursions and other sports					
It imposes sanctions on the perpetrator					
It calls for the creation of works by the perpetrators and their presentation on the subject of discrimination and racism					
Screens films on diversity to raise awareness					
Observes the phenomenon and records whether specific students are often victims of racist violence					
Other.....					

7) In the classroom in order to prevent and counter racism (Tick the appropriate box):

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	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Find stimuli from subjects (Language, Religion, History, etc.) in order to sensitize your students about diversity and discrimination					
Make use of literature (fairy tales-poems, etc.) on the subject of otherness					
Looking for videos and films on discrimination and diversity?					
Do you use role-playing games that students learn about diversity by mimicking social reality?					
Other……..					

8) Prioritize from 1 to 4 the practice that you consider to be the most effective for dealing with racism (Put 1 for the most efficient and 4 for the least efficient)

Find stimuli from subjects (Language, Religion, History, etc.) in order to sensitize your students about diversity and discrimination. ☐

Make use of literature (fairy tales-poems, etc.) on the subject of otherness ☐

Looking for videos and films on discrimination and diversity? ☐

Using role-playing games that students learn about diversity by mimicking social reality ☐

9) Through the practices-techniques you have applied in your professional career are you satisfied -or from the results they have brought in dealing with racism (Do you answer if you have applied even one practice-technique)?

Not at all satisfied ☐ Slightly satisfied ☐

Quite satisfied ☐ Very satisfied ☐

An Educational Approach in Which Students Create Democratic Schools Through Dialogue About 'school rules'[1]

Noboru Tanaka[2]

Abstract

This study aims to make four points. The first is to point out the need to build democratic schools through education, based on the arguments of Apple (1996), Biesta (2011), and others. Second, it examines the Philosophy for Students theory of education, which aims to balance the power relations between teachers and students in the classroom. Third, a lesson on school issues using P4C will be conducted. The fourth examines one way of thinking about democratizing schools by analyzing the results of the lessons using Phenomenographic methodology.

P4C is a theory of interactive learning developed by Matthew Lipman. It is a method that uses dialogue to engage students in the classroom. Currently, in many countries, 'student disengagement from learning' is being discussed, and the idea of P4C, which is based on democratic principles, is considered to be a possible prescription for this.

In this study, the focus will be on classes that consider 'school rules'. Lessons based on P4C dialogue using school rules in Japanese primary, junior and senior high schools will be conducted and one approach to democratizing schools through the school curriculum and teaching will be proposed.

Keywords: Citizenship, Philosophy for Children, Social Studies, democratic schools, school rules,

Introduction

One of the aims of school education is to develop democratic knowledge and its qualities and abilities in students. *These qualities cannot be completely obtained in school, but they are lived in society.* Therefore, the school curriculum is not completed solely through lessons. The school itself has some scope of improvement. Developing a curriculum aimed at fostering civic qualities transforms classrooms and schools into democratic places by placing citizenship development at the core of education. Schools must be redesigned as democratic schools (Apple, 1996).

However, transforming schools into democratic schools remains a challenge. In Japan, many examples of undemocratic practices, including the existence of 'school rules', can be found in schools. School rules are established as learning and living regulations to be observed by students in the process of realizing the school's educational objectives (MEXT, 2021). However, excessive rules regarding hairstyles and clothing, which are not socially acceptable in Japanese schools, have been observed. As a result, school rules are regarded as a social issue and various debates have developed around the topic. For example, there are rules specifying the color of underwear, forbidding head-cropped hairstyles and prohibiting the wearing of tights during winter in cold climates. There have also been cases in Gifu Prefecture

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Tanaka, N. (2024). An educational approach in which students create democratic schools through dialogue about 'school rules'. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, (pp. 22–34). Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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where students have changed unreasonable school rules. However, school rules comprise only one sample of undemocratic aspects. Many other undemocratic issues, such as the line between guidance and harassment of students by teachers and the power structure of teachers in schools, persist in schools. In this context, there has been a recent debate in Japan regarding the nature of democracy in schools through school rules.

The democratization of schools is a major issue that needs to be addressed by national and local governments as well as by teachers as a whole. However, it may also be possible to democratize schools inductively by encouraging students to hold democratic ideas. In other words, the approach is to think about democratizing schools by having students acquire democratic ideas in the classroom and discuss various school-related issues based on these ideas. However, this is not a complete cure for democratizing schools. It is a grassroots approach that takes time, but the acquisition of democratic ideas by students can make a significant contribution to the democratization of schools and the country.

This study highlights the need to build democratic schools through education, based on the arguments of Apple, Biesta, and others. Second, it examines the Philosophy for Students theory of education, which aims to balance the power relations between teachers and students in the classroom. Third, a lesson on school issues using P4C will be conducted. Finally, by analyzing the results of the lessons, an idea for democratizing schools will be examined.

The Need to Build Democratic Schools through Education

Democratic schools face two conditions (Apple, 1996). The first involves the creation of democratic structures and processes, implying that students and teachers engage in collaborative planning in the classroom, with decision-making and planning based on the interests of both parties. This is not an 'agreement' with a teacher's plan but a commitment of the students to the plan themselves. Naturally, various value conflicts and differences in opinion occur in the decision-making and planning processes. Thus, while recognizing these diversities, everyone is involved in the creation of a community. Students should not make decisions alone during this process. The aim is to achieve the common good of the entire community and have a structure in which decisions are constantly renewed by the members of the community concerned. It includes understanding the structure of continuous change for the common good and creating a community for this purpose.

The second involves creating a curriculum in which students can accumulate democratic experiences. Democratic experience guarantees opportunities to question dominant discourses that are considered official and of high culture.

> Most troubling is that in too many schools, such official and high-class knowledge has been taught as if it were a “truth” arising from immutable and infallible roots. Those who are keen on a more participatory curriculum understand that knowledge is socially constituted, and moreover, is produced and disseminated by people with particular values and interests, and with particular tendencies. This is, in short, a totally unmovable fact because everyone is shaped by their culture/gender, geographical factors, etc. However, in a democratic curriculum, students become ‘critical readers’ of their own society. When students encounter some knowledge or perspective, they are encouraged to ask questions such as, ‘Who said it, why did those people say it, why should we believe it, and furthermore, who benefits from this way in which we believe it and act on it’ (Beane & Apple, 2007, p. 15).

This raises the question of dominant knowledge and values as the conditions for a democratic curriculum. It requires a critical re-reading of the various discourses of intellectuals and the

media, as well as the knowledge that is considered 'factual' in textbooks. In this regard, Biester makes a similar point. Biesta points to the need to shift from teaching citizenship to learning about democracy, which 'requires research aimed at understanding the diverse ways in which young people actually become democratic citizens and learn through it' (Biesta, 2011). This emphasises the need for proactive learning in real-world democratic procedures.

Beane & Apple (2007) also makes the following points against the curriculum, which involves the creation of a curriculum that harnesses student interest:

> A democratic curriculum includes not only what adults consider important, but also the questions and concerns students have about themselves and the world they live in. A democratic curriculum also invites students to abandon their passive role as consumers of knowledge and take on the active role of 'meaning makers' (Beane & Apple, 2007, p. 17).

For example, in social studies education in Japan, the curriculum often aims at acquiring academic achievements in the social sciences that are considered facts. Learning is required to embrace knowledge as a public and lofty culture without focusing on the interests of the concerned child. In other words, classes have been established to teach the Japanese culture, and learning has been developed to teach this in a unified way throughout the country. However, the new Courses of Study that began in 2018 in Japan changed the idea of classes that only focus on social sciences to one that emphasizes the values and ideas of each child, class, and teacher and allows teachers to design various curricula according to the students (MEXT, 2018). The idea emphasized in the new curriculum guidelines is the realization of a 'curriculum open to society' that shares the goal of 'creating a better society through better school education' and fosters the qualities and abilities needed to become the creators of the future, in cooperation and collaboration with the society. A curriculum open to society comprises three elements. First, it takes a broad view of the situation in society and the world, to achieve the goal of creating a better society through better school education and to share this goal with society through the curricula. Second, it clarifies and nurtures the qualities and abilities required for students who will create a society of the future, face and relate to society and the world, and develop their own lives. Third, it realizes school education not by confining it to the school but by sharing and collaborating with society through the use of local human and material resources and collaboration with social education after school and on Saturdays (MEXT, 2018). In addition, the new Courses of Study set the three pillars of 'what students will be able to do', 'what they will learn', and 'how they will learn' and set the idea of 'curriculum management' at its core, enabling each school to create its own specific curriculum and classes. Curriculum management means the following. First, it includes viewing the educational content of each subject individually and other subjects in relation to each other, and systematically arranging the educational content necessary to achieve these goals from a cross-curricular perspective based on school educational goals. Second, includes improving the quality of educational content, for which a series of PDCA cycles should be established to organize, implement, evaluate, and improve curricula, based on surveys and various data on the state of students and the current situation in the region. Third includes effectively combining educational content with the human and material resources required for educational activities while also utilizing external resources such as the local community (MEXT, 2020). For example, the content dealing with US military bases has resulted in different lessons being created in Okinawa Prefecture, which has many bases in the region, and in Tokyo and Osaka Prefectures, which practically have no bases. In other words, education in Japan has undergone major reforms, allowing curriculum design to be based on the earnestness of students and regions.

Developing the curriculum from the above perspectives will reform the way schools are organized. The conception and implementation of lessons and curricula based on the context of the students, the culture and organization to which they belong, and the social context guarantee free, independent, and proactive lesson research and design by teachers as it eliminates uniform classroom practice. Simultaneously, the curriculum and classes developed are no longer closed alone to the teacher and school concerned but are open to society in a way that includes the social responsibility of the class and school. Curriculum management connects teachers and students, classes and society, and re-examines the social relevance of schools in contemporary society. In this context, social studies education is positioned at the core of school management for building and running democratic schools.

Building democratic schools aims to develop citizenship through schooling. Social studies education is a subject area designed to directly foster citizenship, and several strategies have been developed for this purpose. Sovereignty education, which has developed in recent years, is one such strategy. Naturally, sovereignty education is not new. Social studies education was originally aimed at sovereignty education to develop the qualities needed to foster the formation of a democratic society. The nature of Social Studies education is exploring and researching society. In other words, social studies refer to the study of society using social phenomena. Students develop an interest in the society, identify problems and issues, and explore their solutions. In some cases, they make proposals to society, thereby making decisions and participating in them. Students acquire this series of methodologies at the school education stage and apply these skills to society after graduating from various types of schools, aiming to become active members of a democratic society and to see society as 'their own business'. School education provides an environment for learning procedures and strategies.

Teaching cannot be established only in a one-way context. It is necessary to approach the development of citizenship, which is the main goal of social studies, while including students' perceptions and values, school culture, and teachers' organization. This presupposes the guarantee of freedom for teachers when designing curricula and lessons. The teachers should interact with students in the classroom, understand their interests, design medium- and long-term curricula by utilizing them, and thus design units and lessons. In addition, the design of a social studies curriculum with democracy at its core makes it possible to improve schools through social studies. Such a strategy will lead to measuring the continuity of students' social interests, which will lead to the development of 'sovereign citizens who continue to learn'.

The philosophy of curriculum management is a continuous and evolving problem-solving activity in which each school creates, modifies, and changes its curriculum as an organization to achieve its educational goals (Tamura, 2011). In other words, it is an ideology that creates a curriculum based on educational goals and places them at the core of school improvement. Curriculum management is expected to work by connecting schools to society. Schools are not to be regarded as individual entities but as a medium that exists in an interdependent relationship with society, and their functions are to be maximized to create a society of the future. In other words, the attempt to improve schools as proposed by Japan's new curriculum involves the construction of democratic schools through curriculum management (Tanaka, 2017).

Philosophy for Children's Theory of Democratic Education

What types of lessons can lead to the democratization of schools? This study considers Philosophy for Students as one of the supporting lines. P4C is an educational concept developed by Matthew Lipman of Columbia University in the USA, together with Margaret Sharpe and others. P4C is a practical theory in which students formulate their own questions and think about how to explore and solve them in dialogue; it is a philosophy education that aims to develop students' thinking skills. The key phrase 'education in philosophy' is a point of controversy, but there are various ways of talking about it, such as 'education based on philosophy' or 'education using philosophy'. Simply put, P4C is a philosophy-based approach in which students explore society and the world autonomously through dialogue. In the framework of school education, it is a way of thinking that transforms a classroom into a community of inquiry (Gregory et al., 2017).

The procedures required for P4C teaching are threefold. The first is the classroom space and the way in which learning takes place. The lesson should revolve around students sitting in a circle with dialogue between them using a community ball. The second is the dialogue perspective. The class proceeds in such a way that students design big questions and then solve them. The question is designed by the child and then solved by everyone. The third is the perspective of clarifying the questions; in P4C, the dialogue is mainly based on seven keywords: (1) thinking about implications, (2) reasons, (3) premises of opinions, (4) sources of opinions, (5) questioning whether it is true or not, (6) concrete examples, and (7) counterexamples. Students explore the questions they set together from these seven perspectives. For the dialogue to be meaningful, 'safety' must be established. Safety means that a community ball is formed with everyone, and the speaker speaks with it, while others wait and listen without pressuring or denying the speaker. The speaker should not be criticized by anyone. Thus, an environment in which everyone can speak without anxiety is created.

Recently, P4C has attracted attention in Japan (Miyagi, 2017; Tokui, 2017; Fukui, 2014; Tanaka, 2017, 2021, 2022) because it is an educational theory that pragmatically engages in participating in a common dialogue to play an active role in the formation of a democratic society through dialogue with others (Sharp, 1992). It is based on Dewey's idea that students and teachers should have the opportunity to experience democracy in schools to make it function practically, and that teaching is based on dialogue, with everything from question formulation to interpretation, discussion, and solutions being positioned as a process of inquiry. P4C has also been used in the US context; in 2013, the National Council for Social Studies Education (NCSS) introduced the C3 Framework, an inquiry-based social studies curriculum (NCSS, 2013, as cited in Makaiau, & Tanaka, 2018), which has received renewed attention because of its emphasis on inquiry, social engagement, argumentative dialogue, and civil dialogue. The dialogue presented by P4C is also used as a theory of learning, as well as a logic for school reform, and is one of the principles for building democratic schools (Tanaka, 2018). As a way of thinking about building democratic schools through lessons, P4C has been the focus.

Envisioning a Democratic School through Lessons: Classroom Practice using 'School Rules' as a Case Study

This study examines the possibility of democratizing schools inductively by having students hold democratic ideas and thoughts. In other words, the approach is to think about democratizing schools by having students acquire democratic ideas in class and then discussing and dialoguing about various school issues based on these ideas. The four main components and methods of this practice are as follows.

1. Lessons on the theme of 'school rules'. In doing so, the lesson does not encourage students to accept concepts such as legal philosophy or ethics. School rules are used as a lens through which students can express their own views on democracy and ideas; through dialogue, their own ideas are uncovered, and their values are placed in the context of society. The lessons are based on P4C.
2. The same concept is practiced at all three levels: primary, middle, and high school. Thus, a developmentally appropriate way of perceiving democracy can be clarified. This involves a detailed analysis of dialogue protocols to identify how dialogue proceeds and how teachers engage in it.
3. To identify differences in gatekeeping among teachers. The concept is communized, and the rest of the lessons are freely implemented by the teachers. First, the teachers' subjects and teaching identities are captured. Second, how teachers translate this identity into teaching and create themes in the form of lessons examined. Third, t enquires what the teacher emphasizes in the dialogue, and how does he/she facilitate its development. This will be analyzed by interviewing teachers after the lesson and linking their responses to the lesson. (This point will be discussed in more detail in a separate study.)
4. The methodology used for this study was 'Phenomenographic' because of the need to 'obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of the students and teachers who participated in the study. In particular, it draws from the work of Denis Harper (2000) who provides methods and guidelines for 'collecting and analyzing visual data materials'.

School rules are not established based on explicit regulations, and there are different views on their legal basis. The general view in recent court cases is that schools established under the School Education Law, whether national, public, or private, have the comprehensive authority to unilaterally establish the necessary matters by means of school regulations to achieve the objective of educating and disciplining students through these regulations. The main contents of school regulations are set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as follows (MEXT, 2021, p. 1).

> School rules and regulations include not only rules concerning academic timetables and pupil and student council activities, but also a variety of other matters such as dress, headdress and matters relating to life in and out of school. The content of the school regulations is to be determined within the scope that is considered reasonable in light of socially accepted norms and in accordance with the actual conditions of the school and the local area, so that schools can make use of their own characteristics and creative ways of defining them, such as the type of school, the actual conditions of the pupil s, local conditions and school culture. The school rules should be set in accordance with the educational objectives of the school, and should be left to the initiative of pupils and students.

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has indicated the operation of school rules as follows (MEXT, 2021, p. 2).

> When providing guidance based on school rules, it is important to provide guidance that is appropriate for each individual pupil and to encourage the pupil's inner awareness so that he or she sees the school rules as his or her own and observes them voluntarily. It is also important to encourage the pupils to become aware of the school rules internally, and to teach them to take them as their own and to observe them voluntarily. In such cases, it is important to pay sufficient attention to the individual circumstances of the students, including the background of the problem, and to ensure that the measures taken are not merely sanctions, but also encourage reflection and enable the students to act independently and autonomously, including how to provide guidance afterwards. The school must ensure that the guidance of school rules has an educational effect, for example, by encouraging reflection and enabling pupils to act independently and autonomously. In order for the teaching of school rules to be truly effective, it is important to ensure that there is a common understanding between pupils and parents about their content and necessity. For this reason, school rules should be made known to pupils and parents in advance, for example, before the start of school. In doing so, it is also important to inform them of the standards and the measures that will be taken if there is a breach of the school rules.

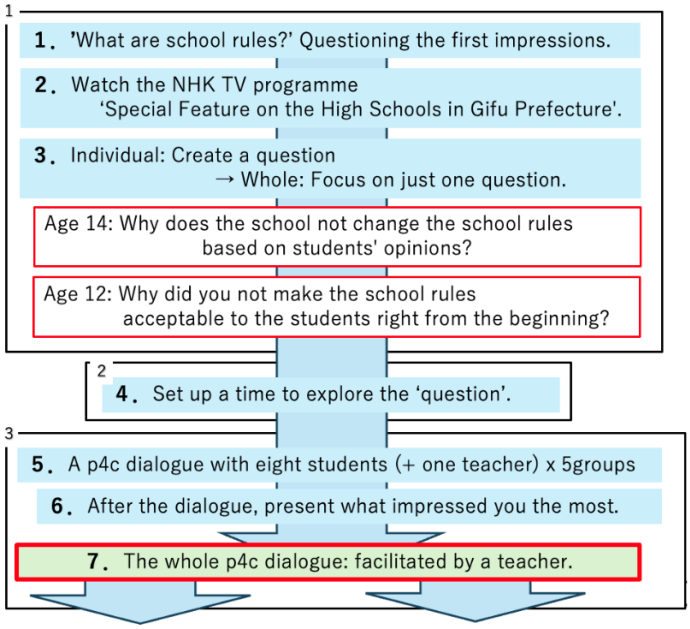
Thus, it can be observed that the operation of school rules is ambiguous and not clearly defined. This ambiguity allows each school to operate independently. However, in Japan, as Hata (1991) points out, there are several situations in which 'school rules stand alone'. For example, as Hasegawa (2022) discussed in a newspaper report as a case study, school rules that specify a 'natural hair certificate', indicating that the hair color is slightly brown or permed at birth, or even the color and design of underwear, as opposed to the Japanese hair color being black, or that first-year high school students who had dyed their hair were not allowed to attend classes and school excursions. In September 2021, NHK, Japan's public broadcaster, broadcast a program entitled 'Are those school rules necessary? Close contact! Frontline of Reform' and reported that in schools with school rules such as 'no mobile phones in school', 'white or beige underwear', 'submit a natural hair application form if you have light natural hair' and 'fringes should be limited to just above the eyebrows', there were cases where students were reviewing the school rules (NHK, 2021). It also pointed out that in Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture, 'review is the best teaching material', citing the case of 137 elementary, junior high and high schools that have started reviewing their school rules at the same time. In conjunction with this, an education board official said, "We are building our own country on our own responsibility. That is democracy. We have to realize that from childhood". The official further said, "We have to realize that from childhood" to point out the significance of reviewing school rules by students. Furthermore, many other studies have pointed out that the various rules in Japanese schools are irrational and have no educational significance (Ogiue & Uchida, 2018; Kawasaki, 2021).

Thus, in June 2021, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) notified the national boards of education of 'Examples of Efforts Concerning Review of School Regulations' (MEXT, 2021). It was indicated that 'school rules are to be established within the necessary and reasonable scope for schools to achieve their educational objectives'. It was also pointed out that 'when providing guidance based on school rules, it is important to provide appropriate guidance for each individual student and to encourage the students to be aware of their own internal awareness, to see the school rules as their own, and to teach them to follow them voluntarily'. Hasegawa (2022) points out that the reasons for this review are that the social environment surrounding schools and the situation of pupils are constantly changing, the contents of school rules must be constantly and actively reviewed, and although the review of school rules is under the authority of the headmaster, it is an opportunity for pupils to think independently. School rules are not simply problems faced by schools. They

challenge the reapprehension of customs and practices that have existed in Japan for a long time. In addition, making school rules an issue exposes schools to society as undemocratic places and provides an opportunity for society as a whole to discuss school democracy. Discussing school rules is the best teaching tool for re-examining school democracy.

In this study, lessons on school rules were conducted in elementary (age 12), junior high (age 14), and senior high (age 16) schools in February 2021. The primary and junior high schools were affiliated with Gifu University. None of the schools had an academic test at the time of admission. However, based on the unique feature of being attached to a university, the schools attract students from relatively favorable family backgrounds. The high school is Gifu High School is located near the university. This high school has the highest level of academic achievement in Gifu Prefecture, and only enrolls students who have passed the rigorous entrance examinations with top grades. The school enrolls many students who intend to attend Tokyo University as a top-level university.

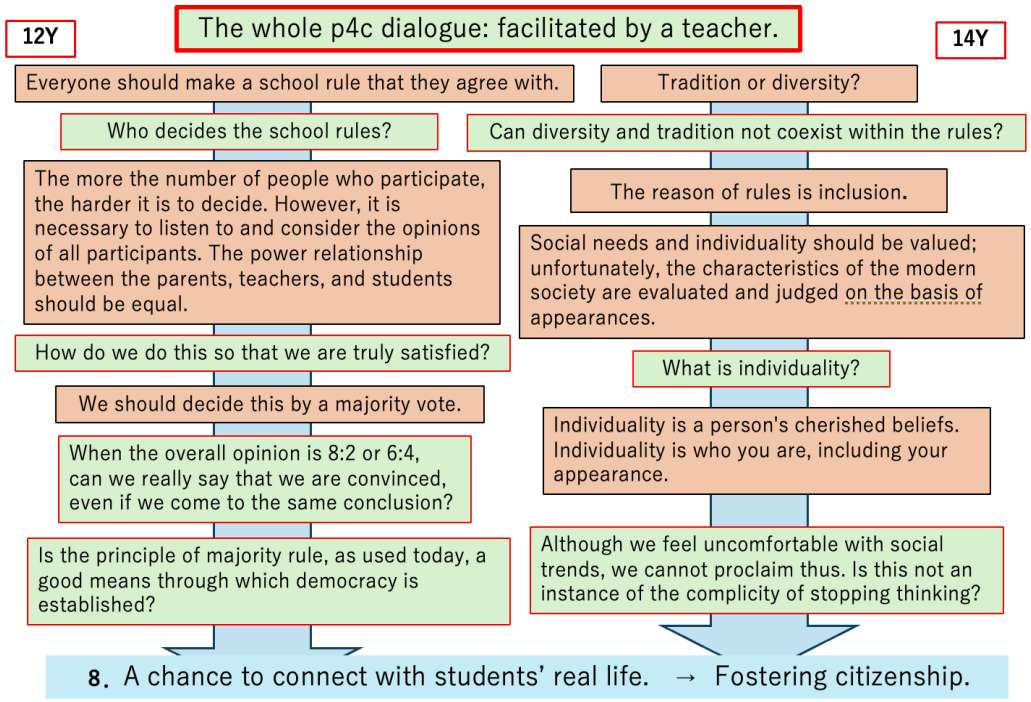
Figure 1 Overall flow of the dialogue



The outline of the lessons is as follows. First, the teacher demonstrates that the class is about school rules and regulations, and shows a case study of a high school in Gifu Prefecture, where the school is located, and where the students' MOVEMENT changed the school rules. Next, based on the P4C methodology, the research question (RQ) to be addressed in the class was set; the RQ was determined by student dialogue, and the class developed in the form of a dialogue on the question. The teacher's role in this lesson was to facilitate the dialogue. Note that elementary and junior high school classes had a common RQ for the entire class, and the dialogue was conducted in groups of five to eight students. The RQ for primary school was 'Why did the school rules not make sense to students from the beginning'? The RQ for the middle school was 'Why do schools not change school rules based on students' opinions'? Note that the high school classes set the questions in groups rather than as a whole, and the dialogue proceeded within these groups. Thus, multiple RQs concerning the high schools were set. For example, 'How should school rules be determined?', 'What impression do uniforms give to local residents?' 'Is breaking school rules really "bad"?' and so on, were set up. Figure

1 shows the overall flow of the dialogue, which proceeded in a unified manner in both schools, while Figure 2 illustrates the flow of the dialogue developed in one group of primary and secondary schools.

Figure 2 Overview of actual dialogue in Y12 and Y14



In secondary schools, for example, the following developments took place. First, one pupil reiterated why the RQs that were set the previous time were set and shared with the entire class. Each group was then divided into other groups for dialogue. After the dialogue was completed, the teacher shared each group's dialogue and developed a lesson to further deepen the dialogue. The protocol of the dialogue is omitted due to the space available, but various issues, including freedom, equality, rights, duties, differences between adults and students, common sense, and insanity, were discussed. After the class, the teacher said,

> *This dialogue has brought up various issues such as rules and regulations, freedom, seriousness, consent, the relationship between students and adults, and diversity, and now, to put it bluntly, my head is a mess. I cannot process it in my mind. I do not know what to do. But this is what the society is. We must find a solution even in such situations.*

The details are omitted, but the teacher who developed this lesson pointed out the goals of the subject and the role of the lesson as follows:

> *The goal of social studies education is the development of sovereignty. I see democracy as 'thinking about the various social events that exist in modern society as one's own affairs'. It is not democracy to adopt majority rule or to go to elections (omitted). It is precisely because I believe this that I aim to 'nurture pupils who participate in the society in front of them as their own affairs' through this research class. I wish to make them realize that the activity of creating their own reality through the lessons is the way democracy should be.*

This ideology has a significant effect on teachers' gatekeeping. For example, the following statement by a teacher is characteristic. One teacher said, 'Rules are for valuing diversity. Rules are for valuing freedom, aren't they?' The teacher dared to take the concept that the

students were showing in terms of opposition as an inclusive concept and pointed out the difficulties of the real world. As a result, the pupils' minds were confused, and they had less to say in response to this teacher's question. However, the teacher further asked, 'Who decides what is considered common sense in the world'? The teacher continued, 'For example, is it good or bad for a student who is competent enough to take the high school entrance examination to be a blonde'? Finally, the teacher queried, 'How should we deal with rules and regulations? In such a chaotic society, how do I confront the rules and how do I live my life'? As a result, the students lost no time in voicing their opinions and continued to write their own opinions on the worksheet. The teacher's identity was reflected in the class, and the gatekeeping based on this resulted in a class that resonated with students, and with teachers and students alike. The following figures are a flow of the dialogue that developed at elementary and secondary grade levels.

The students may pretend to have learnt during the class. However, in the lessons presented in this study, the students were not acting to learn but were actively and autonomously participating in and driving the lessons. They deepened their thinking about democracy, including rule-making, by using school rules as a case study. Two main factors contributed to this observation. First, it was developed as a P4C lesson. The theme covered in this study was school rules. This is generally an untouchable area, and a difficult topic for teachers and students to discuss on an equal footing. This is because school rules are considered the exclusive prerogatives of teachers. However, P4C balances the power relationships between teachers and students. In doing so, an environment in which student safety is always ensured is designed. This is one of the reasons for the students' genuine dialogues. Second, the lesson theme was not the teacher's culture but the culture to which the students belonged. Students belong to various societies, such as their families, schools, and clubs, and the school is one of the main mothers of these societies. This lesson created a culture to which the pupils belonged as the object of study and critically examined the norms that this culture regarded as common sense. This treatment of the pupils' culture was probably one reason for their autonomous participation. Such an approach would be a catalyst for students to acquire democratic modes of thinking and would encourage them to look at schools and society through a democratic filter.

Conclusion

This study has discussed three main points. The first is the need to build democratic schools through education based on the arguments of M. Apple, G. Biesta, and others. This emphasizes the need to create democratic structures and processes within schools through a curriculum that allows students to build on their democratic experiences. The second is Philosophy for Students, an educational theory that aims to balance the power relations between teachers and students in the classroom. P4C, a philosophy-based approach in which students explore society and the world autonomously through dialogue, is based on the idea that students set questions and then think about them together in dialogue, with the power relations between the teacher and students dismantled. We showed that this type of learning provides an opportunity for students and teachers to experience democracy in schools and make it function in a real way. The third is a proposal for an approach to democratizing schools through the school curriculum and teaching, using school rules as a case study. A lesson dealing with school rules using P4C dismantled the 'pretense of learning' played by students in the classroom, and they were actively and autonomously involved in and driving the lesson.

By dealing with the culture to which the pupils belonged rather than the teacher's culture, the class developed a critical examination of the norms that the existing culture made common sense. This approach was shown to be a catalyst for students to acquire a democratic mode of thinking. It should be noted that the relationship between the teacher interview data and lessons could not be discussed in this study because of space limitations. This will be discussed in detail in a separate study.

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Teacher's autonomy and critical thinking in decision-making: Bridging theory for effectiveness and education practical integrity[1]

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Abstract

In the second half of the XX century, theory of education saw its role valued as an instrument for the international institutions' aspirations for the future of economy and technological development (James & Pollard, 2011). An education focused on erasing the risk of failure, on behalf of what efficiently works (Biesta, 2016a; 2023a), spread into the world, by the neoliberal ideology for schooling, to boost competition on economic markets, workforce development, and innovation (Diário da República [DR], 2017, 2018; Ministério da Educação [ME], 2017a, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 1999).

The instrumentalization of concepts as critical thinking, teacher agency, and autonomy (Freire, 1997; Giroux, 2023), associated with the need to secure the students results on evidence-based systems for learning, centered on two of the three dimensions Biesta´s refers as "qualification", and "socialization", neglecting the third: "subjectification". Arendt refers to the homo faber (Arendt, 2018), as the human unnatural dimension related with the world of work; and the banality of evil (Arendt, 2006), as the Human failure to critically think on his actions.

Portuguese teachers must act accordingly with the responsibility to prepare the students for the key-competences (ME, 2017), and the league tables results, but do they have space for decision-making to act critically on behalf of the student's subjectiveness?

This study aims at developing a theoretical and epistemological approach on the teacher's autonomy for decision making balancing Biesta's (2020) three dimensions of education, relating teacher agency, integrity of education, with the future of Public Education (Biesta, 2023a; Säfström & Biesta, 2023), through a literature review problematizing Priestley et al. (2015) Teacher Agency Ecological Model with Arendt's (2006; 2018) homo faber and banality of evil concepts.

This study expectation is to constructively contribute for the subjectiveness of the teacher as an individual responsible for the educational future of his students, and the public school.

Keywords: Educational Studies, Subjectiveness, Teacher Agency, critical thinking, Theory of Education

Introduction

Portugal's engagement with the global education agenda evolved significantly throughout the 20th and 21st centuries (Robertson, 2022). Beginning with its integration into the European Economic Community in 1986, Portugal's educational system underwent substantial reform, aligning with international trends focused on competences, quality, and standardized frameworks. In 2016, the Portuguese Ministry of Education initiated the Schools' Curricular Autonomy and Flexibility (PAFC) pilot project, influenced by the OECD's competence-based

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Oliveira, S., Ribeiro, O. & Estrela, E. (2024). Teacher's autonomy and critical thinking in decision-making: Bridging theory for effectiveness and education practical integrity. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 35-48. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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curriculum framework (Mouraz & Cosme, 2021). This project aimed to identify and address curriculum barriers by empowering teachers to transform the national curriculum into competence-based formats (OECD, 2018). However, this shift towards teacher facilitation of learning, driven by supranational organizations like the OECD, World Bank, and European Union, has raised concerns about the erosion of education's intrinsic purpose and the commodification of learning, echoing critiques (Biesta, 2009; 2016a; Giroux, 2023).

Biesta (2016a; 2022) and Freire (2023), argue that the current trend of viewing education solely as a means for economic gain undermines its true purpose, which is to facilitate personal growth and critical engagement with the world. They advocate for education to focus on transforming individuals into autonomous beings capable of dialogue and self-reflection, emphasizing dimensions beyond mere qualification, such as socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2016a; 2022). However, conflicting demands for efficiency and standardization in education have led to a paradox for teachers, who are expected to be both agents of change and facilitators of a predefined curriculum. This limits their autonomy and may result in an "empty act of education" where their judgment is constrained by external structures (Biesta, 2023b; Priestley, 2011). Giroux (2023) proposes critical pedagogy as a solution to empower individuals to critically analyse and transform societal issues, advocating for a deeper understanding of the human condition through education.

Arendt's (2018) exploration of the human condition highlights the importance of the public realm in shaping individuals into free, politically aware beings. Through engagement in the public sphere, individuals develop consciousness, identity, and agency, forming the foundation of emancipation and freedom. However, Arendt (2018) observes a dominance of the laboring dimension in contemporary society, where economic objectives overshadow the creative and political aspects of human existence, leading to a mechanization of education and a loss of teachers' professional autonomy. This trend reflects the banality of evil, where individuals, including teachers, may relinquish personal responsibility and critical thinking in favors of conformity and obedience (Arendt, 2006; 2020). Freire (2023) further emphasizes the importance of critical consciousness in resisting passive adaptation and engaging with the world to effect transformative change. In contrast, Giroux (2023) critiques the neoliberal influence on education, reducing teachers to bureaucratic roles focused on efficiency rather than intellectual engagement and social transformation.

The discussion on teacher agency within the context of the XXI century education (XXICE) highlights contrasting perspectives on the role of teachers as agents of change. While OECD (2018) reports emphasize the teacher's responsibility as facilitators of learning within a prescribed framework of competences, scholars like Priestley et al. (2015) as well as Afdal and Maaranens (2023) argue for a broader understanding of teacher agency, encompassing dimensions of past experiences, present contexts, and future visions. This dichotomy reflects differing views on the purpose of educational research, with some advocating for standardized procedures to enhance technical effectiveness, while others emphasize the importance of research in fostering critical reflection and empowering teachers to navigate complex educational landscapes. The autonomy and decision-making space of teachers are influenced by numerous factors, including personal, social, and organizational dimensions, as evidenced by studies such as Mota et al. (2021) which highlight the challenges faced by teachers in maintaining autonomy amidst bureaucratic pressures and societal expectations.

Educational research has played a pivotal role in justifying its importance since the 1980s, particularly as a tool for addressing economic concerns within education. However, this focus

on economic risk management has led to the application of models more suited to closed systems, neglecting the inherent complexity and openness of education (Biesta, 2016a; 2020). While initiatives like the XXICE project aim to anticipate and control risks, they often overlook the diverse human factors involved (OECD, 2005). The emphasis on effective pedagogy has shifted the role of teachers towards facilitation of learning, but some argue this approach reduces education to a technical endeavor, disregarding its cultural significance and potential for self-reflection and improvement. (Biesta, 2007). This contrasts with the existential paradigm, which views education as a means for individual emancipation and critical engagement with the world (Freire, 2023). The tension between these perspectives raises questions about teachers' autonomy and agency within a global educational system driven by economic imperatives, potentially limiting their ability to act as professionals and advocates for their students' freedom and democratic participation in society.

In this understanding, this study aims to develop a theoretical and epistemological approach to teacher autonomy for decision-making. Therefore, it intends to relate Biesta's (2022) three dimensions of education, Priestley et al.'s (2015) Ecological Model of Teacher Agency and Arendt's (2018) concepts of homo faber and the banality of evil through a literature review.

The study is divided into chapters, namely: Portugal's participation in the global education agenda; the purpose of education and the act of being; Hannah Arendt: the banality of evil, personal responsibility, and the transitivity of Freire's consciousness; Teacher agency for the XXICE and decision-making space; Limits and promises of educational research for teacher professionalism.

Portugal's Participation in the Global Agenda for Education

The XX century last decades marked a shift in theory of education research development, when it´s beginning of use by the OECD, the World Bank, and other transnational organizations, for the prospects of the economy, and society future (Biesta, 2009; Pollard, 2008). This shift spread across the developed world, and in Europe, through the partnership of those supranational institutions and the European Union (Robertson, 2022).

Portugal´s entry into the European Economic Community in 1985, marked a promising change in the Portuguese educational system. At that time, the Portuguese government was still trying to recover from 41 years of the Estado Novo [New State], autocratic period (ended on April 25, 1974), which kept the country outside the economic and social investment by the Global Agenda. Portugal integration in this agenda, initiated by converging the social policies, modernizing, and homogenizing the form of speech: words such as competences value, quality, and control instruments, were evident and marked the willingness to follow what was the international political ideology (Cavaco, 2018; Teodoro & Anibal, 2007).

Further in time, in 2016, responding to the world education shift for the XXI century education [XXICE] agenda, the Portuguese Ministry of Education (ME) challenged six schools from different geographical areas, to participate on a pilot project for schools' curricular autonomy and flexibility (PAFC) .The project was a model borrowed from the main competence-based curriculum [CBC] framework, developed by the OECD and the Definition and Selection of Competencies [DeSeCo] (Mouraz & Cosme, 2021; Rychen, 2004).

The PAFC started in 2016 with a challenge made by the ME to six public schools across the country, with the goal to identify the curriculum learning barriers, and to develop

methodologies according with the directions pre-given (Ferreira et al., 2021; Mouraz & Cosme, 2021). The main goal was to develop the CBC for the Portuguese education system, following the OECD (1999) guiding documents, and the curriculum packaged as a pattern to be worked and adapted to the sociocultural context. In the schools PAFC challenged schools, the teachers, who were now viewed as agents of educational change, had to transform the national curriculum into competences (Cosme, 2018; European Commission, 2022; OECD, 2018).

With the CBC the OECD, the World Bank, and the European Union (EU), changed the role of teachers from the professional-subject, with knowledge and curriculum expertise, to the facilitator of learning, who must follow prescriptive guidelines to transform the curriculum into competences (Biesta, 2009; 2016a; 2018). This conception of "agency" is related to the teacher efforts to act with the responsibility idealized by the neoliberal ideal (Apple, 2018), and it is, according to Giroux (2023) by the continued understanding of students as consumers, and teaching as a standardized chain process.

As in any line of economic production, the aiming of the neoliberal ideology has been to erase the risk of failing the goals for the economic project. However, as Biesta (2016a) points, by eliminating the risk of failure, the purpose of education is eliminated too.

The Purpose of Education and the Act of Being

According to Biesta (2016b; 2022), the new educational tendencies for seeing the act of education as a process for economic benefits goes against what is supposed to be the purpose of education: to bring something new to the student, and to teach him how to be in the world, and with the world on. Corroborating his point for discussion we can quote Freire´s (2023) critical perspective for: i) the paradigm of adaptation – in which the person is treated as an object, that without the possibility to critically act with is judgment, he will adapt to that impossibility and with time loose it as a capacity per se; ii) and the paradigm of integration, in which the person is a subject, free for judge and act with his critical consciousness, "make choices and transform reality" (Freire, 2023, p. 4).

For Biesta (2016a; 2022), the purpose of education is this "person-transformation" into a "subject-being", emancipated to assumed is freedom in constantly dialogue with the world. To fulfil this purpose, education mustn´t be an action of learning, focused on the only goal of qualification. Education has two other dimensions that must be put in the process: "socialization" and "subjectification." The three dimensions are presented as: i) qualification has to do with the assessment of students' knowledge, competences (on this new curriculum for competences meaning); ii) socialization, with the way students related the knowledge the receive with the world, and their own self; iii) subjectification has to do with the "self" dimension, and his distinguished individuality from others. The three dimensions are intrinsic to the dialogue the subject establishes with himself and the world and are expressed in questions as "Who am I?", "How am I?" In this process the education as to deal with meaning of the act of teaching: "what´s the purpose?", "What contents must be taught to students?" and "how can I (teacher) establish a relation with them to enable a dialogue"? (Biesta, 2016a; 2022).

However, the level of efficiency, quality demands and the process of transforming schools in learning facilities as brought contradictory discourses for teacher's professional space. On one hand, they are acknowledged as agents of educational change, with autonomy and flexibility

to work and adjust the class contents to students. But on the other hand, they are recognized as facilitators of learning, supporters of the student's agency and central position in the curriculum, they can also be seen as actors in a pre-defined script of skills and guidelines for educational and economic goals (Biesta, 2023b; Priestley, 2011).

The limits of freedom for teachers' decision-making, for the purpose of efficiency as Biesta (2023b) argues, an empty act of education, where their judgement might seem to be of great importance, but it is "curtailed through the structures that arrived through the back door" (Biesta, 2023b, p. 22) impact on teachers' freedom to act according with what they think it´s right. With the force of habit this process becomes a common sense of being in the teacher profession.

Giroux (2023) proposes critical pedagogy as practice to enable individuals to think critically, to interact and transform the world, to be aware of the other and of the self. Giroux (2023) proposition is to use critical pedagogy to address the problems of the human condition.

Hannah Arendt Banality of Evil, Personal Responsibility, and Freire's Consciousness Transitivity

Arendt's (2018) human condition reflects on the public realm as the link between the subject and is political-being. As the author argues, a person becomes a free subject, with the ability for critical, moral, and political worth, through this mediation. It is in the public realm that people develop relationship with others, develops his consciousness as a self, and construct his ability to be on the world. And it´s with this process that the subject becomes emancipated and free.

In this course of events, the subjects are developed as: i) *homo faber*- with the ability to fabricate objects, plan and shape the world towards his necessity; ii) *homo laborans*- providing what it´s need it to survive in the world; iii) *homo-action* - through action he his distinguished from other subjects living in his society and culture. And it is by the equilibrium of these three dimensions that, the *vida activa* is formed (Arendt, 2018).

However, the world of man is becoming more dominated by the *laborans* dimension, absorbed by technicality, by the economic objectives of human ambition, which allows the faber dimension to be enclosed as a resource. Through the manipulation of homo faber, *homo laborans* are dominating the world (Arendt, 2018).

What we argue in this study is the action of the *homo laborans* on the third dimension of the *vida activa,* and that is transforming humans into "humanoids," and teachers, into "teachers-humanoids."

In this way, teachers are understood as political subjects, with the three dimensions of active life advocated by Arendt (2018). In the economic society of the 20th century, education has become an institution governed by mechanical procedures to measure learning levels, by "essential learning" (ME, 2017) and by learning descriptors and profiles. We must therefore ask ourselves: aren't teachers being alienated from their freedom of action as specialized professionals? If they act based on guidelines, are they using their decision-making space?

These questions bring us back to the banality of evil, understood as the state of not being able to think critically about one's own actions. In this way, by taking away teachers' ability to do

what they think is best for their pupils, by neglecting their professional space, policymakers are putting *homo laborans* in control of the action dimension (active life) (Arendt, 2006).

Arendt's (2020) definition of "personal responsibility" is described as the human capacity to develop a judgment of one's own actions in a specific situation and to act accordingly. However, it is a personal responsibility because it is related to the action of the subject and concerns the form of participation, unlike collective responsibility, which refers to the group, or to a government: which in pursuing a goal, will imply the enrolment of all citizens living under its banner.

Personal responsibility is also the opposite of political responsibility, where the government must deal with the responsibility of the antecedent actions over the community. However, the responsibility of the personal domain has to do with what the person does when faced with an order, and the ability to critically analyses the consequences inherent in it. By acting without exercising critical awareness to measure their own action, people are taking on a passive role, accepting their part in it for their own benefit. And with this, as Arendt (2020) wrote, there is a difference between the action of consent and the action of obedience, since the former is related to the adult world and the latter to the child who must obey the adult's authority.

According to Freire (2023), by obeying the adult becomes an object, adapted to the world, in a passive way. Therefore, critical thinking implies the consciousness of our temporal relation with the past, the present, and the construction of the future. To be a subject, the person is integrated in the world, acting on it with the use of consciousness transitivity, critically analyzing the events of his temporality, by refusing to deliver his social responsibilities, rejecting the passivity of adaptation, arguing and actively engaging with the world to transform it. The critical transitivity puts the subject in constant interrogation, and dialogue with the world.

However, Giroux (2023) argues on the negative impact of neoliberal ideology on the teacher profession, as it transforms the school's education in an economic and corporative model, and the teachers on bureaucrats, with competences for efficiency.

The Teacher Agency for the XXICE and the Space of Decision

The Teachers Matter report (OECD, 2005) documents what should be the profile of the best teacher competences for the 2030s. The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030 identifies the teacher as a facilitator of learning, acting as an agent responsible for guiding students in a student-centered education. Teachers should guide and assess, for each school subject, according to student profiles and descriptors, as is the case in Portugal with the profile of students at the end of compulsory schooling, and the government document Essential Learning (ME, 2017).

By analyzing documents from the OECD (2018) and the existential conception of education, used by the critical theory social researchers, we see that there are two different constructs of teacher agency (see Table 1): i) there is the facilitator-agency of the OECD neoliberal ideology, where teachers only follow guidance; ii) and the existential conception where the teacher is a political being, who has the potential to act as agent for education, based on his beliefs and values, to change it for what he thinks it´s best (Emyrbayer & Mische, 1998).

Table 1. Different concept for keywords used between OECD and Existential paradigm.

	OECD	Emyrbayer & Mische (1998)
Agency	Teacher's action as an actor for education change. Action follows guidelines. Teacher as facilitator of students learning. Competences. (OECD, 2018, 2005; Schleicher, 2018)	• Teacher reaction to act on the environment to change it. • Beliefs on the action rightness; change for better. • Subject uses abilities previously learned, expecting to be the solution for a problem.

Source: *own elaboration*

Priestley et al., (2015) argued on the word "agency" used on the XXI century education, by the OECD (2018), sustaining that when it comes to teacher´s agency is an action related with the space to make decisions, or to act on behalf of what he or she thinks to be the best for the students (Afdal & Maaranen, 2023; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Bandura´s definition for agency is related with someone, in a determinate moment, has decided to act on the environment to change it, to what he or she feels it will make it better (Bandura, 1997).

The OECD (2005; 2018) understands teacher agency as the responsibility teacher must have to act on education change towards the XXI century education [XXICE]. However, according to Priestley et al. (2015), teacher agency has three interconnected dimensions: i) "interational" - past work, personal experiences and teacher education influences the teacher's professionality perspective for the present and for the future; ii) practical-evaluative – present culture, structural factors related with social relations and material or instruments to work, also influence the future and have impact on teacher understanding for their own professionality; iii) projective – teachers short and long term professional understanding of their role in education. It is related to what do they think about education know and in the future.

Afdal and Maaranens' (2023) study about teachers' space for decision-making allows us to deepen the teacher's agency problematic, as it questions how much space teachers must make decisions within the new prescriptive curriculum for competences, or how do teacher manage bureaucracy, and their sense of awareness for the students, as individuals.

Therefore, the difference between these conceptions for teacher agency is patent by research use as an instrument to find what shall be done to control education technical effectiveness. In this conception, research produces knowledge to develop standardized procedures to accomplish the education risk elimination. The conception of education research, as an instrument based on measurement, competences transform knowledge on an instrumental object (Biesta, 2007).

The instrumentalization of knowledge is carried out through thinking about educational research, based on procedures to support the measurement of competences. However, educational research can be understood through different practical interpretations, i.e., how the teacher's professional identity influences their practice and their perception of agency. It can also be considered in the ability to manage the relationship between what is ordered by official educational documents and the pre-established way of doing things, to achieve efficient and proven learning for the correct action of education for students (Biesta, 2007).

Through research it is possible to develop critical reflections about practices giving an inside vision for the teacher self-consciousness and judgement, identifying problems, and planning for improvement (Biesta, 2007). By doing this process the teacher puts his agency in practice, acting in the present, but envisioning the future: by using experiences from the past, values and beliefs, his cultural, structural, and material present reality (Priestley et al., 2015).

If the focus of research is circumscriptive to the technical dimension of teachers (as workers), the cultural, professional, and personal dimensions will be neglected (Biesta, 2007; Priestley et al., 2015).

Teachers' autonomy and space for decision is conditioned by different variables, related with the three dimensions of Priestley et al. (2015), Ecological Model for Teacher Agency. As an example, a study developed by Mota et al. (2021), targeting the "teachers voices" on the personal, social and organizational dimensions and burnout levels, has identified among the practice-evaluative dimension, the teacher's scientific knowledge autonomy conditioned by parents and school stakeholders, students' motivation lack, pressure imposed by the workload of different bureaucratic responsibilities teachers must handle; unfriendly comfort of physical work conditions, and the students' raking levels. On the personal level the study emphasizes the teachers lack for recognition for their work, burnout and "lack of status" felling, and "perception of loss of autonomy in decision making (i.e., grade assignments) and lack of freedom of expression" (Mota et al., 2021, p. 5).In the course of presenting the aforementioned solid argument, it is occasionally impossible (or, at the very least, inconvenient) to follow a linear path from general to specific statement. The realities of empirical research are such that there are often parallel or even divergent paths that must be addressed in equal measure, in order to provide a comprehensive argument; multiple facets at each level of a discussion, required to present a cohesive narrative.

It may seem that such steps back and forth between different section levels require complex numbering schemes. Historically, this has not proven to be the case. We employ one of several formatting schemata, developed over years of trial and error, which have been found to be quickly and easily learned and recognized by readers across multiple disciplines. Simply choose the appropriate (preformatted) Microsoft Word "Style" and you will be fine.

Limits and Promises of Educational Research for Teacher Professionalism

Since the beginning of 1980's educational research has been constantly confronted to justify the importance of its role and as a field of study. When in the 1990's projects for effective pedagogy were implemented to provide education with solutions for the problems of economy, educational research turned to be one of the key tools to justify the economic supranational institutions hand on "what works" in education. The goal was to erase the risk from education (Biesta, 2020).

However, to make it possible, models of economic risk were applied to education, as if education were a closed system as a company, or a profitable which the assets with numbers and products (Biesta, 2016b, 2022). To control the risk, the project for the XXICE anticipates, measures, and acts with the eyes on the future.

However, education is as Biesta´s (2016b) acknowledges, an open system, with people from diverse backgrounds, life, and cultural experiences. In education, there are invisible factors that are ineffective for measuring and control (Biesta, 2016a; 2022). For instance, one of the

educational factors studied by the XXICE research production is the profile for the effective teacher. They are considered a key-factor in the process of learning, and it is important to recruit those to fit better in the competence profile, to control the risk of educational failure (OECD, 2005).

Table 2. Different concept for keywords used between OECD and Existential paradigm.

	OECD	Existential paradigm
Values and discourses	Teacher's action as an actor for education change (OECD, 2005, 2018). Action follows guidelines. Competences for economic development	Subject-teacher is by nature a political being, and the public realm is the environment by which he/she may exercise is own humanity in the world (Arendt, 2018). The subject-teacher is a subject-politic, who thinks why his own individuality with own judgment in the world is (Arendt, 2018). Development of the ability to think for his own, and the capacity for moral judgment and political values.
Responsibility	The subject has the responsibility to contribute for the socioeconomical development (Meyer et al., 1997).	Subject responsible for his own actions. He/she acts according with his/her "moral and political worth" (Morgan, 2016, p. 2).
Education research	Evidence-based research supported by economic ideals, neurosciences, development of legitimacy of a global educational system for economic and technological purposes (Pollard, 2008). Constructivist based research (Biesta, 2009).	Educational research has two roles: i)technical, ii) and the cultural, which are linked to the three dimensions of education: qualification, socialization, and subjectification [QSS]. The two roles, functions on an equilibrium, as it must function the QSS (Biesta, 2007, 2022).
Emancipation	The subject is a key-factor for the state development and economical achievement. Whitin universal principles: "citizenship, socioeconomic development and rationalized justice" with "universal applicability" (Meyer et al., 1997, p. 148).	Through his/she owns actions, the subject can transform himself and evolute. Through the exercise of his agency as an active political being, the subject makes his stand in the world, by acting on it. Every human being learns from the world and acts to change it. Achieving autonomy by acting individually and according with his/her own agency (Arendt, 2018)

Source: own elaboration

Together with other fields of knowledge, educational research worked to develop the framework for a system of effectiveness and quality education, focused on learning outcomes. The "principles for effective pedagogy" shifted the school paradigm, and the

professional competence of teachers, from teaching to facilitation of learning (Biesta, 2020; James & Pollard, 2011; Pollard 2008). The Teachers Matter report (OECD, 2005) is one of the results from these changes, and the Future of Education and Skills (2018) also is, with the teacher going from the professional specialized on the subject knowledge, to be a facilitator of learning.

However, the educational research contribution to the effective pedagogy is what Biesta (2007) argues to be the technical and instrumental dimension of the field. Is a one-dimension use of educational research, with a specific goal: legitimize the supranational institutions economic goals, to control education. This use of educational research doesn´t acknowledge it´s cultural role, which could be of significant use for teachers' self-reflection on his practices, to understand it and to identify what may need improvement.

The speech and the consequences of the shifting for the effective pedagogy paradigm is contrasting with the existential paradigm behind the critical pedagogy understanding for education and the teacher's role (see Table 2). It may even enlighten about the consequences for the teacher's space for decision making, his critical understanding of autonomy, his construct as a professional and as self, and the responsibility he must develop his student's emancipation.

Freire's (2023) words about the impact of the massified society on the individual dimension of the subject may enable the connection between the teacher space for decision-making and the global school system as it is in our contemporary world. In a school for all, grounded on "what works" on behalf of what is best for economic goals.

What we argue is that by being unable to act as a professional, with scientific knowledge to teach, to judge and to critically think on what is best for his student's liberty and democratic participation in society, the teacher might have little space for decision. In this sense, isn´t the teacher an oppressed individual himself? This question is argued on the basis on Freire's (2018) statement of the process of dehumanizing the person (that is the teacher) by subversion of his freedom and by being constantly subject to the others control, imposing limits to his professional competence to act and judge for what he thinks is right.

Discussion

Portugal's participation in the global education agenda has been significantly influenced by international organizations such as the OECD, the World Bank, and the European Union. This involvement has led to a transformation in the Portuguese education system, especially through initiatives like the pilot project for schools' curricular autonomy and flexibility (PAFC) (Estrela, 2010, 2018).

The shift towards competence-based curriculum frameworks, inspired by OECD guidelines, has redefined the role of teachers from knowledge experts to facilitators of learning. However, this change raises concerns about the purpose of education, with scholars like Biesta arguing that education should not only focus on qualification but also encompass socialization and subjectification. Additionally, critical pedagogy, proposed by Giroux, emerges as a way to counteract the negative impacts of neoliberal ideology on education

Drawing from Arendt's concepts of the human condition and personal responsibility, this study highlights the risk of reducing teachers to mere facilitators devoid of autonomy and critical thinking. Arendt's notion of the banality of evil warns against blindly following prescriptive guidelines without critical reflection (2006).

Examining the concept of teacher agency within the context of the XXI century education agenda, this study contrasts the OECD's neoliberal vision of teacher facilitation with an existential conception where teachers are seen as political beings with the potential to promote changes based on their beliefs and values. This raises questions about the extent of teachers' decision-making space within prescriptive curriculum frameworks.

Educational research, while instrumental in promoting effective pedagogy aligned with economic goals, is criticized for its narrow focus on technical dimensions at the expense of cultural and personal aspects. The study emphasizes the importance of research that promotes critical reflection and empowers teachers to navigate complex educational landscapes.

Overall, the study highlights the need for a balanced approach to education that values teacher autonomy, critical thinking, and holistic development, while also recognizing the complexities of global educational agendas and their impact on local contexts.

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Assessment and Management of Flood Risks in the EU - Goals and Limitations Depicted at the German River Murr[1]

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Abstract

The floods in parts of Germany in July 2021 are clear indicators that the ongoing anthropogenic climate crisis leads to changes in the hydrological cycle. These deviations from a hydrologic balance lead to drought periods on the one hand and to heavy rainfall and flood events on the other. Hence this case study concerning the Murr, a small German river with high flood risk, argues that the flood risk management of the EU and its member states has further to be constituted as a key environmental challenge of the 21st century.

Keywords: Technology assessment - flood protection - EU flood risk management - water retention in the landscape - technical flood prevention

Introduction

To transfer European into German legislation the EU directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks was turned into the National Water Act in 2010. Due to the federal structure of Germany, the amendment of the law in Baden-Württemberg, the federal state where the Murr is located, took place in 2013. Against this background this case study on the river Murr examines two main research premises. Firstly, the study argues that the German federal structure leads to negative consequences for rivers with high flood risks. Secondly, it is to show that a sustainable water resource management and processes of urban development and planning often are in diametrical oppositions due to economic interests.

The case study builds on data collected using a standardized questionnaire. The survey was conducted as a reaction to the application of technical flood prevention measures in different villages and towns in the Murr-area. The questionnaire was addressed to different kind of experts in the field of flood prevention such as water districts, lower water authorities and citizens' groups among others.

Key findings of this case study are:

- Flood risk management without the participation of the public lead to more expensive and less sustainable technical flood prevention solutions.
- Flood risk management using technical flood prevention solutions such as flood protection walls are still commonly used in Germany usually due to economic interests.
- Technical flood prevention solutions are usually deployed without any technology assessment processes.

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Brunold, A. & Kerscher, U. (2024). Assessment and Management of Flood Risks in the EU - Goals and Limitations Depicted at the German River Murr. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 49-63. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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- As meadows and riverside areas are still used as building grounds, technical flood prevention leads to an accentuation of the upstream and downstream riparian problematic.
- In comparison among environmental association and the citizens affected there is a higher acceptance for ecologically-sustainable solutions such as retention areas than for technical solutions.

The paper concludes three main points. The authors argue in favor of natural flood prevention measures such as retention areas and the re-naturalization of rivers instead of technical flood prevention. The former are not just more sustainable strategies, but can also compensate for impervious surfaces, are meet with more acceptability by the citizen affected and can mitigate the upstream and downstream riparian problematic. Moreover, technical flood prevention strategies should be accompanied by technology assessment strategies to predict the risks. What is more, in order to tip the scale for sustainable flood risk management public participation processes should happen at the beginning – not at the end – of a flood risk management process.

Initial Situation and Questions

As a result of climate change, there will be more flood events in the future due to more frequent and heavier rainfall, with significant impacts on the environment and the affected population. The central question therefore is how to change requirements for flood protection, which can be integrated into flood risk management based on the principle of sustainability?

After the “millennium flood” in 2002, which affected several European countries there was a call for effective legal regulations to avoid or reduce such damages in the future (Brunold 2014, p. 30). The “EC Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks” (EC-HWRL), which came into force on November 2007 by the EU Parliament and the European Council, was amending the Water Resources Act (WHG). European law was implemented into national German law in 2010 (Federal Ministry for the Environment, 2007).

An assessment of flood risks (Art. 4) and the determination of areas with significant flood risks (Art. 5) had to be carried out in Germany on December 2011, the creation of flood hazard and risk maps (Art. 6) on December 2013. On December 2015, according to the Flood Risk Management Directive (HWRM-RL), flood risk management plans had to be drawn up for river areas with significant flood risks (Brunold, 2014, p. 28). This involves assessing the impacts on human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activities (Federal Environment Agency, Flood Protection Law, 2022). The Flood Protection Act II in Germany came into force on January 2018, further tightened the regulations by stipulating the consideration of neighborhood concerns and the updating of the flood hazard maps (HWGK) on December 2019 (German Bundestag, 2017). According to this, in order to improve flood protection in the Member States, the hydrological data of flood areas and the effects of climate changes must also be updated (European Union, 2007).

According to this and in order to improve flood protection in the Member States, the hydrological data of flood areas and the effects of climate change must also be updated (European Union, 2007). For citizenship participation, this data must be published accessible in flood management plans so that transparent procedures can be enabled. In Germany, this law was implemented on March 2010, including the regulations on flood protection (German

Bundestag, 2009). In Baden-Württemberg, however, this law was not incorporated into the state water law at the same time. The adaptation took place at the last possible date on December 2013 and has since opened up numerous options of exception.

The EU's flood protection policy is based on the precautionary and polluter pays principle and therefore aims to primarily address risks at their source. It is evident that the EU's competencies are having a great influence on national legislation, so that a constant adjustment process is the rule. The pressure to solve problems within the EU multi-level system has therefore increased, especially in policy areas in which common goods can no longer be distributed fairly within national borders in a way, that is oriented towards the common good or can be solved within them, as is the case with flood protection. This is therefore a cross-sectional task within the interface between the EU and the nation state. In order to overcome prisoner's dilemmas and conflicting goals between economic and ecological interests, regulations towards the common good in flood protection must be based on the insight that natural household systems such as water cycles are dynamic, whereas economic and financial cycles are rather linear and still be perceived as infinitely expandable.

Technology Assessment in Flood Protection

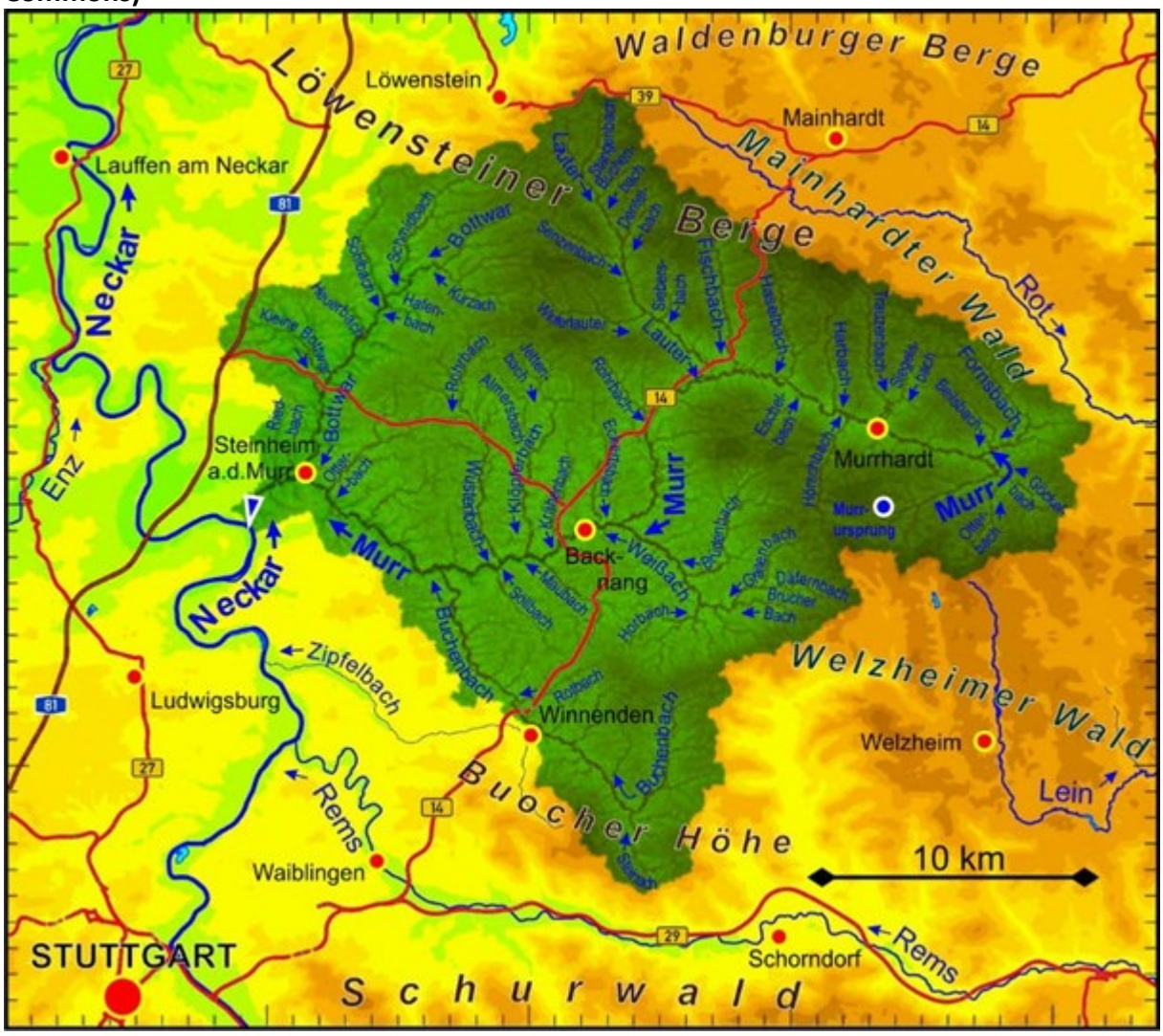
Options of technology assessment are based on the assumption that there is certainty about the occurrence of the previously uncertain event at a later point in time (Renn, p. 3). This can be understood as the precautionary principle, as enshrined in Article 15 of the 1992 Rio Declaration: “If there is a threat of serious harm, a lack of complete scientific certainty shall not be a reason for postponing effective measures to prevent environmental degradation” (United Nations, 1992).

In the area of flood protection, the limits of forecasting ability are statistically defined in terms of annual flood events, so that the expected consequences of each option must be taken into account (Jonas, 1984; Böhret, 1987). Since this deployment is based on predictions about its effects, it offers a prime example of anticipatory impact research. With the increasing transformation of dangers into risks, society's demand for effective and anticipatory risk management is growing. This includes the best possible prediction of the possible consequences of using technology and the corresponding actions to limit risks in order to reduce the likelihood of negative effects (Radkau, 1989). The consistent application of the polluter pays and precautionary principles instead of the common burden and aftercare principles is a prerequisite for this.

Such criteria cannot be derived from administrative practice, as there are often large gaps between legal requirements and the planning or implementation of technical measures. These must be identified and further developed in political processes in order to integrate the assessment into a social-discursive process (Schweizer & Renn, 2013, pp. 42-47). The planning sovereignty of municipalities according to Article 28 of the Basic Law is also susceptible to conflicting objectives and local economic interests, so that flood protection measures must always be evaluated. Technology assessment is therefore seen as a scientific practice. In its guidelines for technology assessment, the Association of German Engineers (VDI) states that the goal of all technical activity is to secure and improve human life opportunities. These are linked to values such as prosperity, health, safety and environmental quality (VDI, 2000).

The river Murr is a 51 km long tributary of the Neckar River and is considered as a "flood risk river" in Baden-Württemberg due to the narrow river catchment area. It flows westwards through the Rems-Murr district and further into the district of Ludwigsburg.

Fig. 1: **Catchment Area of the Murr River (tributary of the Neckar River) (Source: Wikimedia Commons)**



Flood protection is planned by local communities and the water authorities in the Rems-Murr County district and also in the Stuttgart regional council without public participation, so that civil society actors and the citizenry cannot really participate. The consequences are expensive and unsustainable planning concepts based on the model of purely technical solutions of the “security strategies” of the 1950s and 1960s, without their consequences being estimated. Floodplains and nearby river areas are still being built on for economic reasons, and thus ensure that the risks are passed on to the respective underlying municipalities and their citizens. Economic interests as well as social and environmental requirements for sustainable water management and urban development diverge widely.

The case-study presents a project to promote civil society and citizenship participation in Baden-Württemberg, elaborated by the Non-Governmental Organization “Environment and

Nature Conservation Association" (BUND) in 2018. The aim was to develop a science-based expertise on flood protection at the river Murr", sponsored by the state-ministry of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. Necessary was the support of a local community, which was carried out by the community of Steinheim/Murr in the county-district of Ludwigsburg. The results of the research answer questions about the acceptance of technical flood protection by environmental associations and affected citizens and demonstrate the far higher importance of ecologically sustainable solutions through measures of water retention in the area of the river basin Murr.

Fig. 2: Construction of Flood Walls on the Talstrasse in Backnang (Source: Photo by the author)

The so-called "Murrtal Water Association" -consisting of the communities Murrhardt, Sulzbach, Murr, Oppenweiler, and Backnang- was founded in 2008 to solve the flood problems of the river Murr. Following a 50-year flood event in 2011, the Rems-Murr County District made planning decisions in 2012 for intra-local flood protection measures for Oppenweiler, in 2015 for Backnang and Sulzbach/Murr. The seven flood retention basins to be built with first priority were deferred. The paradox is that in the same county, the planning on the river Rems is carried out without any internal measures and solved exclusively by flood retention basins (see Brunold 2013 and 2014).

Aspects of Citizenship Participation and Findings of the Investigation

A central component of the citizenship participation process was a standardized survey carried out by the author of this article and associated with workshops of the BUND and the NABU. The survey was carried out by a questionnaire in response to the massive internal measures of purely technical flood protection at the Murr, which now culminate in the "walling" in all

four communities of the “Murrtal Water Association”. The realization took place without any water retention or retention space compensation, so that in the meantime immense retention space losses of certainly more than 2 million cubic meters have occurred.

It is clear from this that the citizenry can often contribute greater knowledge and identification to neighbouring areas than many bureaucratic organizations, local authorities or even supervisory authorities are able to do (see Brunold, 2018). The survey on flood protection at the river Murr clearly shows this. Their results will be presented below.

After looking at the actual situation by environmental data and document analyses, the dangerous risks for the citizens were first identified in workshops. The consensus was that conventional community administrative action is no longer sufficient concerning the complexity of sustainable flood risk management. For example, citizen participation should not be at the end, but at the beginning of plan approval procedures, accompanied by the change from “enforcement communities” to “service and citizen communities”. Innovative concepts of municipal competence requirements could contribute in such a way that administrations develop themselves into learning organizations. The added value of municipal self-government lies in its public interest orientation and its democratic participation possibilities, which can further be developed into a “cooperative democracy” in the triangle between citizenship, municipal council and administration. The ideal objective would be a symbiotic relationship between civic and civil society and public administration, in order to strengthen civic participation in administrative procedures.

Ultimately, the results of the study can locally contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Reference points are Sustainable Development Goals No. 4 (Education), No. 11 (Sustainable Cities and Settlements) and No. 13 (Combating the Effects of Climate Change). The consequences of climate change can be demonstrated by the flood events which are intensifying in ever shorter intervals. This requires an equitable sharing of burdens of upper and lower riparians, as it can be seen by the flood risk maps of the State Institute for the Environment Baden-Württemberg. As a first result, it can be noted that the estimation of any measures taken by upper and lower riparians at the river Murr can contribute to influence the flood situation. This is considered “very plausible” by 56.3% of respondents and “plausible” by 28.1% of respondents (N = 32).

One objective of the investigation is to identify planning alternatives concerning the flood protection concepts and planning procedures of the water authorities. The latter shows that all community measures are preferred before the construction of flood retention basins in the exterior area, which, however, runs counter to the prohibition of deterioration in the Water Management Act in the national law. The planning of the Murrtal Water Association is based on a completely overhauled river basin survey from 2004. This was carried out - instead of using two or three-dimensional methods - with an inadequate one-dimensional non-stationary outflow calculation, which significantly distorts their results. This does not take into account the outflows of the numerous lateral waters of the Murr, so that - in view of further increasing development of settlements - an overall balance of the conditions is not available. The “EC Directive 2007/60/EG on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks” (EC-HWRL), which became law in 2007, turned European into German law through the updating of the Water Management Act in 2010 (Federal Ministry for the Environment, 2007). The reduced quality standards are now evident in particular in the flood hazard map from 2010, which has not been updated by the State Institute for the Environment Baden-Württemberg

and can actually be continued in a 6-year cycle. The binding deadline for updating the data by 22 December 2019 has passed.

Unfortunately, water authorities still tend to stick to the same reviewers, with almost no evaluation or certification. Compliance guidelines are also hardly taken into account. Instead, the "expertise" of the reviewers is usually taken over unaudited and confirmed. Thus, water authorities trust expensive and apparently technical feasibility rather than financially much cheaper solutions closer to nature, with the consequence, that with larger order volumes the fees of the engineering offices also increase. As a result of the externalization of environmental costs as well as subsequent care measures generated by the lack of technical impact assessments, new follow-up orders are thus always generated and further hazard risks and costs are generated.

Table 1. Key players in flood protection planning with multiple mentions (N=34)

Rank	Institutions or Actors	Frequency	Percent
1	Citizens' initiatives	25	73,5
2	Research institutes	22	64,7
3	Water associations	19	55,9
4	Water authorities	18	52,9
5	Citizens as individuals	17	50,0
6	Non-Governmental Organizations	17	50,0
7	Planning offices	10	29,4
8	Economic enterprises	2	5,9

The survey shows a loss of public confidence in public authorities. The question, which actors do have the greatest confidence in the planning of flood protection measures, state and municipal authorities and counties (6.3%) as well as municipal associations (6.3%) perform the worst - still behind affected citizens with experience (12.5%). Environmental associations with 50% and research institutes with 25%, on the other hand, have the highest confidence in the planning of flood protection measures (N = 32).

It was also asked which stakeholders should be involved in planning-processes. Here the skepticism of the citizens in comparison with the authorities is again evident. Citizens' initiatives (73.9%) and research institutes (64.7%) are considered to be the main players.

Investigation Results of the River Basin Area of the Murr

The land development in the river basin areas of the Murr show the unsustainable approaches of the technical flood protection concepts. In comparison with the years 1996 and 2016, it becomes clear whether the requirements of the Water Law Baden-Württemberg and the National Water Management Act according to § 5 and § 6 were taken into account when draining the settlement areas. Based on data from the Federal Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg, the land development of various municipalities in the Murr basin area are analyzed and evaluated:

Table 2. Land development in the river basin areas of the Murr from Murrhardt to Marbach

	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	Diff./S+V	1996	1996	1996	1996	1996
	EW	A/ha	F+LW	S+V	W	Ha	EW	A/ha	F+LW	S+V	W
Murrhardt	13953	7115	6214	829	43	**59**	14346	7114	6272	770	40
Sulzbach	5194	4012	3582	387	26	**28**	5015	4011	3610	359	23
Oppenweiler	4197	1980	1664	289	16	**41**	4081	1983	1710	248	15
Weissach i.T	7196	1413	1098	299	11	**14**	7028	1413	1113	285	10
Backnang	36633	3938	2722	1158	24	**71**	38000		2895	987	22
Aspach	8058	3545	3014	486	26	**113**	7960	3546	3151	373	13
Burgstetten	3653	1029	827	180	10	**24**	3267	1029	852	156	10
Kirchberg	3862	1321	1048	248	12	**42**	3657	1322	1092	206	12
Steinheim	12162	2318	1816	457	29	**47**	12446	2318	1838	410	30
Murr	6429	779	525	234	15	**52**	5432	778	572	182	15
Marbach	15682	1806	1298	448	29	**20**	13517	1806	1339	428	30

Legend: EW=Population, A/ha = Total area of the municipality, F = Forest areas + LW = Agricultural land, S + V = Settlement areas with traffic areas, W = Water surfaces, Diff./ S + V = Difference in Settlement areas from the years 2016 to 1996

With only small changes in the number of inhabitants from 1996 (EW 96) to 2016 (EW 16), a significantly high level of land consumption can be observed in all municipalities. This leads to significant losses in forest and agricultural land (F + LW) in opposite to settlement and transport development (S + V).

Within an area sealing (diff./S + V) between 14 and 113 hectares, the small increase in water areas in some municipalities of about 1 to 3 hectares cannot make a significant contribution to a balanced water balance or to the reduction of flood hazards there. The due diligence required in § 5 and § 6 of the National Water Management Act and consideration of the principles of water management is not respected in the area development by the common discharge principle of settlement drainage. In this respect, the investigation presented here, which also take into account the flood recovery areas in the area, go far beyond the Flood Hazard Maps, which are mainly exclusively orientated to the course of the river.

The discharge changes in the basin area of the Murr due to the area development in the respective municipalities are shown in the lower table. In the case of a 5-yearly rain event (according to KOSTRA-DWD grid data) in one second or in the case of a rain duration of 15 minutes, an average drain coefficient between traffic and settlement areas of 0.5 results in an additional drain of approximately 1 m3/sec. for an area of 10 hectares or 100 litres/sec. on an area of one hectare (German Weather Service 2018).

Table 3. Changes in outflows from Murrhardt to Marbach

City/ Community	**Murr-Hardt**	**Sulz-bach**	**Oppen-weiler**	**Weis-sach**	**Back-nang**	**Aspach**	**Burg-stetten**	**Kirch-berg**	**Stein-heim**	**Murr**	**Mar-bach**
Surface Sealing	+59ha	+28ha	+41ha	+14ha	+71ha	+113ha	+24ha	+42ha	+47ha	+52ha	+20ha
Discharge Coefficient	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5
Surcharge Factor	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1
Design Rainfall Lit./sec./ha	185,6	178,9,5	182,2	185,6	183,3	183,3	185,6	182,2,	180,0	180,0	184,4
Rain Duration/min.	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Frequency	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Increase Out-flow m^3/sec.	**6,18**	**2,93**	**4,29**	**1,47**	**7,44**	**11,84**	**2,51**	**4,40**	**4,92**	**5,45**	**2,10**
Increase Out-flow m^3/15min	**5562**	**2640**	**3865**	**1320**	**6694**	**10653**	**2263**	**3960**	**4431**	**4902**	**1886**

Legende: surface sealing, Difference of area development in the period 1996 bis 2016, discharge coefficient 0,5, Supplement factor for Climate 1,1, design rain following KOSTRA 2010R, set for a 5-year rain event with a duration of 15 minutes (German Weather Service 2018).

It is evident that the effects of surface sealing can be offset by the decentralized retention of surface effluents. Urgent requirements for the municipalities are needed here. Unfortunately, considerable hurdles still have to be overcome in order to implement such measures, because the specifications of the National Water Management Act and the requirements in developing plans for retention and leakage of surface drains are still too often restricted by the authorities. Furthermore, in the case of construction projects, the soils are usually classified as non-leachable without differentiated investigations in order to discharge the surface water produced according to the usual principles. A balanced municipal water balance should therefore be prescribed in accordance with the provisions of the water laws in river basins. By creating municipal outflow and retention room balances, decentralized and regional protection concepts could be developed, which can replace the expensive and urban non-aesthetic measures - as the example of Backnang shows.

On the basis of drainage and retention balances, it is thus possible to comply with the requirements of the water laws. The basics are available to the municipalities through the split surface sewage fee, so that the authorities could take into account the current data for an ecologically sustainable flood protection. According to the respondents, the increased flood risks at the river Murr are therefore mainly due to increasing surface sealing (76.5%) and more frequent and severe rainfall events (61.8%).

Table 4. Assessment of the main causes of increased flood risks at the river Murr (N=34)

Rank	Cause	Frequency	Percent
1	Surface sealing	26	76,5
2	More frequent and stronger rainfall events	21	61,8
3	Settlements	15	44.1
4	Climate change	15	44,1
5	Influencing the outflow cross-section	13	38,2
6	Agricultural development	10	29,4
7	Technical flood control	9	26,5
8	Waters removal	8	23,5

This finding is closely related to the assessment of technical flood protection, which is assessed as “less sustainable” to “unsustainable” with a total of 88.8% (N = 33). The question whether alternatives to technical flood protection are possible is answered in the affirmative by 87.5% of respondents (N = 32).

The environmental policy of the European Union (EU) aims at a high level of protection, based on the precautionary and polluter pays principle and based on the priority of addressing environmental impacts at their source. In view of the advancing European integration, it is evident that EU directive competence has an increasing influence on national laws, so that a steady process of adaptation to EU law has become the rule. The problem-solving pressure within the EU multi-level system has increased above all and is reinforced in policy areas where public common goods can no longer be fairly distributed within national borders or solved as problems, as is the case with flood protection. This can thus be regarded as a cross-sectional task within the interface between the EU and the nation state.

Table 5. Assessment of the effectiveness of precautionary flood protection measures (N=32)

Rank	Building measure	Frequency	Percent
1	Renaturation	16	50,0
2	Surface precaution	10	31,3
3	Technical flood control	3	9,4
4	Construction precaution	1	3,1
	Behavioral precaution	1	3,1
	Prevention of risk	1	3,1

Especially in order to overcome prisoner dilemmas and conflicts of goals between economics and ecology, public-interest regulations must be based on the insight that household systems are cyclical and dynamic in nature, whereas economic cycles are still perceived as linear and infinitely expandable.

When asked how important precautionary flood protection is in terms of increased flood risks, a total of 96.9% considered its relevance to be “very important” to “quite important” (N = 32). When assessing which measures are most effective for precautionary flood protection, 81.3% of the responses show that measures for restoration and land provision are preferred over technical solutions.

With this finding, the effectiveness of construction measures can be evaluated for a precautionary flood protection. It has been found that 75.0% of the responses favoured

measures to recover retention surfaces before the construction of technical retention solutions.

Table 6. Assessment of the effectiveness of precautionary flood protection measures (N=32)

Rank	Building measure	Frequency	Percent
1	Open flood surfaces	16	50,0
2	Dismantling of river banks	8	25,0
3	Constructing water-basins	6	18,8
4	Flood control polder	2	6,3

EU Flood Risk Management and its Municipal Implementation

The results of the study coincide with the solutions of flood risk management, according to which public-interest and locally effective regulations must be developed in accordance with EU requirements. Flood protection must therefore be seen as a Community task for the EU and for local authorities. Hereby it is necessary to find answers to questions of justice. Thus, typical Allmende clamps and prisoner dilemmas occur as a upper- and lower riparian problem, which poses problems for sustainable and common-good water management. A correction of administrative action in relation to misallocations of public subsidies and hence environmentally harmful subsidies is necessary in this field, since investments are always subject to interference with the natural water budget and to risk factors for a technology impact assessment. For example, local authorities would have to develop an awareness of the importance of collaborations for planning and implementing sustainable flood protection measures. Cooperation is based on the confidence that each local authority is committed to the implementation of water laws in its respective sphere of activity with the citizenry. Last but not least, the European regulations provide for public participation. The aim of the EU Flood Directive is therefore to establish a framework for the assessment and management of flood risks to reduce flood-related consequences, in particular on human health and the environment.

After an assessment of the flood risks (Art. 4) and the determination of the areas with potentially significant flood risk (Art. 5) had to take place on 22.12.2013, the creation of flood hazard and risk maps (Art. 6) on the part of the federal states was necessary. As of 22.12.2015, the development of flood risk management plans (Art. 7,8) as well as the assessment of flood risks and flood effects on human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic sustainability were required. The Flood Protection Act II, which entered into force on 05.01.2018, further strengthened the flood law regulations, as well as the need to take into account neighbouring concerns and update the Flood Hazard Maps until 22.12.2019 (German Bundestag 2017). In assessing the usefulness of flood risk management at EU level, this was considered “very useful” by a total of 31.3% of respondents and “sensible” by 50% (N = 34).

Table 7. Assessment of the flood protection regime at EU Level (N=34)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Very useful	10	31,3
Quite useful	16	50,0
Less useful	3	9,4
Not useful	3	9,4

The EU guidelines make it clear that a wide range of aspects of river basin areas must be coordinated. Thus, risk and retention space compensation as well as the National Water Management Act Regulations and the resulting deterioration prohibitions must be observed. However, in the federal sate of Baden-Württemberg municipalities are given opportunities by so-called “flood registers” to compensate lost retention spaces on the upstream of the same river. However, there is a risk of abuse by the way of exemptions, since the conditions that functionally no deterioration can occur is hardly to fulfill. Thus, the functionality of a “compensatory measure” created in 2017 in the "Upper Toswiesen" of the city of Backnang precludes the National Water Management Act prohibition on deterioration. The unlawful project “Annonaygarten” in Backnang (ZDF 2017) was an opportunity for their construction. This shows that conflicts of goales in flood protection planning are pre-programmed. 70.6% of respondents see “economic conflicts” in the foreground. 55.9% perceive “conflicts within administrative structures” as relevant, 41.2% recognize “environmental conflicts” and 35.3% fear “higher risks on the part of citizens” (N = 34).

Using the example of flood protection at the river Murr, it can be shown that ecologically sustainable and democratic action is necessary within the water authorities. 50.0% of the respondents consider the participation of citizens in water management procedures as “very important”, 31.3% as “important” (N = 32). Likewise, the need for early public participation in flood protection plans of 53.1% is classified as “very high” and 28.1% as “high” (N = 32).

69.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement that subsidies for flood protection at the river Murr can be harmful to the environment (N = 33). In this respect, environmentally harmful subsidies should be avoided there and ecologically sustainable solutions should be given preference instead (Brunold 2018). Unanimous consensus among the respondents was that any land use close to water bodies has an effect on flood events. As a counter-strategy, 63.6% of the respondents advocated the granting of subsidies for provision of land near water bodies (N = 33).

Technology Assessment and its Added Value for Flood Protection on the Murr

The Murr flood protection concept shows that environmental policy and municipal decision-makers are still taking paths that run counter to the public interest orientation to the common good and the principles of ecologically sustainable development paths. Here, the technology assessment should be included in order to identify ambivalences of “technical progress” and to develop scenarios of possible technological consequences at an early stage. Taking into account expert and civic participation procedures, it was possible to derive action alternatives to overcome misconceptions in the linear and post-care-oriented consideration of flood events as well as science-based findings of natural and water cycles. Last but not least, the syndrome concept can also be applied to flood risks occurring locally, regionally and across borders, which have their causes, above all else, also in rainfall induced and increased climate change processes. Closely related to this are - as already indicated - settlement activities in the respective river basin areas, which, inter alia, impair the leaching capacity of the soils, accelerate the water outflow or tend to destroy retention areas.

The forecast scenarios of the Flood Hazard Maps therefore reflect the consequences of technical flood protection, which, with the associated destruction of retention spaces, tend to increase the potential for danger. In view of this practice, Flood Hazard Maps are already outdated on the day of their publication. In this respect, the highly calculated dangers in Flood

Hazard Maps can only be comprehensibly delineated to a limited extent, so that future forecasts for technology assessments harbour uncertainties in knowledge and assessments, which are to be kept open, inter alia, through transparent democratic debates (Grunwald, 67 f.).

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Building Bridges Between Generations through the Valorisation of Cultural Heritage. Why and How Children Learn to Love People by Looking at their Objects[1]

Sandra Chistolini[2]

Abstract

Primary school children from two European cities, Leipzig and Rome, participate in an experimental project to promote active education using objects collected in museums and pedagogical collections. The aim is to investigate how and why children learn to live well together using objects collected by scientists. The main investigative hypothesis assumes the value of children's narratives that connect generations through the possibility of touching objects. The instrumental significance of human interaction is demonstrated as a means of producing the social awareness necessary for common well-being. From a methodological point of view, the qualitative study of experiential processes makes it possible to redefine the concept of culture by showing the transformations of knowledge fed by narrated facts and collected things. In the experience of group interaction, children's historical and social learning is defined with the acquisition of skills and competences that place objects in a specific space and time with the contextualization of knowledge and emotions. The research leads to an understanding of how the passing of gifts from grandmothers, mothers and grandchildren fosters the formation of community identity and educates feelings of respect for carefully preserved testimonies. Analysis of the data collected reveals the cognitive, emotional, ethical, and aesthetic characteristics of the experiences that restructure ways of thinking about oneself and others, fostering the construction of strong solidarity and deep belonging.

Keywords: Generations, Dialogue, Cultural Heritage, Solidarity, Belonging

Introduction

Social heritage is considered to be a kind of inheritance that is passed from generation to generation with the declared purpose of collecting cultural heritage goods that human societies consider valuable and for this reason feel it is indispensable not to disperse, and which they rather wish to preserve and protect (Scalcione, 2021, p. 201). The products of human culture are at the origin of the processes of identity and belonging of the individual and the group to the wider society. The consideration of cultural heritage looms large as the sedimentation of a set of things that are an integral part of existence (Di Berardo, 2018, pp. 178-179). These are fixed and mobile things that are affected by continuous interpretations over time and places of hospitality, and which are as much enriched as they are made problematic by the nature of interventions progressively arranged according to logics of internal coherence between parts, forms, contexts, structures. Within the environment in which the cultural heritage is preserved, cognitive processes arise in which everyone learns to recognize common cultural roots.

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Chistolini, S. (2024). Building Bridges Between Generations through the Valorisation of Cultural Heritage. Why and How Children Learn to Love People by Looking at their Objects. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 64-75. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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The realization of this experience of close interaction between things, people and the environment can be described as social heritage in the sense of the integration of cultural goods into society and access to cultural goods in society. The distinction between tangible culture (Burkhart, 2006; De la Peña, 2007; Brewer & Fritzer, 2011; Sweetman et al., 2020) and intangible culture (Xia et al., 2024) of social heritage collects interesting studies that deepen the educational impact of the introduction of heritage in the school curriculum, especially in art education (Alvarez et al., 2023). The Council of the European Union (2014) defines cultural heritage as a strategic resource in the Europe of sustainability and emphasizes its connection to the past in all its forms:

> Cultural heritage consists of the resources inherited from the past in all forms and aspects - tangible, intangible and digital (born digital and digitized), including monuments, sites, landscapes, skills, practices, knowledge and expressions of human creativity, as well as collections conserved and managed by public and private bodies such as museums, libraries and archives. It originates from the interaction between people and places through time and it is constantly evolving. These resources are of great value to society from a cultural, environmental, social and economic point of view and thus their sustainable management constitutes a strategic choice for the 21st century (The Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 36).

This article considers the material culture represented by objects that bear witness to the school of a century ago and that primary school children observe today and use, developing meaningful reflections in the construction of intergenerational ties.

Social Heritage and the Sharing of Material Culture

The integration of the products of culture in society refers to the valorization of what human groups, associations, communities, schools, institutions, ethnic groups, organizations produce as objects considered to be the concrete manifestation of their existence, in terms of values, traditions, experiences, conceptions. These objects become an integral part of society when they enter collections and museums and can be known and admired by all, both by those who made them and those who observe them for the first time and begin a process of exploratory approach. In this sense, we speak of public access of society to cultural heritage.

These two moments (a) the inclusion of objects in collections and museums, and (b) the public access of goods are at the heart of the evolution of material culture into cultural heritage to be managed in society as another form of public participation (Council of Europe, 2005, pp. 1-9; van den Akker & Legêne 2016, pp. 7-12). However, the whole identity journey comprises two other moments: an initial and a final one. The initial moment is the one in which, for different reasons, the creation of products takes place, and the final moment is the one in which the sharing takes place, which we call civic education, and which represents the pedagogical goal achieved as a result of the occasions of contact with things in museums (Schorch, 2013, p. 78).

Creation, integration, access, sharing are the four distinctive moments that characterize the experience of cultural heritage. The experience thus articulated leads to the formation of an awareness of the intrinsic value of things that become part of material culture, through deliberative and intentional decision-making acts.

The conception of a cultural heritage preserved in the museum is complemented by the conception of a social heritage as a shared good in which each person recognizes part of his or her own biography and learns to feel united with others in the community in which he or

she lives. Cultural heritage helps to strengthen social cohesion as it promotes responsibility and democratic participation of the population. Collected and preserved cultural heritage can be observed by school pupils during cultural visits, with observation followed by narration about the experience if necessary. The exhibited goods are usually neatly arranged and viewed from a distance and the experience is often indirect.

In the participatory social heritage of material culture, the condition of learning is reversed because the objects come out of the box and are the occasion of suggestion for a new and free, self-created, self-imagined experience. The effect is not known upstream of the experience. The effect, understood as a deliberative consequence, derives from the situation and since each experience is unique to the person experiencing it, we are forced to observe it from scratch by examining the manifestation of human interaction with the cultural thing procured.

Culture Between Concept and Meaning

Tylor's (1871, pp. 1-2) definition of culture continues to fuel an articulate debate by scholars from various disciplines and schools of thought. Ratnapalan (2008) points out how behind Tylor was Lubbock's (1870, pp. 31-33) theory of human development, and how both found in archaeological material first and folkloric material later the route to inspiration in 19th century studies. In this contest, Ratnapalan writes: 'Whereas Lubbock's ideas about human civilization were organized on the basis of the materials of archaeological research, Tylor also made use of sources that were more difficult to classify in material terms. It was the newer forms of evidence provided by collectors of folklore and popular customs that inspired him to think about the continuity of cultural beliefs and practices from one historical epoch into another' (2008, p. 132).

Tylor's wide-ranging and all-encompassing perspective prevails the thesis of the continuity of cultures in almost mechanical forms of historical evolution, without detracting from the originality of individual manifestations, which are typical and unique in their context of realization. Knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, morals, customs and every other skill and habit learnt by man in society was at the time considered a culture of civilization. Ethnography entrusted learning in society with the origin of culture and gave an exquisitely pedagogical imprint to the production of objects, both spiritual and material (Tentori, 1972, p. IX; Rossi, 1970, pp. XI-XII).

The systematic and taxonomic need to place culture within the specific disciplinary framework appears decisively with the study on the concept of culture by Kluckhohn and Kroeber (1952, pp. 78-105). Culture is also made up of artefacts, and the handmade things to which we attribute value enter museums to help us look at the past and recontextualize it by making the object the excuse for creating our own specific meanings of what the object originates in us.

On the one hand, according to Ford (1937), culture is about how man produces and uses artefacts. Artefacts are data of culture; they are not themselves culture. Hence the relationship to the environment in which artefacts are produced. On the other hand, according to Rouse (1939), the method requires special attention and therefore develops a theory of structuring concepts with the use of materials. Culture is not in the artefacts. In fact, the objects themselves are not cultural, instead the relationship between them and

those who use them is cultural, hence the focus on the method of attributing meaning, acting on the artefacts. The keys to meaning are the concepts, ideas, interpretations of factors and forms that the researcher examines in particular space-time conditions, constructing the typologies of cultural materials.

The Pedagogical Value of Objects

In the 19th century, the concept of culture provoked a broad scientific debate in the field of the humanities, from ethnology to archaeology, from anthropology to history, directly affecting the discourse of the social sciences in their relationship with the natural sciences, with regard to the reasons for structuring knowledge within delimited boundaries. Pedagogy and the educational sciences have been affected above all by the influence exerted by the contents of culture on education and the entire training process. The original legitimization underwent extensive transformations in the 20th century in conjunction with the development of empirical research and access to a less universal and more circumscribed concept of culture.

Culture rigidly codified in academic definitions and its artefacts classified and stored in museums broke the mold by overturning the point of view of scientific observation. The classic themes of introducing young people to the goods of culture (Kerschensteiner, 1917, pp. 11-30) charged with universal value and viaticum for civic education return as a pedagogical metadiscourse on environmental sustainability. Teacher Rosa Agazzi's museum (1923, p. 12) of the early 20th century, made from the junk collected by children, contained the need to participate in a human design of adherence to the world of things extrapolated from everyday life taken as fundamental for creating identity and responsibility, a sense of belonging and imaginative faculties.

Objects found in the present useful to talk about the past, but above all objects touched, manipulated to play, taste, feel, imagine, invent. The protagonism of the child in the new schools, without desks, and with many practical workshops, as at the Rinnovata Pizzigoni in Milan (Pizzigoni, 1929, p. 10), had been inaugurated by the Ligue Internationale de l'éducation Nouvelle in Calais in 1921 (Lucisano & Marzano, 2022, p. 15), challenged the rigidity of the short thought of the class closed in on itself (Ferrière, 1920, pp. 20-40) and produced the new school culture, a culture by definition material, because at school one teaches with things, with the blackboard, the notebook, the book, the inkwell, the drawing and above all one has direct experience of life (Chistolini & Atehortúa-Cru, 2023a, p. 91).

The following study is part of ongoing research with the University of Leipzig (Germany), conducted within the framework of the project entitled ‘Bildung und Objekte: Historische Sachlernprozesse in schulbezogenen Sammlungen’ (Wagner, 2022, pp. 83-104), i.e. ‘Education and Objects. Historical material learning processes in school collections'. The recently completed collection of children's interactions in the Leipzig School Museum and the Pizzigoni Collection in Rome.

The Pizzigoni Fund to Rediscover a Forgotten Pedagogy

The collection of pedagogical material in the Pizzigoni Fund, kept since 2001 at the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Roma Tre, allows us to understand the experimental method of the educator Giuseppina Pizzigoni (1870-1947) and opens up

new perspectives of study and research for a better actualization of the teaching plan launched in Italy at the beginning of the 20th century.

Research into the interaction between objects and those who observe and manipulate them questions the value of meaningful learning about the object as part of a context in which the historical and philosophical conditions of our existence in the world are created. It is precisely through the objects preserved that children who visit the Pizzigoni Fund learn to re-motivate their commitment to the school and willingly come into contact with the life of past generations, with their peers who lived over a hundred years ago and who, thanks to their teachers, are able to hand on an imperishable witness to the present generations.

As Denzin (1993, 184) observes, qualitative research on the interaction between subjects who experience play, invention, and imagination with specific objects at the same time has the researcher as the participating protagonist who observes in order to bring out the meaning from objects transmitted from one century to the next. Alongside the researcher, the children are oriented to listen to the narratives that spring from things and become sensitive to what is transmitted with a materiality from which the vital spirit of the human person and his or her community springs.

The Ethnographic Research Methodology

The contribution of pedagogy to the delimitation of the concept of material culture allows us to differentiate the categories of analysis and interpretation on the role of objects in the growth of the awareness of belonging to a common cultural heritage. The intersection of the historical perspective with the experiential perspective leads to favoring the qualitative ethnographic investigation, which is considered the most coherent with respect to the study assumptions of proximity-distance between moving generations.

From the ethical-value plane we move to the plane of lived experience in which the object acquires meaning within a defined learning environment. The subjects who live the experience are the same ones who narrate it, providing the cognitions to understand what happens in the construction of the social meaning of the interaction with the object.

Starting from the pedagogy of the Pizzigoni Renewed School and the sedimentation of culture that originated from it, we can highlight the continuity of both the systematic need, present in scientific studies of various kinds, and the lived experience in the educational context. The ethnographic narrative provides the necessary documentation to describe and interpret the interaction provoked by selected objects in the pedagogical collections used with children.

Finally, we reflect on the benefits brought by the interaction of the person with objects counted in the social cultural heritage to the study of childhood learning processes. It is assumed that the benefits found in historical understanding, social awareness and in empathic and emotional relationships will have significant repercussions in children in terms of the formation of their mental structures and grafting into the mechanisms of prefiguration of the future.

Interaction with objects is not a foregone conclusion, it requires at least three basic building blocks: 1) the availability of school objects; 2) the possibility of touching objects; 3) the practice of pupils' interaction with objects. Given these premises, the problem necessarily arises of the pedagogical methodology to be followed to answer the question of meaning as to why, how and when a new material culture is created in contexts in which elements, objects, products belonging to known museums and defined collections are present.

In Dewey's (1944, pp. 23-52) reflection on the value of experience in education, it is emphasized how the earliest experience connects to new experiences, and vice versa, integrates the various experiences in a context so as to prepare the logical structuring of thought. As a matter of fact, experiences develop continuously, increase individual capacities, introduce new experiences, graft learning. The world in motion is the premise of the methodology that studies the situational interaction of a specific group of pupils (Giglio, Arcidiacono 2017, pp. 1-11) invited to actively participate in the re-appropriation of existing culture and transform it in the present.

Hands-On and Active Learning

The construction of the conceptual structure is the scientific operation with which the need to classify objects found by archaeology and placed by historians according to chronological sequences is always met. According to Mannoni (2002, p. 415), know-how is the result of the transmission of knowledge contained in material culture. Learning means setting in motion that manual dexterity with which the mind forms concepts both general, about the product and its uses, and particular, about production processes. Concepts make us think, allow us to seek solutions and help us design the way to use the object or artefact by posing new questions and advancing the resolution. The study of this know-how originating in material culture could broaden the human mind's knowledge of the past, while with respect to the future it could bring new solutions to scientific and existential problems, making motivations, meanings, belonging flourish again. Human behavior is linked to material culture and is not independent of the objects we use for various functions.

Warnier (1999) proposes a theory of material culture based on materiality concretized and visible in sign systems born in the movement defined within a field of subjectivation. Studies conducted in various disciplines sometimes tend to overlook the materiality of culture in relation to the sensory-motor conduct of the active subject. The contributions of a semiological nature by R. Barthes; structuralist by Douglas; cognitivist by Conein; historian of F. Braudel; sociologist of T. Veblen; dialectical materialist of Marx; technological of Leroi-Gourhan would have the limit, always according to Warnier, of not thinking with the fingers and of pushing materiality to the margins, which instead should be recovered not in schemes and representations, but as a subject that moves and feels, and understands how objects are incorporated in his person, they shape his identity; objects are not external, they do not appear casually, they are part of his perception.

Intergenerational Communication

In 21st-century intercultural pedagogy, the concept of ‘cultures in interaction’ encompasses the material and immaterial that the social subject produces with others and communicates in an intergenerational relationship experienced in different contexts in which the experience

of doing together promotes positive dynamics of inclusion and participation (Lapov, 2019, pp. 75-91).

It is unanimously agreed that material culture includes artefacts as much as experiences, tools as much as techniques. However, in addition to the definition of what to include in material and immaterial culture, it is relevant to understand what to do with the elements characterizing that semantic universe. In museums and collections, human products are arranged and catalogued. The common experience is that those products are so precious that they cannot be touched, they remain distant from the observer. The transition to the interactive museum is not always possible as it requires considerable investment, together with resources that are sometimes difficult to have at one's disposal.

In German universities, the teaching called *Sachunterricht* in primary school combines elements of history, geography, science and civic education, which in practice are accompanied by objects with which students prepare their own teaching projects. There is a lot of material available, and it is well stored in specific bookcases for workshops and group work. The material is varied and does not belong to museums or collections. In this way, unlike Italian universities, the teacher's training involves the acquisition of design skills with concrete objects tested in university classrooms and evaluated in the academic curriculum. The difference is relevant from the point of view of the culture of manual dexterity from which theoretical knowledge is accessed through doing with one's hands what one thinks. The student who is theoretically and practically prepared to use the material could develop a flexible mindset and could easily conduct experiments on objects of various origins. This intellectual and practical apprenticeship is fundamental to move from the idea of an observed museum to the idea of a created museum.

In the case of the Italian university, in order to respond to this gap between preparation for the use of objects and connection with the material assets preserved in specific places, such as museums and collections, we are proposing pedagogical experiences of artistic heritage appreciation in outdoor education contexts in which classes of pupils aged 3 to 18 years receive outdoor lessons in direct contact with an architectural work of the past and then elaborate on their knowledge and experience at school with the production of artistic objects that are varied in terms of techniques and means (Chistolini, 2023b).

Elements of the Experiment with Primary School Pupils

In the experiment with 100 nine-year old pupils of the fourth grade of a primary school on the outskirts of Rome, Italy, carried out between March and September 2023, the comparative study on the children's interactions with objects was conducted and observations on the learning process were recorded, with particular attention to the historical reminders that the objects elicited. The researchers' question was: “How do children learn to participate in historical and social culture through interaction with objects?”.

The three starting hypotheses concerned: a) the similarity between past ethnographic studies and the graphic representations of the pupils; b) the continuity between past and present as the construction of meaningful links between people from different eras; c) the sedimentation of the memory of the lived experience during the experimentation.

With respect to the first hypothesis, it was assumed that it was possible to find examples of children's drawings that resembled the engravings found in prehistoric caves (Lubbock, 1870,

p. 32). In both cases, in the cave and in the children's drawings, the graphic representation of life is stylised and symbolic, hinted at and the figures are essential with group situations in which the depiction of the natural environment prevails, of play and work, of the tools used daily, with no difference in gender, the kindergarten children's drawings of the 1961-62 school calendar (Bertuzzi & Chistolini, 2012) are reminiscent of the engravings found in caves as prehistoric work, and vice versa, the prehistoric engravings show similarities with the drawings of younger children.

In the second hypothesis, the continuity and discontinuity between past and present emerged. In the school of a century ago, children marked time with a calendar made by hand by them, just as is the case today in kindergartens, so the scanning of months, weeks, days and the representation of daily events was of interest then as it is today, and learning about chronological time is a focal point in the teaching of the various eras. To this continuity, children juxtaposed the discontinuity between past and present schooling when interacting with puppets (Chistolini, 2022). In the school of the past, children could have fun and tell stories with puppets, today these objects are no longer present in our schools. The same discontinuity is registered in the listening to the sound of the birds reproduced by instruments that no child knew and would never have expected to find in the experimentation space (see Figure 1), again the object of the past leads to a new experience that makes one reflect on the differences between the school of long ago and the school of today.

Figure 1 Interaction with pedagogical objects

The children associate the sound of the instrument with the image of the bird and reflect on the differences between the school of the past and their own school.

In the third hypothesis, the distinguishing feature was the memory that consolidates the lived experience during the interaction with the objects. After the interaction with the objects the children returned to school and continued to talk about the experience, when asked to represent a drawing and write a narrative of the experience, in all cases the persistence of the pleasant and meaningful memory was noted, with the request to repeat the experience of the interaction with the objects at school.

The three hypotheses were confirmed during the children's interaction with the objects. Similarity, continuity and memory describe the learning process of the historical fact. The researchers were able to conclude that interaction with objects had a positive effect on experiential learning. The children established an affective relationship with the context and with the people to whom the objects had belonged and asked questions about the similarity and closeness of the stored objects to similar objects and experiences experienced in the

present, A sense of respect and love was born for objects previously unknown and now appreciated.

Months later, the children remembered the objects and the teachers reported that, on several occasions, the children made connections between the present situations and the experience of the interaction months earlier.

Conclusions

The knowledge generated by ethnographic research concerns the field in which the researcher invests his imagination. The relationship between society and culture investigates an ever-changing process, and ethnography has the merit of accessing the process and understanding its most diverse human manifestations. Ethnography is a way of thinking of the researcher that is genuinely open to social research, it is unconventional and exposed to the risk of contemporary complexity that affects the results, it is empathic because it seeks to understand the emotions of others. The three principles of thinking of process, of empathy, described by Mills and Morton (2013, pp. 3-4), are a fundamental call for the contemporary researcher in pedagogy.

Instead of the traditional concept of evolution of the species (Lamarck 1809; Darwin 1859), which has also influenced the social sciences, we find the concept of development more suited to the ethnomethodology of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969; Denzin 1970, 259-284) and grounded theory (Glaser, Strass 1967). Development in pedagogy means the study of the human person growing together with others using the creations of collective culture. In every moment of everyday life, we interact with the things in the environment in which we find ourselves, in every precise existential situation. Development is an ascending parabola formed by things, words, impressions, emotions, materialized thoughts that are communicated in the occasions of interaction between several subjects.

When the interactive experience is lived, the subjects have no awareness of the development process, only in the monitoring phase does the researcher-observer detect actions and attribute meanings.

According to the dynamic process of our reflection, the actions that the researcher introduces are observation of the child's unthinking; concentration on the material culture; interpretation of the detectable meanings; scientific restitution. The constant in human history is the human being and his interaction with material culture. In this developmental process, the distinctive phases are a) the finding of artefacts and objects; b) the creation of meaning; c) interaction; d) learning in different situational contexts. The operational subject is the small group of the school class oriented towards the specific interest of a thematic finding.

Cultural heritage objects from museums, collections, the territory educate children and adolescents in historical thinking and civic-social sense. Each object becomes an opportunity to recognize the value of what has been passed down through the generations to the point where a profound sense of gratitude is instilled in the youngest. For this ethical reason, it is necessary to make cultural heritage a highly usable asset for schools, by including it in vertical curricula, from childhood to secondary school. The experience of the object to be rediscovered creates the lasting bonds between parents, children, grandchildren and by

extension leads to the protection of what mankind creates and preserves in order to remember, understand, safeguard and then continue towards new developments.

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Intercultural Communication of Greek Civil Servants: A Bridge towards Social Change and an Empowered Citizenry[1]

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Abstract

Intercultural Communication (IC) is very important for an effectual civil service in Greece, a society now characterized by increased cultural diversity. This study attempts to explore the state of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) in the Greek public sector, by studying its impact on societal transformation and citizen empowerment. The study is based on a combined qualitative and quantitative research framework, which attempts to analyze the ICC of Greek civil servants, while determining strong areas, as well as those in need of improvement. The theoretical framework is based on the models and theories of Hall, Hofstede, Ting-Toomey, Bennett, and Gile. The findings highlight the significant role of ICC as a common principle for governance models that can be used to overcome the major problems encountered by social cohesion in Greece. We discuss challenges such as the plethora of languages and bureaucratic obstacles, illustrated for their effect on access and availability, as well as the quality of services provided. In the context of policies, the training programs should be capable of indicating the proper way to cultivate ICC among civil servants. IC skills and the adoption of culturally responsive policies that accommodate diverse citizen needs are recommended for inclusion into professional development curricula. Through the improvement of its civil servants with regard to ICC, Greek Public Administration can more effectively address the growing needs of its diverse population by enhancing the good provision of services and the prosperity of the community. This, in turn, will aid at the current process of the country on its path to cultural stability and social cohesion.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Greek Civil Servants, Social Change, Empowered Citizenry, Mixed-Methods Research

Introduction

Intercultural Communication (IC) is the primary mechanism through which individuals from different cultural backgrounds exchange information, experiences, comprehend each other's perspectives, and interpret meanings. Hall coined the term in 1959, defining IC as the communication between individuals from different cultures (Chaney & Martin, 1995). In public administration, IC is not only a theoretical concept but a practical necessity, critical for civil servants to navigate and interact effectively and appropriately in multicultural environments. It refers to a fundamental skillset for ensuring equitable service delivery and simultaneously promoting social cohesion, and empowered citizenry.

Greece has historically been a hub of cultural exchange. In recent decades, the country has experienced significant demographic shifts due to immigration and refugee flows. This

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Thanopoulou, D., Spinthourakis, J. A., & Karras, I. (2024). Intercultural Communication of Greek Civil Servants: A Bridge towards Social Change and an Empowered Citizenry. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 76-93. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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continued population diversification has made the ability of Greek civil servants to engage in effective IC pivotal.

Effective communication is crucial for service delivery and governance ın the public administration sector. Every 21st organization century must raise awareness among its personnel, and especially managers, regarding the impact of culture on job performance (Knap-Stefaniuk & Sorribes, 2021). IC enhances the ability of civil servants to understand, respect, and manage cultural differences among citizens, thereby ensuring that Greek Public Administration (GPA) services are accessible to all and responsive to diverse needs. Interculturally competent civil servants can mitigate misunderstandings, reduce barriers to access, and cultivate a climate of trust and inclusivity within communities.

In a deeper sense, Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) encompasses aspects of social integration and community development, as civil servants possessing strong ICC competencies can better deal with marginalized or underrepresented groups, advocate for inclusive policies, and facilitate processes that promote social equity and justice. This enhances the overall effectiveness and legitimacy of public organizations in addressing complex societal challenges.

This paper attempts to examine how well these ICC skills are currently accumulated in Greek Public Administration (GPAd) which is based on our assessment through qualitative insights and quantitative data. Another objective is acknowledging the change on a societal level. The results reveal how improved ICC may bring about a positive impact on a societal level such as the inclusion of new communities and the diminishment of cultural barriers. Moreover, it focuses on proposing practical strategies and recommendations for the improvement of Greek civil servants' ICC, emphasizing training programs, policy adjustments, and institutional support.

By addressing these objectives, this paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on ICC in public administration, offering insights according to the unique socio-cultural context of Greece. It seeks to provide not just solutions but a valuable reflection on the matters and a roadmap for the advancement of ICC in public administration.

Literature Review

Intercultural Communication Competence in Public Administration in Greece

ICC is increasingly recognized as indispensable in public administration, particularly in diverse societies such as Greece. Developing IC skills and multicultural harmony allows civil servants to improve their effectiveness in providing services to the changing populations of society (Nikolaou & Spinthourakis, 2006). Below, we explore the significance of ICC, relevant theories, challenges specific to the Greek public sector, and implications for policy and practice.

Theories and Models of Intercultural Communication

Several theoretical frameworks provide insights into ICC. Hall (1976) categorizes cultures according to communication styles, distinguishing between implicit (high context) and explicit (low context) communication. "High context" cultures rely on non-verbal cues and the surrounding context to convey meaning. Low context cultures are based on direct verbal communication. Understanding these differences can help public servants modify their communication strategies to better serve in multicultural communities. Greece is considered

a high context culture and, as such, people largely focus on relationship-building rather than explicit rules, prioritizing interpersonal relationships. Greeks focus on building relationships among partners, with the aim more to establish business-relationships than to paying attention to guidance through rules (Papalexandris & Chalikias, 2002).

Core differences in cultural values shape varying communication patterns within a society (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede's (1980) Cultural Dimensions Theory addresses such differences, including though not limited to power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long term vs short term orientation, and indulgence vs restraint. Understanding, for example, the importance of power distance dimension may really help civil servants manage hierarchical relationships more effectively in different cultural contexts.

Under the scope of intercultural sensitivity, Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) highlights different stages of sensitivity from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. This model facilitates understanding how people progress concerning their ability to appreciate and adapt to cultural differences (Bennett, 1986). Civil servants can be trained to be more adept at handling cultural differences in their workplace, by cultivating their intercultural sensitivity using this model or others like it.

Ting-Toomey's (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1988) theory explains how cultures deal with conflicts maintaining the crucial role of face through communication strategies, highlighting cultural diversification in conflict styles. There are examples in public administration where conflicts appear merely due to cultural misunderstanding. By utilizing face negotiation principles, civil servants may resolve conflicts more effectively, maintaining positive relationships with diverse stakeholders.

Public servants equipped with strategies to manage anxiety and uncertainty can interact more confidently and competently with people from different cultural backgrounds, improving the overall quality of public service. In his Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM), Gudykunst (1995) tackles emotions and insecurities in intercultural communication closely affected by values and communicative competence, related to both cultural and non-cultural factors in his empirical observations.

Flexing the tone of message delivery in order to exhibit greater efficiency in the environment is especially important in communication, especially when dealing with people of different cultural backgrounds. Giles and Soliz's (2015) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) delves into how individuals adjust their communication styles to suit other people. This includes changes in language and behavior based on specific cultural differences.

Significance of ICC in Greek Public Administration

ICC encompasses the cognitive, emotional and the behavioral skills called for to enhance intercultural communication skills (Byram, 1997). In the spheres of public administration, high ICC among civil servants may be translated into enhancement of the service delivery to diverse populations, fostering social inclusion and cohesion (Deardorff, 2006; Jandt, 2017). In the social context of shifting immigration and other changes to the country's population mix, Greece faces unique challenges that underscore the critical need for the enhancement of ICC.

From this perspective, we investigate IC in public administration as a reinforcement for social integration, beyond merely meeting the basic survival needs of immigrants. Effective IC

enhances civil servants' ability to understand and respond appropriately to the needs of different populations. This not only improves the effectiveness and fairness of service delivery processes but also addresses the social integration aspects of population by fostering mutual understanding and respect (Kim, 2001). As Greece continues to receive immigrants from various cultural backgrounds, the development of ICC among public servants becomes even more crucial.

The Impact of Migration on Greece

Greece's strategic geographical location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa has historically positioned it as a significant point of entry for immigrants and refugees. Immigrants arriving in Greece originate from neighboring countries, the Middle East, and various parts of Africa. They are driven by diverse motivations including economic prospects, asylum-seeking due to conflict or persecution, or seeking refuge from other dire circumstances.

Waves of migration, intensified by the economic crisis of the late 2000s and subsequent geopolitical developments, have profoundly impacted the country's demographic landscape. Concurrently, Greece suffered an ongoing, severe economic and political crisis, which shaped public attitudes towards migration and significantly hindered their integration into the Greek labor market (Triandafyllidou, 2014) and society in general. On the one hand, the long-term settled immigrant population altered the ethnic demographic composition of both the citizenry and resident population, which has become increasingly socioeconomically integrated, following Greece's economic stabilization in 2018 (Triandafyllidou & Gemi, 2018). Recently arrived populations primarily comprised of asylum seekers, on the other hand, continue to live in precarious conditions, despite efforts to stabilize and integrate them (Triandafyllidou & Gemi, 2018).

The great influx of immigrants and refugees introduced a notable cultural diversity to Greek society, reforming social dynamics and challenging traditional norms. Cholezas and Tsakloglou (2008) note the presence of an accumulated number of immigrants, including a significant number of what is commonly referred to as the undocumented workers. This demographic shift reveals prospects and threats within the social entity of the labor market. It necessitates a re-evaluation of how public services are conceived and delivered. This, in turn, requires public servants to adapt their practices to effectively address the complex needs that such communities present.

The challenges faced by civil servants in such circumstances are mainly associated with linguistic and cultural differences, which can hinder communication and understanding between service providers and recipients. Difficulties concerning bureaucratic procedures and having access to essential services can be particularly demanding, especially for immigrants who are still unfamiliar with the functionalities of the Greek system. Such challenges only emphasize the importance of ICC among civil servants. Indeed, ICC enables the bridging of cultural gaps, facilitating access to services and ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all residents.

The presence of diverse populations in Greece, however, may also create opportunities for societal enrichment and economic growth. According to most findings, immigrants and refugee populations appear to foment both advantageous and disadvantageous economic shifts (Cholezas & Tsakloglou, 2008). Cultural diversity can introduce new skills, perspectives

and contributions to community life and the workforce, reinforcing well cultural exchange and broader social integration.

In response to these demographic changes, various policies either governmental or non-governmental have been implemented to support integration efforts. From the perspective of diverse populations, language courses, cultural orientation programs, employment support and legal assistance services are included in the above initiatives to help immigrants and refugees integrate and positively contribute to Greek society.

Multicultural populations in Greece have posed challenges and opportunities, while also reinforcing cultural enrichment and economic revitalization. Under the scope of GPAd, effective adaptation and implemented policies are critical for promoting social cohesion aimed at maximizing the potential benefits of demographic diversity in Greece. The importance of ICC in public administration in fostering effective service delivery within diverse societal contexts simply cannot be overstated.

Importance of ICC in Public Administration

Public administration is a cornerstone of governance. As such, it must adapt to the alternating societal needs. Blesset (2016) points out that effective administration entails the ability to understand and engage with diverse populations. Norman-Major and Gooden (2012) describe cultural competence as integral to effective administration, crucial for adequate service delivery. Cram and Alkadry (2018) further emphasize that cultural competence is a prerequisite for managers to effectively relate to clients and enhance service delivery. The Network of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), which strives to furnish learners with necessary skills to interact productively with diverse workforces, fostering respect, fairness and equity, recognizes the role of cultural competence for the transformation of public service delivery (NASPAA, 2014). Egan and Bendick (2008) point out that visible and invisible aspects of cultural diversity may significantly improve organizational processes and outcomes. Hence, the development of public organizations from viewing diversity through its enriching potential highlights a better understanding of cultural diversity (Selden & Selden, 2001).

IC Management in Public Administration

Effective IC management concerning public administration facilitates collaboration across diverse cultural landscapes, influencing the achievement of organizational goals (Lylyk, 2021). Intercultural management plays an important role in global organizations (Aguzzoli & Geary, 2014). Indeed, the application of intercultural principles is crucial for fostering effective cooperation among employees from different cultural backgrounds. Under the scope of public administration, employees share a common subculture which is defined by administrative practices, obligations and rights, despite not belonging to the same business unit (Bailey et al., 2017; Beugelsdijk et al., 2018).

Historically, the Unified Code of Civil Servants in Greece, a law of 1951 amended by Law 3528 of 2007, aimed to standardize the behavior of civil servants (Government Gazette, 1951; 2007). It was not until July 2022 that developments such as the issuance of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Public Sector Employees, highlighted the role and importance of ethical behavior, respect, and cooperation within GPAd (Ministry of the Interior, 2022).

Article 107 of Law 3528 in 2007 regarding disciplinary provisions underlines breaches of misconduct and duty, without any special reference to behavioral competencies concerning cultural competence or emotional intelligence (Government Gazette, 2007). The aforementioned framework, however, lacks more specific guidelines concerning the enhancement of ICC through targeted training and skill development.

Despite regulatory constraints, there is a clear imperative to integrate ICC into public administration training and development programs. Evidence suggests that these competencies can be learned and developed over time, through structured experiences and deliberate reflection (Beamer, 1992; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Intercultural training has been shown to enhance employees' ability to effectively navigate diverse cultural contexts (Helm, 2009; Zhang, 2012). Programs like Erasmus in Public Administration provide valuable exposure to international settings and working conditions, fostering a broader understanding of cultural diversity (Nikolaou & Spinthourakis, 2006). Without a systematic approach to intercultural communication training within the context of Greek public administration, however, these experiences may not effectively translate into improved intercultural competencies. Karras (2015) argues that it may also be beneficial for tertiary-level Business Schools in Greece to incorporate courses on ICC into their curriculum, particularly for students who are aspiring managers.

Behavioral aspects within public administration, particularly in relation to emotional intelligence and cultural competence, are increasingly recognized as pivotal for enhancing service effectiveness (Knap-Stefaniuk & Sorribes, 2021). Studies, as highlighted by Holt et al. (2007), consistently demonstrate a positive correlation between individual attitudes, abilities, beliefs, communication skills, and cultural competence. These competencies, such as knowledge discovery, respect for diversity, openness, cultural mindset, and intercultural understanding, are critical for managerial success from a cognitive perspective (Holt et al., 2007).

Cultural awareness of organizational values and codes of conduct stand out for their great influence on employees' ability to adapt and perform in more dynamic market conditions (Knap-Stefaniuk & Burkiewicz, 2020). This makes human resources (Kotter & Cohen, 2002) are the basic block of a strategic change plan within any organization. A substantial amount of research underscores the important role of employees' satisfaction, motivation and commitment in determining service quality and job performance, followed by the impact on innovation performance, loyalty and customer's satisfaction (Trivellas et al., 2011; Jari, 2007; Kotter, 1990).

Emotional competencies (such as the ability to understand and work in different environments and the ability to handle one's emotions, tolerance for ambiguity, cultural empathy, polycentrism, and emotional resilience) significantly contribute to employee's satisfaction, motivation, enthusiasm, stress management, and multicultural teamwork within public sector settings. These abilities are needed at a strategic level and are issues of the operational level such that they may result in better service and organizational effectiveness (Holt et al., 2007).

Theoretical concepts and practical suggestions both highlight the importance of ICC, ethical behavior, and effective communication in the public sector. The incorporation of these basic principles into training programs and organizational policies may allow Greece to foster a more inclusive and responsive framework of GPAd.

Challenges Faced by Greek Public Sector

The Greek Public Sector faces significant challenges in adapting to and effectively serving diverse populations, due to huge immigration and refugee flows. These challenges include social cohesion, integration, cultural, linguistic and administrative aspects of daily life. Civil servants face a dual challenge: they work in environments that are increasingly both linguistically and culturally diverse and they are often the first point of contact for (newly) diverse groups trying to adapt to their new surroundings. Studies on the impact of linguistically and culturally diverse groups on professional attitudes, skills, and actions indicate a need for appropriate in-service training and extended education in IC, accompanied by organizational and structural changes (Spinthourakis, 2006).

Addressing these challenges requires civil servants to develop strong ICC. Training programs focused on ICC can equip public officials with the skills needed to understand and respect cultural differences, thereby improving interactions and ensuring equitable treatment for all residents.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Immigrants' participation in public life is very limited, and there are only a small number of (small) ethnic associations. This limited participation should also be understood in the context of a generally weak civil society among the native population (Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2019). Diverse populations bring with them varying cultural norms, communication styles, and languages, which can pose barriers to effective communication and service delivery. Language barriers in particular frequently hinder communication between public servants and non-Greek-speaking individuals, leading to misunderstandings and potentially compromising the quality of services provided.

The Hellenic National Centre of Public Administration and Local Government aims to enhance civil servants' foreign language proficiency, aligning it with administrative needs to facilitate their mobility in a multilingual and multicultural Europe. These initiatives take place and equip the personnel of GPAd with adequate knowledge and skills to effectively deal with professional tasks in a multicultural context. More precisely, it develops multilingualism within public administration, underscoring the need for lifelong training for better adaptation to economic, social and cultural changes. The language training program is set up in such a way that it offers the students a well-established basis of knowledge, abilities, and skills at all levels of proficiency for a particular topic. Part of it focuses on language and contents that coincide with the participants' social and professional lives, fostering motivated learning. The program's teaching and learning processes evolve, due to prior experiences of the participants, who are involved in the learning process (Bourbouli, 2018).

Integration and Social Cohesion

The integration of foreign people into Greek society is much more complicated than just counting economics. It raises issues pertaining to multiple social and cultural aspects. Integration is not a positive concept related only to job and settlement; it is also about indigenous relations and local societies.

Integration policies must give priority to options that enable cultural exchange, community engagement and mutual understanding. Programs that promote intercultural dialogue and collaboration can help the mitigation of social tensions, the reduction of prejudice and the enhancement of social cohesion within Greek society. The existence of interactions that transcend cultural boundaries leads to invoking the concept of belonging and shared identity of all the inhabitants. This, in turn, contributes to the establishment of secure and stable multifaceted communities and cities.

It is important to highlight that the most effective application of the aforementioned policies in the workplace necessitates a supportive work environment. Such an environment should aim to motivate employees to incorporate the outcomes of their training into their daily work routines. A significant issue hindering the development of human resources in public administration is the lack of sufficient training and guidance in modern technical methods, recent advancements, behaviors, and attitudes (Alexiadis & Peristeras, 2000). Velli (1996) argues that the problems within the GPAd largely stem from inadequate training and specialization of its executives. Indeed, systematic and continuous training of human resources is a fundamental pillar for the modernization of Public Administration (Stavrakaki et al., 2023).

Legal and Administrative Procedures

Navigating Greek bureaucracy can be particularly challenging for immigrants and refugees. This process can be exacerbated by language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and unfamiliarity with administrative procedures. Civil servants act as crucial intermediaries in facilitating access to information, rights, and public services for these populations. Enhancing IC skills among public officials is essential to effectively addressing these administrative challenges and improving service delivery. Specifically, the strategy towards creating an intercultural culture could be identified as a planned effort managed by the senior management of an organization aimed at increasing effectiveness (Beckhard, 1969).

GPAd has not incorporated management principles and remains a bureaucratic organization with limited use of upward vertical communication (Akrivos et al., 2013). This results in a discouraged staff that is unwilling to support changes and views them with skepticism. Bitsani (2006) argues that, among equally hazardous situations concerning the human resources of the Public Administration, employee indifference-estrangement, antagonism towards the citizenry and the deficiency of the cooperative spirit are significant threats to a viable future. enhanced by streamlining bureaucratic procedures and ensuring clear communication, minimizing barriers to access to empower individuals to navigate the system more confidently.

Policy Implications

The enhancement of ICC among Greek civil servants, includes the creation of good administration and progressive policy. More precisely, the ICC is built and reflects the power of civil servants to cope and communicate with people of different ethnicities and cultures, delivering high-quality services. Such initiatives should therefore arguably employ IC courses that allow recognition of the diversity and respect for cultural differences, thus improving service accessibility and responsiveness.

Developing ICC is a direct path to fostering inclusive environments where diverse communities feel valued and respected. Robust policies like ICC sessions could be developed, breaking barriers, building trust and promoting solidarity among different cultural groups within Greek society.

The incorporation of ICC perspectives in legislature results in laws and institutional behaviors becoming both more inclusive and reflective of the requirements of diverse populations. Policymakers must engage with community stakeholders to design policies that promote equality, protect rights, and facilitate effective integration.

The response to the challenges provoked by cultural diversity in the public sector in Greece must rely on a joint attempt to improve ICC among civil servants. Theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence highlight the role of ICC in communication across different cultures, improving service delivery and fostering social cohesion.

Methodology

ICC is addressed by various social sciences, including anthropology, linguistics and psychology (Harman & Briggs, 1991; Hart, 1999). Methodological approaches to the subject differ substantially, depending on the purpose of the study (Hu, 2004) but, in many cases, a mixed methods approach may be the preferred course of actions (Hu & Fan, 2010). This study paper integrates both qualitative (semi-structured interviews; focus group) and quantitative (questionnaire) methods, applying a convergent parallel design to compare data sets (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2008).

The examination of data from different perspectives -the leading principle of mixed methods studies- helps ensure well-documented conclusions through the cross-validation of findings (Flick, 2006). Mixed methods hold the potential for increased validity and reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Data, observer perspectives and methodological approaches are triangulated to enhance accuracy and generalizability beyond the study's specific context (Flick, 2018). We argue that this approach encompasses all the facets of ICC and, as such, aspires to contribute to the better understanding of its implications for EU civil servants' behavior (Joppe, 2000).

Quantitative Data Collection: Research Questionnaire

We employ a questionnaire as the main instrument for quantitative data collection. It was selected for its reliability, anonymity, and effectiveness in collecting and classifying structured numerical data (Cohen et al., 2000). It is a modified version of the ICC Instrument (Arasaratnam, 2009; Arasaratnam et al., 2010), consisting of 21 Likert-type items that cover cognitive, emotional and social abilities.

The questionnaire is divided into three component parts:

1. ICC Assessment: 21 items Likert-type items assessing cognitive, emotional and behavioral/social abilities.
2. Demographic information: 23 closed and open-ended questions designed to cover demographic details, education, technology familiarity, work profile and multicultural experiences.

3. Multicultural Experience: Five questions exploring the participants' personal multicultural experiences.

The questionnaire was administered electronically using Google Forms, facilitating accessibility and user-friendliness, through familiarity, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pilot testing validated the questionnaire's face and content validity, with adjustments made based on feedback. Following this, the questionnaire was distributed via email and Viber to public employees using convenience sampling. Data collection spanned from May 30, 2021, to November 5, 2021. Collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.

Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide consisting of 18 open-ended questions. The interviews focused on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral abilities related to Greek public employees' ICC. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and geographical challenges, interviews were conducted via telephone between April 15, 2021, and June 30, 2021.

Each interview was carefully scheduled following initial contact with participants. Interview transcripts were transcribed and processed using MS Office Word and organized in an Excel spreadsheet. Thematic analysis was conducted using QSR NVivo v. 12.2 software to identify patterns and insights across the thematic areas.

Ethical considerations, particularly microethics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014), were meticulously observed. This involved ensuring fairness and respect in the interview process, despite the remote nature of the interviews during the pandemic.

Focus Group

The qualitative approach also included a focus group discussion involving eight participants held on March 7, 2021. The session was conducted remotely using the Zoom platform due to COVID-19 restrictions. The focus group was moderated by the researcher to explore themes related to ICC of public employees. Participants were chosen, using purposive sampling, to represent diverse educational backgrounds, geographical regions, and administrative roles within Greek public services. The discussion was recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for analysis using NVivo software. Detailed notes were taken to capture key points and insights emerging from the discussion.

Target Population and Convenience Sampling

The target population for this study comprises Greek civil servants. The sample size for the quantitative data collection consisted of 262 public employees, while the qualitative research included 13 semi-structured interviews and an eight-member focus group.

To the extent possible, purposive sampling was employed to select participants based on the characteristics of interest listed above. COVID-19 and practical accessibility issues within the GPAd, where cooperation for research purposes was limited, necessitated that even this was, to some extent, ostensibly convenience sampling as well. To the best of our ability, we endeavored to ensure that this sampling method facilitated data collection from public

employees across various administrative levels, sectors, and geographical regions in Greece. Despite its limitations in generalizability, the homogeneous nature of the sample allows for insights that may be representative of similar contexts within the GPAd.

Data Analysis

Reliability and Validity of Research

Analysis revealed that the original three-dimensional ICC scale was not viable, leading to a condensed 12-item scale derived through factor analysis. This revised scale proved effective and compatible with our data. Of course, the reliability and validity of a questionnaire can vary across different populations (Galanis, 2013). If the content, face, criterion, and construct validity are met, parts of the original tool can function as a reasonable approximation of substitute scale. Construct validity, indicating accurate measurement of the intended concept, aligned with findings from Arasaratnam (2009).

Achieving external validity in qualitative endeavors is challenging, due to the researcher's influence on data selection and interpretation. To mitigate this, the purposive sampling employed for the focus group and interview participants placed special emphasis on sample homogeneity. Cross-cultural studies often contextualize findings within their sampled populations (Rad et al., 2018). Jager et al. (2017) propose the choice of homogeneous convenience samples to address sampling limitations, which we applied in this research.

Quantitative and Qualitative Results: A Summary

According to the analysis of data from questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and the focus group, public servants exhibited moderate to high levels of ICC. Qualitative analysis indicated lower ICC levels. This discrepancy between suggests the need for a new measurement tool for ICC comprised of more representative statements.

Younger individuals, women, those familiar with technology, and those with intercultural experiences showed higher levels of ICC. Education, personal values, and intercultural sensitivity were also key factors in respondents' level of ICC. Qualitative analysis also identified a series of stumbling blocks to meaningful ICC, including the existence of stereotypes, prejudices, lack of respect for diversity, and poor communication.

Despite the challenges, civil servants appear to be both inclined and willing to improve their ICC and IC, both among civil servants and when interacting with the multicultural public. Participants also explicitly emphasized a corporate culture promoting inclusivity and diversity. The interviews, in particular, highlighted the value of empathy active listening and cultural awareness Greek civil servants, emphasizing the need constant training as evidenced by (Galanis 2018).

Discussion

The results indicate that improving ICC among Greek civil servants is essential for tackling multicultural issues. There is a clear need for focused educational and experiential training programs, because participants with higher levels of education and foreign work experience demonstrated better ICC. Effective ICC training requires a multi-faceted approach, including:

- Interactive Workshops: These provide civil servants with an opportunity to practice and internalize intercultural skills through role-playing simulations and case studies.
- Continuous Professional Development: Ensuring that civil servants stay updated on best practices and new insights through online courses and seminars (Jackson, 2018).
- Performance Appraisals: Integrating ICC into the performance appraisal system to incentivize the active development of these skills (Groschl, 2011).

Comprehensive policies that specify organizational expectations and guidelines for inclusive practices-including non-discrimination equal opportunity and cultural sensitivity in service delivery are essential to promoting inclusive community citizenship. A culture of inclusivity and diversity in the workplace can only be fostered by clearly defining expectations.

For ICC initiatives to be successful, sufficient resources must be allocated. This includes funding for educational initiatives hiring specialists in cross-cultural communication and purchasing technology that promotes cross-cultural learning. And, in this vein, organizations dedicated to improving ICC must prioritize budgetary allocations that support continued training and development initiatives across all workforce levels.

Civil servants with developed ICC can benefit substantially from peer support groups and mentoring programs. Skilled mentors can share best practices and provide insightful advice for successfully navigating cross-cultural obstacles (Jandt, 2017). Peer support groups cultivate a supportive environment conducive to ongoing learning and growth by offering a collaborative platform for exchanging strategies, solutions, and experiences. Administrative staff members are greatly motivated when their efforts to enhance ICC are acknowledged and rewarded. Organizational commitment to diversity and inclusion is reinforced by incentives like awards, certificates and opportunities for career advancement linked to ICC competencies (Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2019).

Intercultural competence is prioritized and valued in a culture that is fostered by associating professional recognition with ICC accomplishments. Improving ICC among public employees substantially impacts social change and citizen empowerment, as it affects the delivery of public services community involvement policy creation and the empowerment of marginalized communities. Strong ICC competencies enable civil servants to provide services that are culturally sensitive and responsive to the varied needs of the community. Offering multilingual services and culturally appropriate information materials, for example, can improve overall satisfaction with services, improving accessibility and comprehension for non-native speakers (Triandafyllidou, 2018). It should go without saying that both civil servants and the communities they serve benefit from effective intercultural communication.

Building cooperative relationships, promoting civic engagement and guaranteeing adherence to laws and regulations all depend on trust. Citizens are more inclined to proactively engage with public services and take part in community initiatives that aim to promote collective well-being when they feel understood and respected (Matveev & Nelson, 2014). Intercultural interactions provide insights when developing inclusive policies. Civil servants with ICC proficiency can support laws that advance inclusion equity and social justice for a variety of communities (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2019). Policies aimed at integrating immigrants and refugees into society address specific societal needs and challenges, including reduce disparities and promote social cohesion (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2020).

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Structured initiatives that integrate ICC development into its training policies could Greece's public administration bridge the integration gap. We argue, particularly, for the prioritization of mandatory IC workshops, language training, and cross-cultural interaction. The goal pf the Institute of Training for Greek civil servants is to raise the performance of civil servants through educational programs, whilst the National School of Public Administration and Local Government seek to foster educated and capable staff concerning the handling of contemporary challenges, emphasizing the "Four P's": Pride, Passion, Pace, and Professionalism (Bourbouli, 2018). These programs are vital for their ability to help raise public servants' awareness about cultural diversity, potentially improving their communication skills and help them foster a more inclusive society.

Incorporating IC competencies into performance evaluation and career promotion criteria, may motivate civil servants to prioritize skill development in this critical area. Mumford (2006) argues that training on cultural sensitivity for staff must align with organizational goals, which will, in turn, result in efficiency and performance excellence. This implies that integrating an ICC skillset in training programs and the regulatory framework should contribute to employees' ability to successfully negotiate and confront the complexities of multicultural environments.

Our qualitative analyses provided us with further, focused insights relevant to the GPAd reality. We argue, therefore, for the necessity for tailored solutions to boutique problems. Civil servants who espouse stereotypes, prejudices, lack of respect for diversity, or who are characterized by poor communication skills are clear and evident hinderances to meaningful ICC in the Greek civil service. Our solutions are a call for continued (and ongoing) education, the incorporation of common communication rules, active administrative interventions, regular interviews conducted by and with representatives of human resources, and regular contact with psychologists. We recognize that several of these measures may appear, at least superficially, obvious. Their continued lack of implementation, however, let alone compulsory nature, highlights the necessity for their persistent reinforcement in the discourse in hopes that they are eventually implemented, in a meaningful step toward enhanced ICC, with all of the societal benefits this would connote.

Conclusion

Operating in a multicultural society improving ICC is essential for Greek civil servants. Public service delivery can be enhanced, and social cohesion can be promoted with the help of inclusive policies, supportive organizational cultures and effective training. This study underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to developing ICC, with implications that potentially extend beyond Greece to other multicultural societies. We relegate to future studies the burden of examining the long-term effects of ICC training in order to discern the most effective ways to incorporate it into public administration. The importance of such investigations, however, cannot be overstated, as investing in ICC development is a road to a more inclusive and resilient society but can also empower citizens and spur social change.

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“My best friend is from another country” – Participatory Visual Method for Studying Cross-Ethnic Friendship Ties in Schoolchildren[1]

Eva Medin[2] & Göran Jutengren[3]

Abstract

This study investigated cross-ethnic friendship ties in schoolchildren in a diverse school setting in Sweden. Twenty-three elementary students, half with immigrant background, were included in a participatory visual method of friend nomination (drawing a picture depicting “My friends and I at recess”) as well as individual interviews about their drawings and friendships. This was complemented by the collection of survey data on the participants’ and their classmates’ demographic backgrounds, which allowed for the triangulation of study findings. This developmentally appropriate approach provided a detailed picture of individuals’ and groups’ patterns of cross-ethnic friendship and social integration and conceptions of friendship while avoiding common ethical problems in this area of research. The study revealed that elementary students had stronger friendship ties to others sharing the same or similar ethnic or language backgrounds, despite their belief that their friendships were simply based on common interests, activities, and gender. This study also highlighted factors related to more significant cross-ethnic friendship ties and inclusion. Notably, this study can offer guidance regarding developmentally appropriate research methods for investigating multiethnic social integration and cross-ethnic friendship in schoolchildren as well as other sensitive topics with children.

Keywords: Childhood Friendship; Cross-Ethnic Friendship; Participatory Visual Method; Friend Nomination; Social Integration

Introduction

Childhood Friendship

Children's friendships are a central focus in their lives and are important for their well-being (see Carter et al., 2023; Rubin et al., 2004; Gauze et al., 1996). Children's friendship choices are influenced by a variety of factors, with similarities such as common interests, values, and experiences playing a primary role (Lease & Blake, 2005). Similarity in academic orientation and behaviors, such as prosocial behavior, can also play a role in the formation of friendships (Kawabata & Crick, 2011). Additionally, children's moral reasoning and level of moral development, influenced by their friends, can impact their social behavior and choices in friendships (Gasser & Malti, 2012).

Cross-Ethnic Friendship Ties in Children

Research indicates that cross-ethnic friendships are as developmentally important as same-ethnic or general close friendships (Feddes et al., 2009). Such friendships are associated with

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Medin, E. & Jutengren, G. (2024). “My best friend is from another country” – Participatory Visual Method for Studying Cross-Ethnic Friendship Ties in Schoolchildren. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 94-113. Malmö University and Children’s Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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positive outcomes, including improved liking, acceptance, social status, sociability, empathy, leadership skills, and open-mindedness among children (Jugert & Feddes, 2017) and other social adjustment and psychosocial benefits (Graham et al., 2013; Kawabata & Crick, 2008). Additionally, cross-ethnic friendships can buffer the negative effects of perceived ethnic discrimination on psychological outcomes in ethnic minority children (Kawabata & Crick, 2011) and improve outgroup attitudes and intergroup relations (Bağcı, 2014; Birtel et al., 2019; Kawabata & Crick, 2011).

Research has emphasized that children's attitudes and beliefs about ethnic groups can influence their preference for same-ethnic friendships (Jugert & Feddes, 2017). The formation and maintenance of cross-ethnic friendships can be influenced by factors such as ethnic diversity, social-emotional adjustment, national and ethnic identification, and school composition (Jugert et al., 2017). Studies have introduced the concept of cross-ethnic friendship self-efficacy, which refers to children's belief in successfully forming and maintaining high-quality cross-ethnic friendships (Bağcı et al., 2019). Furthermore, the definition of friendship and developmental stage can impact the outcomes of cross-ethnic friendships, with inclusive norms for cross-ethnic relations from in-group peers positively predicting children's interest in cross-group friendships (Grütter & Tropp, 2018; Tropp et al., 2014).

Research Challenges

Considering the significance of friendship generally and cross-ethnic friendship ties for child development specifically, studying this topic closer is of great interest. Yet its study poses unique research challenges due to children's developmental stage, vulnerability, and legal and ethical considerations. Parental consent and child assent as well as approval from ethical review boards are important for ensuring ethical research practices in such sensitive questions (Furey et al., 2010; Lambert & Gacken, 2001; Morrow, 2008; Nairn & Clarke, 2012; Sipes et al., 2020). Children are highly sensitive to evaluative comments, highlighting the importance of considering the potential effects of research on children and the need for ethical practices (Goodnow et al., 1986; Suzuki et al., 2021). Ethical symmetry in researcher-child relationships is essential, emphasizing transparency and benefit to the children involved (Gaches, 2020; Phelan & Kinsella, 2012).

The need to protect children from harm, both physical and psychological, when engaging them in research necessitates careful consideration of the concepts introduced to them (Langer & Beckman, 2005; Woodgate et al., 2017). Indeed, respecting children's rights and autonomy is crucial in research, and introducing inappropriate or sensitive concepts may infringe upon them (Nutbrown, 2010; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Moreover, the cultural and social positioning of children must be considered when deciding which concepts to introduce in research, as different cultural backgrounds may have varying sensitivities to certain topics (Harcourt & Quennerstedt, 2014; Stalford & Lundy, 2022).

Researchers must consider the cognitive and emotional abilities of children when designing research protocols, as well. For example, using age-appropriate language and visual aids can facilitate children's understanding and engagement in the research process to create a safe and supportive research environment (Patton & Winter, 2023; Wood, 2015). Multi-visual methods can be useful in addressing sensitive topics with as they can help children in the meaning-making process and provide insights into their experience (Shaw et al., 2019).

Cross-ethnic friendships are complex due to the influence of societal norms and cultural expectations (Davies et al., 2011; Munniksma et al., 2016) as well as their potential to challenge stereotypes and power dynamics (Feddes et al., 2009; McGlothlin et al., 2005). They may impact both social and emotional development (Davies et al., 2011; Feddes et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2013). Understanding their dynamics, then, requires sensitivity to ethical, cultural, and individual factors. Researchers must priorities children's well-being and protection (Hilário & Augusto, 2019). To this end, qualitative research and multi-visual methods can be appropriate (Hiriscau et al., 2014; Shaw et al., 2019).

Participatory Visual Methods in Child Research

Participatory visual methods are increasingly popular in child and youth research, enabling active engagement and insights into their experiences (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Henderson-Dekort et al., 2022; Lamba & Palattiyil, 2022). These methods, including drawing, photography, and video, allow children to express thoughts and emotions not easily conveyed orally or in writing (Literat, 2013). They have been particularly useful in understanding newcomer children's experiences (Lafleur & Srivastava, 2019). A systematic review of participatory methods in child research identified five groups of participatory methods for children: observational, verbal, written, visual, and active methods (Haijes & Thiel, 2015), which can be used to gather data on children's experiences, perspectives, and needs in a comprehensive and holistic manner. By using a combination of these methods, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of children's social worlds and engage them directly in the research process (Horgan, 2016).

Such participatory child-centered research methods empower children (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2019; Henderson-Dekort et al., 2022; Lamba & Palattiyil, 2022). Creating a comfortable environment through play, art, and storytelling helps gather valuable data; (Barriage et al., 2017; Elvia et al., 2022; Knight et al., 2015) and visual methods complement traditional data collection, facilitating children's expression (Abrar & Sidik, 2019; Einarsdóttir, 2005; Powell & Smith, 2009). Ensuring accurate and respectful representations of children in research is essential (Dubois et al., 2021). These methods not only facilitate data collection but also promote a more equal and respectful relationship between researchers and children. As noted, ethical considerations are crucial, especially regarding informed consent, power dynamics, and participant burden (Dubois et al., 2021; Hemming, 2008; Phelan & Kinsella, 2012). Visual methods complement verbal and written data collection approaches, providing children with alternative ways to express themselves that are developmentally appropriate and ethically considered.

Current Study

This study's goal was, then, to employ an ethically considered and developmentally appropriate method to study the sensitive topic of children's cross-ethnic friendship ties. Our ambition was that a participatory visual method complemented by triangulation with demographic data would allow for investigating this topic while avoiding ethically or developmentally inappropriate lines of questioning, for example, "What is your best friend's ethnicity and is it the same as or different from yours?" By collecting such demographic data on the participants and their nominated friends separately from engaging them in a participatory visual method of friend nomination and individual interviews, we hoped to

provide a detailed picture of children's and groups' patterns of cross-ethnic friendship and social integration and conceptions of friendship while avoiding ethical and developmental challenges in this area of research.

Method

Data collection

Participants were 23 primary school students from a diverse school setting in western Sweden. Data was collected in the following three steps: (1) demographic survey, (2) participatory visual method of friend nomination (drawing a picture), and (3) individual interview. The first step was carried out several months before the second and third steps, which were performed in conjunction. Together, these data collection steps enabled us to triangulate the results from the visual method, interviews, and demographic background data with the intention of giving a full picture of cross-ethnic friendship ties.

For the survey administration and the subsequent steps of the data collection, all participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and they could choose to participate in data collection. All participants were also informed that their answers would be confidential. All participants had the consent of their parents to answer written and oral questions relating to friendship and school. No parents were present as the data collection took place during school hours on school premises. The participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. To build a sense of cooperation with the researcher, it was also explained that the children's help was needed to learn more about how schools can be good for children (Christensen, 2004; Gibson, 2012). Consent for the study was obtained from a Regional Ethics Review Board (Reg. no. 592-13).

Demographic Survey Participants

Demographic background survey data were collected in three grade two classes and three grade three classes at an elementary school in southwestern Sweden. These classes had a total of 117 students and 75 responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 64%. The demographic surveys were thus responded to by the majority of the students in the second and third grades at the school; questions included age, birthplace, parents' birthplace, and languages spoken at home. These questionnaires were administered by the first author in the students' regular classrooms in September 2014.

Participatory Visual Method and Interview Participants

From these four classes, 23 participants were randomly selected from those who had responded to the demographic survey to participate in the participatory visual method of friend nomination that constituted the second step of data collection. These students were representative of the variety of backgrounds present in their classes. Specifically, among all the 23 participants in the present study, 12 had immigrant background and there was great variety in mother tongue and country of family origin: Somalia (two), Vietnam (two), Turkey (two), Eritrea, Iraq, Kosovo, Serbia, India, and Belarus. Eleven of these students spoke another language at home than the majority language of Swedish. Of the 12 students with immigrant background, five were born abroad and the other seven had at least one parent who was born abroad.

Participatory Visual Method and Interviews Procedure

The music classroom at the participants' school was chosen as the location for visual method and interviews to avoid direct connections to the students' classrooms to reduce the feeling of having to "perform." The information was expressed in a child-friendly language in which all concepts described in a clear and concrete way to ensure that the children understood what they agreed to. All who were invited to participate in this step of the data collection chose to participate. The researcher (the first author, EM) who conducted the data collection was familiar to the children from having previously administered the surveys collecting data on their demographic backgrounds. Because repeated contacts with adult evaluators/researchers can increase children's confidence and trust in the data collection process, this was considered an advantage (Irwin & Johnson, 2005; Spratling et al., 2012). The researcher also had experience working with children through being a teacher in the same municipality, which was also an advantage in this context (Spratling et al., 2012). This step took place in December 2014.

The participatory visual research method was that participants were asked to draw a picture on the theme "My friends and I at recess." If the participants needed more guidance, the researcher explained that the student could draw a picture of "you and your friends, the person or people you play with the most at recess."

The method of giving children the task of drawing pictures depicting different aspects of their daily lives has been used both to build trust for the researcher and as a data source (Yuen, 2004). Beginning with the children's reflections about their school and their friends in the interviews was a conscious decision to involve the children in the research process (Kortesluoma et al., 2003). Since the method is both inclusive and interactive, a hope was to avoid as far as possible hierarchical imbalances between researchers and participants. This makes the process more democratic and ethical in character (Literat, 2013), which is particularly important in research with children (Christensen & James, 2000; Lindsay, 1999). Reflecting on their experiences by drawing pictures has proven to make it easier for children to talk about the events associated with strong emotions (MacLeod et al., 2013), which friendship and recess at school can be. This method was also chosen with regard to those students who did not have Swedish as their mother tongue and therefore possibly did not fully master the Swedish language (Literat, 2013; Merriman & Guerin, 2006). To test the instructions to the visual method, two children of the same age first acted as "children experts" in a pilot study. This was done in accordance with recommendations regarding qualitative data collection with children (Spratling et al., 2012).

During data collection, each participant sat alone and drew with colored pencils for ten minutes. Thereafter, the researcher engaged each participant individually in a discussion about the drawing and the students' nominated friends in an informal, semi-structured interview. The drawings were supplemented with these traditional interviews to get more variety in the children's descriptions of their experiences (Clark, 2001). Participants were asked follow-up questions from the researcher, such as "Can you tell me more about your friends?", "What do you do together?", "How are you similar and how are you different?" Or "Why do you like to be together?" They were also asked to label the pictures with their friends' name(s) so we could match them to the demographic data collected previously. This method lasted a total of about 20 minutes per participant, including time for drawing and

interview. Participants' drawings were both a data source in and of themselves and a starting point for the individual interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Analysis

The interviews about students' nominated friends were subjected to thematic content analysis as described by Braun and Clark (2006). The content of the drawings together with students' explanations of them were analyzed also treated to thematic content analysis according in the same manner for patterns relating to the presence or absence of immigrant background, sex, activity of choice, and grade level.

Responses to the survey on demographic background supplied data on patterns concerning age, country of birth, ethnic background, and mother tongue, an additional step in the method of this study. The goal was to be able to analyses the demographic information of the participants, their nominated friends, and their classes. When a student mentioned a friend verbally or in pictorial form (most participants wrote their friends' names above the relevant figures in the drawing), we could identify the nominated friend's demographic data from the survey (for those students who had participated), such as sex, age, ethnic background, and language. These data sources – the drawings, interviews, and responses to the survey on demographic background – meant we could triangulate our data to investigate cross-ethnic friendship ties in this diverse group of elementary children.

Results

Survey Results

The demographic survey of all the students in the second and third grade classes revealed that 60% had immigrant background (defined as one or both parents born abroad) and 19% of the students themselves were born abroad. Children with background in 30 different countries were present in these classes and 57% spoke a language other than Swedish at home at least part of the time, among other findings. An overview of children's demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information for all pupils in grades 2-3 who responded to the survey

Variable	Category	*N*	Percent
Sex	Boy	40	46.7
	Girl	35	53.3
Born in Sweden	Yes	60	81.1
	No	14	18.9
One or both parents born abroad	Yes	45	60.0
	No	30	40.0
Language spoken at home	Swedish	32	42.7
	Other	27	36.0
	Alternate	16	21.3
Parents live together	Yes	57	76.0
	No	18	24.0

Interview and Drawing Results

The results come from the analysis of data from the visual research method, "My friends and I at recess," participants' interviews about the friends and friendships depicted in the drawings, and demographic information about the participants and their nominated friends. First, we will present the results of the individual interviews. Next, we will present a selection of drawings with an analysis of the content. Then we will present the demographic characteristics of the participants and their nominated friends and "best friends." Finally, we will weave together the various analyses into a comprehensive summary of the results, our triangulation of results.

In the interviews, common activities or interests was the students' most common understanding of why their friendships formed. "We like a lot of the same things," said a girl, Participant A. "Almost the whole class plays soccer, it's fun" said one boy, Participant D. Another boy, Participant I, noted that he participated in many activities with friends during recess, "We play football, we chase each other, we play hide-and-go-seek." Girls such as Participant E responded more often like this, "We usually talk, and we usually play."

Gender groupings, as in some of the quotes above, were often explicitly noted by both sexes. According to one girl, Participant H, "We are in a club, it's just girls. No boys, it's just girls." Similarities and differences in appearance also came up in the descriptions of friends, especially among girls. As one girl noted, Participant G, said "We have almost exactly the same hair colour." Girls with immigrant backgrounds who shared physical similarities with friends had said that others, such as staff members, confused them, according to Participant T: "[We are] similar in the hair and face. All the teachers mix us up. They think we are siblings or twins. It's not fun." Height was also notable for the participants. As one girl, Participant M, said, "B, she is a little smaller than me." A boy, Participant F, noted "I am tall, I am strong. . . I can wrestle with them, it's easy."

Figure 1. Sample drawing

Note: This drawing was drawn by a boy in grade 3 with immigrant background and depicts a football match. According to the student, there are two teams. The student's team was composed solely of other boys with an immigrant background. The other team was composed of ethnically Swedish boys and a girl with a Swedish background. Although the soccer recess activity here seems to be positive for cohesion, also shows that the team divisions can give rise to both ethnic and gender grouping. Most of the boys' drawings in this study depicted group activities: soccer or a local variant of hide-and-seek.

Similarities and differences in language/ethnic background proved to be a conscious element in the friendship of some students. According to one girl, Participant B, her friend was “from another country. I'm not from the same country as she is, but C can speak the same language as me.” Another girl, Participant S, reported that “My best friend is from another country.”

Figure 2. Sample drawing

Note: This drawing was drawn by a girl in grade 3 with parents with a background in Vietnam. She said it depicts two friends: a girl with parents from Vietnam and another girl with a Middle Eastern background. She said “I'm in school just playing with my best friends. A and I, we are the same, and B and I are just friends. [I and] A are similar in the hair and face. All the teachers mix us up, think we are siblings or twins. It's boring.” This is an example showing that students are aware of the physical similarities, and that in many cases, but not always, share an ethnicity with their close friends. This drawing was representative for the girls in the study, as the vast majority of them drew and described friends with physical similarities.

Group stability was another theme that was shown by the pupils' language. Students are told that they “usually” or “always” are associated with the specified friends. As a boy, Participant V said, they were while they were “sometimes with a few others as well, but it's always us two.”

Twenty-three children drew pictures on the theme “My friends and I at recess.” Figures 1, 2 and 3 shows a selection of the students’ drawings together with analysis and comparison with other sources in the study.

Figure 3. Sample drawing

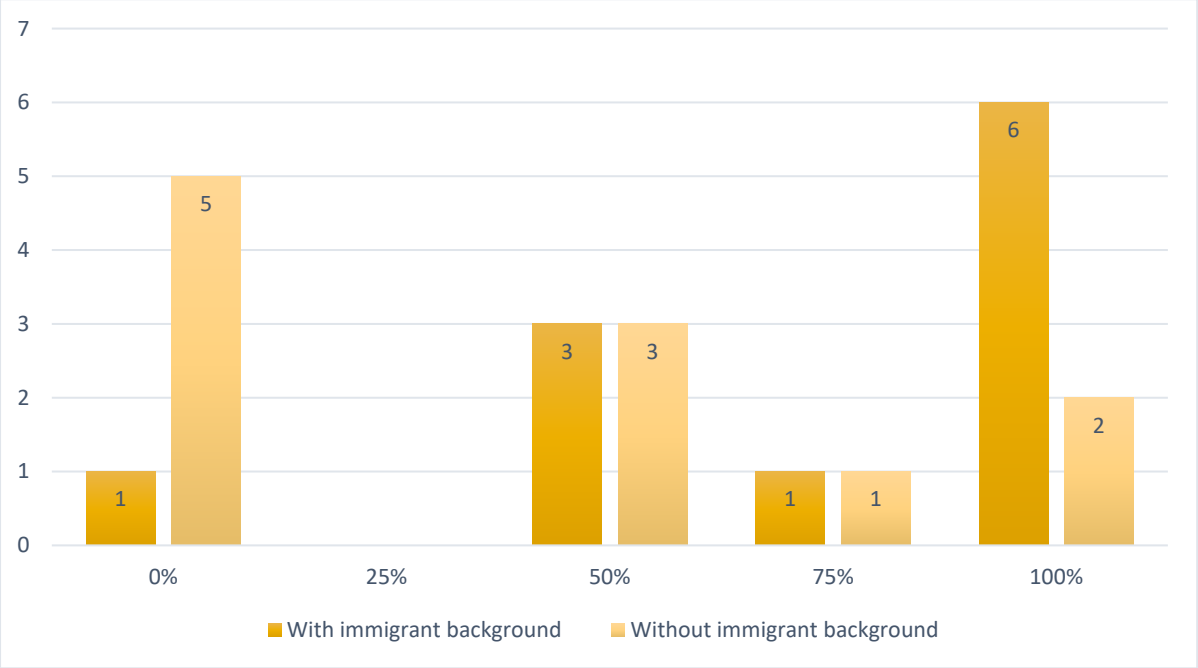
Note: This drawing was drawn by a girl in grade 2 without an immigrant background. She mentions a best friend, a girl who was born in Somalia. "I and C, we usually play on the jungle gym. We also go to the playground and play. We like the same things. My best friend is from another country." It is clear from her description that she is aware of her friend's background, but what seems to be most important to her is their common interests. This student was one of two ethnic Swedish students from a total of 11 such participants who solely mentioned friends who had a different ethnic background than Swedish. In this way, this drawing is unique.

Triangulation of Results

A review of the background of the children nominated as friends by the participants indicated patterns of friendship choice characterized by social segregation.

- 83% of students (10 of 12) with an immigrant background mentioned only friends who also had an immigrant background.
- 54% of students (6 of 11) with no immigrant background mentioned only friends who also did not have an immigrant background.
- 50% of students (6 of 12) with an immigrant background mentioned at least one friend they shared ethnicity with (i.e., had parents who were born in the same country).
- Among the students (regardless of whether they had an immigrant background or not) that mentioned friends with a different background than what they themselves had, the nominated friends' background very diverse.
- Teams and group activities were associated with cross-ethnic friendship ties and gender mixing, with the caveat that this was limited to those in the students' "own" team and that those in the "other" team tended to be of different ethnic backgrounds and the opposite gender.
- Students with an immigrant background reported a greater proportion of friends of a different ethnic background than themselves than students without any immigrant background (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Number of students who nominated different proportion of friends with a different background than the student themselves (*N* = 22)



Note: The percentages of friends of other backgrounds have been rounded to the nearest quartile.

Results Summary

Participants primarily nominated friends with a shared ethnicity, not only regarding having or not having immigrant background (Swedes/non-Swedes). Shared mother tongues and backgrounds in the same country or world region were also evident. According to the participants' statements, friendship choice was based primarily on common interests, activities, and gender. The import of ethnicity, language, or presence or absence of immigrant background was not explicitly expressed by the participants. Shared group activities such as soccer seemed to have the greatest potential for social inclusion in relation to ethnicity (and gender), with the important exception that the division of the players into teams gave unconscious rise to ethnic and gender divisions.

Discussion

An extensive body of research shows that friendships are formed based on homophily. Geographic proximity, social skills, common interests, and similarities regarding socio-economic and socio-cultural background, language, personality, gender, behaviour, and intellectual capacity are among the factors studied in relation to how children choose their friends (e.g., Aboud et al., 2003; Haselager et al., 1998; Ladd, 2005; Nangle et al., 2004; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). In this study, we have seen these patterns as well, particularly that socio-cultural background seems to have great importance for the children's friendship ties, as also shown in a significant amount of previous research (e.g., Hamm et al., 2005; Kao & Joyner, 2004; Nesdale, 2008).

From a sociological perspective, Moody (2001, p. 680) shares the following reasoning:

> . . . when other circumstances are equal and people have the opportunity to select the relations within its own socio-cultural group, so they also do it. . . This becomes most apparent when the heterogeneity is at a medium level, where a minority could threaten the majority dominance. If a similar dynamic is active in school, so we would expect to see a greater friendship segregation in schools where heterogeneity is moderately high.

"Moderately high" heterogeneity describes the student population at the study school, as 60% of students had at least one parent who was born abroad (from 30 countries). That at least 50% of students still nominated friends with parents from the exact same country, despite this diversity, indicates that ethnic origin played a role in friendship formation in this group.

This does not necessarily mean that students are not integrated in Berry's (1997) sense, because it does not say anything about students' actual attitudes to the intercultural meeting. However, it may be a sign of social selectivity, which may be relevant for both social inclusion and prosocial behavior as friendship across ethnic boundaries have been associated with less bias and greater social competence in children (Aboud & Levy, 2000; Hunter & Elias, 1999; Lease & Balke, 2005).

Relatively few children spontaneously mentioned the similarities and differences with their classmates respecting ethnic origins; students were possibly unaware of or unwilling to mention such things, or they did not think it was important. That children do not attach so much importance to the nature of differences/similarities are a trend observed earlier in a similar Swedish study of students' views on social inclusion (Jonsson & Gharaie, 2010). Language seemed to be a more natural discussion point for the participating children. All participants spoke Swedish well enough to participate in the interviews, but we do not know how well students at the schools generally mastered the language. A Swedish survey of primary school students' inter-ethnic relations showed that students' classmates deemed inferior in the Swedish language were also considered to have less social competence (Vedder & O'Dowd, 1999). This is a circumstance that is an obstacle to cross-ethnic friendships beyond those that can arise when trying to socialize with someone that is difficult to communicate with.

It is worth noting that students with no immigrant background more often reported having a best friend at all. Forty percent of the composition of students in each class had more established Swedish backgrounds with no parents born abroad. Among the other students, there was a very great diversity in terms of ethnicity. If we reason that the students primarily created friendships with other students who had similar background to themselves, as our findings indicate, there was a greater "supply" of students with a Swedish background compared to students with, for example, Vietnamese or Turkish background. Some students were the only "representative" for their ethnic group in their class. Intimate friendships of high quality (cf. the expression "best friends") have possibly better conditions to be created between classmates with more similar backgrounds (Aboud et al., 2003).

Nothing in the findings indicates that either ethnicity or language was the basis for an informed choice when students made friends. Earlier Swedish studies show that friendships can be formed based on ethnicity even though the students themselves believe that ethnicity plays no role at all (Addo et al., 2003). Consistent with other research (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996), the students expressed rather hobbies and gender as being among the decisive factors when it came to friendship. The girls reported fewer but stronger friendships (best friends

than play with the other kids who happened to like the same game), which is also consistent with other research (Kistner et al., 1993).

The data in this study suggest that the relationships that students claimed were mutual rather than unilateral. In all cases where the interviewed student's nominated best friend also participated in the visual data collection step, the friendship was mutually expressed. How reciprocity of friendship between the students perceived otherwise we do not know. Nor do we know how students interpreted the task to draw a picture on the theme "My friends and I at recess." It cannot be excluded that the students have a very short-term perspective on friendship and used the term "friend" for the classmate with whom they spent the last recess with the same day as the interview was conducted. However, many of the students expressed in their interviews group stability in their circle of friends (they "usually" or "always" play with the specified friends). We therefore believe that the students' descriptions represent relatively established friendships.

In analyses of recess activities that involve some form of team grouping (e.g. football), we observed that children who consistently described belong to "the other team" than the interviewed self, as less close friends than children who were described to belong to "the same team." This is an assumption vitiated by relatively high uncertainty, but there were significantly more common for boys who played team sports during recess described the girls (regardless of background), or boys from other ethnic backgrounds as a player in the "other team". One can speculate whether this may have based on the students' participation in team sports outside of school, which are usually geographically based, and many residential areas in the study city are relatively segregated. The children may simply have wanted to play together with those they usually play with. Participation in sports and other recreational activities can sometimes reinforce the segregationist tendencies among students (Carter, 2012; Epstein, 1985). However, a degree of structure or targeted efforts at non-academic activities have proven to be able to control the mix of students, fostering greater integration (Quiroz et al., 1996) and have thus been able to promote an inclusive school climate (Moody, 2001).

Conclusion

Childhood friendship's importance is well-acknowledged and the significance of cross-ethnic friendship ties in children has also been established. But there are significant developmental and ethical needs to consider when studying this sensitive topic. Previous research has suggested the benefits of visual methods and mixing of data sources to attend to children's experiences in developmentally and ethically appropriate investigations of sensitive topics with children. This study's approach was thus intended to address these concerns by employing a participatory visual method of friend nomination complemented by individual interviews and demographic data collected separately and triangulating the findings. Through this research, we aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of cross-ethnic friendship ties in a diverse school setting with younger elementary students as well as to the development of methods to study this and other sensitive topics with children.

We found that the friendship patterns among the students at the study school were in line with the previous research on children of this age; that friendship ties are more common among children with the same ethnicity; and that gender, interests, and shared activities play an important role. Our findings confirm other studies on childhood friendship patterns, which

suggests the validity of our approach, but, significantly, we were also able to avoid problematic areas of questioning or concept introduction in that we did not ask the children directly to consider their ethnicity in comparison or contrast with their friends'. This study can thus offer guidance regarding research methods for investigating multiethnic social integration and cross-ethnic friendship in schoolchildren as well as other sensitive topics.

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Shaping Citizenship in Highly Diverse Classes Through Inclusive Educational Practices[1]

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Abstract

In concentrative and inflexible educational systems such as Greece's, top-down educational policies shape the sociopolitical identity of future generations. This article investigates the role of inclusive education practices in shaping citizenship among middle school students in highly diverse classrooms. Through qualitative research involving 10 secondary education teachers, we examine the impact of collaborative learning, commonly used for research projects, with or without technology. Most teachers report that collaborative learning significantly motivates students, particularly when technology is used to display audio-visual materials. Specifically, 8 out of 10 teachers favor research projects that incorporate technology, as it appears to highly engage minority students.

Teachers primarily use new technologies to initiate discussions and leverage audio-visual materials, and also incorporate ICT for teaching materials like worksheets and exercises. The study explores how ICT enhances student participation while noting the potential drawbacks of prolonged exposure to technology, such as reduced attention spans. Effective strategies highlighted include experiential activities, personalized learning, and adjusting cognitive demand levels. Additionally, the study addresses challenges in implementing these strategies, such as outdated curricula, high grading requirements, and students' difficulties in accessing information through technological or physical means. The developmental stage and classroom composition significantly influence the choice of instructional strategies.

This research underscores the importance of inclusive education practices in shaping citizenship in highly diverse classrooms. It demonstrates that the thoughtful integration of collaborative learning and technology can enhance motivation and participation. However, it also emphasizes the need to address structural challenges to maximize the benefits of these educational strategies. By addressing these challenges and leveraging inclusive practices, educators can better support the diverse needs of students, ultimately fostering more equitable and effective multicultural classrooms that prepare all students for active and engaged citizenship in a diverse and interconnected world.

Keywords: Multicultural education; secondary education; inclusive strategies; Northern Evros; citizenship

Introduction

> Some of their good practices are not yet instilled institutionally, so teachers trying to foster a democratic habitus feel isolated within their institutions and wider society. Transferring universal declarations and ethics into daily practice cannot be done by teachers alone, but requires the examples and actions of adults in society at large. (Dusi, et al., 2012, p.1410)

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Nikoltsioudi, K. & Tsioumis, K. (2024). Shaping Citizenship in Highly Diverse Classes Through Inclusive Educational Practices. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 114-129. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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Addressing diversity and plurality within schools has become increasingly crucial due to the complexities introduced by globalization and the existence of ethnic minorities in Europe, alongside particular political and societal tensions. For at least the past twenty years, the cultural pluralism that characterizes Greek society has also been reflected in Greek public schools. According to data from the Institute for Education of Diaspora and Intercultural Studies (IPODE), approximately 10% of the total student population in Greek schools consists of repatriated and foreign students. Beyond repatriated and foreign students, the multicultural profile of Greek schools also includes Muslim students from Western Thrace, and other regions, students who adhere to different religions and denominations, and students from the cultural minority of Roma, among others (Kesidou, 2009).

Consequently, one of the primary challenges of intercultural education is teaching younger generations how to navigate pluralism and respect diverse viewpoints. Educational practice is not on compensating for any deficits but rather on leveraging the linguistic and cultural differences that exist within a diverse classroom for the benefit of all students, both minority and native. In other words, intercultural education views the cultural pluralism present in the classroom and school as a unique opportunity that allows children, regardless of their background, to interact and learn to live with others who are "different." This approach aims to develop "intercultural awareness" and the ability for "intercultural communication," which are now considered essential skills for 21st-century education (Kesidou, 2008, p. 15-16).

Teachers, in this case, play a crucial role in integrating multicultural education into their classrooms and influencing the curriculum with their values, perspectives, and teaching styles (Banks, 1993). Their behavior in the classroom is essential for helping all students reach their potential, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, language, or exceptionality. To better meet the needs of a culturally diverse student population, teachers may need to investigate and adapt their teaching and learning styles (Ramsey, 1987).

The contemporary Greek school is characterized by cultural heterogeneity, with the number of non-native students in general school classes having increased significantly in recent years. This reality, combined with the individual differences of students in terms of learning prerequisites, renders the educator's task particularly demanding. Pedagogical approaches such as Intercultural Education and differentiated instruction appear to provide educators with appropriate knowledge and methods for a more effective and pedagogical response to this heterogeneity. A characteristic example of a multicultural student population can be found in the secondary education classrooms in Northern Evros, where, in addition to the non-native students who have been integrated in recent years, a consistent number of students from the Muslim minority, with very distinct characteristics and needs, are also enrolled. The study examined specifically the strategies employed by teachers in implementing the curriculum and educational materials for diverse in culture, ethnicity, religion and language student groups residing in a remote, primarily agricultural area, the challenges and the role to building up a sense of citizenship to these students.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this educational research are multifaceted and aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of teaching practices in culturally diverse classrooms. First, the study seeks to detect both traditional and innovative strategies that teachers report implementing to enhance learning, engagement, and critical thinking among diverse student

populations. Second, it aims to identify the main challenges and restrictions that educators face when implementing innovative strategies. Additionally, the research investigates the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in improving student engagement, expanding learning opportunities, and overcoming language barriers. Lastly, it aims to underline the future impact of inclusive practices on shaping students' identity and civic engagement, thereby contributing to the development of more equitable and effective educational environments.

Methodology

Regarding the collection of data, the study relied upon a sample of 10 active teachers from four different Secondary Education school units: three middle schools and one high school. These teachers were selected based on their availability and were informed beforehand about the purpose and duration of the research. The teachers' evaluations hold significant weight as they are influential in shaping school culture and serve as key ideological standards. Therefore, their insights provide a reliable criterion for studying the institutional encouragement they receive at the level of educational policy implementation (Tsioumis, 2010).

All participants hail from the region of East Macedonia and Thrace, with an average age of 48.7 years. The sample consists of 3 men and 7 women, with diverse initial studies. Specifically, 9 of the teachers are graduates from Humanities and Social Sciences departments: 3 in Philology, 1 in History & Archeology, 2 in Philosophy, Pedagogy & Psychology, 1 in English Literature, 1 in German Literature, and 1 in Theology. Additionally, one teacher holds a degree in Mathematics. Moreover, one participant has a second degree, and six possess postgraduate degrees, which ensures their familiarity with the research subject. Two teachers hold positions of responsibility as deputy principals, and their seniority in Northern Evros schools ranges from 5 to 23 years. This range allows for a balanced perspective from both more and less experienced teachers. Therefore, the main focus is on the variety of the participants' views rather than pointing out even the slightest deviations

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, a qualitative research method that allowed us to delve deeply into the educators' insights and experiences (Frydaki, 2015, pp. 225-6). This approach facilitated the exploration of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the integration of technology, multicultural education, and inclusive pedagogy in their classrooms and allows an in-depth examination of the issues under investigation. The semi-structured interviews provided the teachers with ample time to reflect on and organize their thoughts regarding their experiences and roles, effectively bringing out and interpreting the significance of their insights through qualitative representation. Additionally, our approach incorporated elements of exploratory interviews, following Cohen & Manion's (2002) typology. This method aims to generate new hypotheses by allowing participants to freely communicate their experiences and emotionally engage with the issues at hand (Paraskevopoulou-Kollia, 2008).

The subsequent sections will provide a detailed analysis of the strategies educators employ, the challenges they face, and the implications for policy and practice in multicultural education.

Findings

Building Bridges: Inclusive Intercultural Interventions

Inclusive intercultural interventions are vital in shaping citizenship in highly diverse classrooms. Collaborative learning serves as a foundational strategy, promoting mutual support and learning through discussion. By forming heterogeneous groups, teachers enhance the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky), allowing students of varying abilities to support one another. These groups are adjusted based on sociocultural theories and the teacher's experience. E1 highlights,

> *I rely on sociocultural theories, which consider that there is a Zone of Imminent Development, while in Piaget's constructivist theory. Piaget talked about groups between equal members, they should be of the same cognitive level, so in order for it to work the Zone of Imminent Development, let there be one who is better at math and one who is not so good. [...] another thing I consider important is group work, where students can, in a heterogeneous environment, start to adopt a mindset of helping and being helped. This is not easy; I now follow specific strategies for forming groups, which have emerged from the literature but mainly from my experience, meaning what works and what doesn't.* (E1)

Continuous assessment and reorganization of groups ensure optimal results. Sociometry is used to understand classroom dynamics, considering students' preferences and rejections for **group formation**. This helps identify isolated or negatively characterized students, who then receive special attention to ensure their inclusion.

Adapting teaching methods is another critical strategy. Instruction is gradually modified based on the difficulty of concepts, with differentiated materials accounting for varying Greek language proficiency levels. Students with difficulties are supported through simplification of concepts and a focus on basic knowledge.

Creating a favorable learning environment is essential which can be achieved through special classroom arrangements and the creation of a space where students feel comfortable and safe are vital components, notes E1. Actions aimed at developing collaborative skills include promoting activities that enhance collaboration among students and organizing regular reflective sessions to evaluate collaborative work.

> *It requires activities for the groups to become truly collaborative. You don't always succeed; it's not easy at all, especially in a competitive society and without students having prior experience of working together. There are misconceptions among the students, parents, and tutors. It is not easy at all, and it's not easy to do this for four hours a week. If it were for many hours, like in elementary school, it would be much easier because you have the same students and the same teacher. Here, it is more difficult. Now, if many teachers collaborated, things would certainly be different.* (E1)

Cultivating Engagement: Effective Learning Strategies

The findings highlight the importance of collaborative learning, a method widely favored for its ability to motivate students, particularly through research projects conducted with or without technology. Educators noted that collaborative learning promotes engagement by fostering group projects and peer support, allowing students to learn from one another and build a sense of community. Technological tools were found to enhance this process significantly, with audiovisual materials and educational software making learning more dynamic and interactive. Almost all teachers (8 out of 10) prefer research projects with the

parallel use of technological means to present audiovisual material, as it seems to motivate minority students significantly. One of them mentioned that:

> *All these [minority] children, when they are not with others, with the dominant group of Christians, are more talkative and more willing to participate, that is a given. Perhaps with computers, with less use of language, because language is their problem, whether writing or on the computer or anywhere else... let's say you can have them gather some images on a topic.* (E6)

Role-based activities, which assign specific roles to each student, were reported to ensure active participation by giving students a sense of responsibility and ownership over their learning.

When ICT is involved, several teachers mention, without being the only solution for all problems as prolonged exposure to technology contributes to reduced attention student participation is enhanced in duration and numbers. Reference is also made mainly to experiential activities, research works (project), utilization of terms in the children's native language (e.g., Muslim children), sociometrics, personalized learning, adjustment of the degree of difficulty of the cognitive demand, two-speed classroom.

The teachers emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity, integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum to make learning more relevant and respectful of their identities. In the diverse setting of religious education, educators are finding innovative ways to engage students from various backgrounds. By incorporating projects that allow students to explore and present their cultural perspectives, teachers are fostering a more inclusive and interactive learning environment. This approach not only enhances understanding and respect for different cultures but also encourages active participation from all students, especially referring to students from the minority.

> *They participate a lot, and I am very pleased—I experience it with them because I enjoy it too. The good thing is that they want to show the Islamic perspective on some basic issues such as charity, forgiveness, suicide, and social issues. They do projects, presenting their own views and the common elements. Practices like these, I believe, integrate them into many aspects of the curriculum.* (E3)

> *In the context of the literature class, there are moments that provide opportunities, especially when we discuss customs or practices from different cultures.* (E7)

> *They have spoken to us many times about their holidays, about Ramadan, about their Bayram, etc., about their fasting, mainly in presentations but also on a daily basis. In May, when Ramadan starts, we wish them well and their other classmates wish them a good Ramadan. When Bayram arrives, they are wished well for their holiday. They bring sweets here, like baklava and Turkish delight, and they share them with us. There are also their own theology teachers, those of the Quran, who mostly conduct joint lessons with our school's theology teacher, discussing how each religion views things. All these activities bring things a bit closer together.* (E4)

Creative projects, such as model building and other hands-on activities, were particularly effective in capturing students' interest and encouraging active learning.

Highlighting the effectiveness of hands-on learning, one educator describes how a creative project based on the Odyssey led to remarkable student engagement and comprehension.

> *Experiential! Do it with your hands. When they were studying the Odyssey three years ago, I saw a video where they used straws and sticks, skewers, to make Odysseus's boat. Until then, we would just talk about constellations here and there, and 18 days... When I told them to make Odysseus's raft and showed them a video from YouTube, the next day, I had 17 rafts, each more beautiful than the other. A*

> *child who could never describe it managed to make it, or draw Calypso's cave. They might not be able to articulate everything they understand, but somehow...* (E8)

Out of all the educators, two (2/10) mention that educational drama is an instructional tool that highly motivates students, contributes to the expression and communication of the multiculturalism characterizing the class, and facilitates the connection of the teaching subject with the present. An educator's observations reveal that even minimal dramatization activities, such as rewriting and acting out scenes from the Iliad, can significantly enhance student involvement by allowing students to explore different perspectives in a memorable way, especially in diverse classrooms.

> *I noticed last year and this year that they really enjoy even a basic form of dramatization. For example, in the Iliad, they had an assignment to intervene in the story during the scene of Hector and Andromache's meeting, to intervene and write their own scene as they wanted, even changing the names and the version of the story, putting in other heroes, and then creating a dialogue like the original text. After preparing this assignment, each pair, Hector and Andromache, would come forward to present their dialogue. To my great surprise, in a class supposedly uninterested, with many Muslim students and repatriates, everyone got involved and enjoyed the dialogue presentation, playing the role each had chosen. They intervened in the story, added their own elements, made plot twists, and this worked—intervening in the text, putting their own stamp on it, and then dramatizing it, even minimally, to present it.* (E9)

Interdisciplinary learning in addition to personal interaction between teachers and students was found to be crucial in building trust and motivation, reinforcing the importance of interpersonal relationships in the educational process and real-life scenarios.

> *In our literature classes, we are given opportunities, for example, in the second year of high school we discuss racism. It's a very good opportunity, since it's part of the curriculum, to ask the students if they have experienced any negative behavior against them. They don't talk easily about such issues, and I think they hide their identity a bit even when they have the chance.* (E2)

Last but not least, building confidence, social, and language skills is achieved through group work. E7 mentioned that group work can motivate minority students, helping them communicate more and feel that they have contributed to the final outcome, thus improving their social and language skills.

The composition and developmental stage of the class significantly impact the selection of strategies. E5 pointed out that each class comprises individuals with different reactions, which necessitates a flexible approach. Teachers need a toolbox of actions and strategies, assessing students and adapting accordingly. Middle school is particularly challenging due to students' instability, tiredness, and aggression, requiring experienced teachers to be flexible.

Overall, these strategies collectively create a rich and engaging learning environment, fostering equity and effective learning for all students. By incorporating diverse and inclusive practices, secondary school educators can cultivate a garden of engagement, where every student has the opportunity to thrive and develop as a responsible, active citizen.

Surmounting the Barriers of Implementation

Educators have also identified several significant barriers to the effective implementation of innovative strategies. These obstacles reveal the complexities of integrating inclusive methods within the constraints of the current educational landscape.

One major challenge is the rapid pacing of the curriculum. The swift progression through material makes it difficult for teachers to consistently apply new strategies, often leaving little time for innovative approaches. Additionally, outdated lessons that are not aligned with modern educational practices further hinder the effectiveness of new methods, as they fail to address current educational needs and standards.

A primary theme that emerges is the tension between the structure of the curriculum and the autonomy of teachers within that framework. While many educators find the curriculum restrictive, they also appreciate the flexibility it provides for adapting lesson plans. E1 acknowledges that there are several contradictions concerning the scope of autonomous action. Although teachers have the ability to design their lessons, the guidelines provided to them are often unclear and restrictive.

> *The Curriculum Framework, I believe, is a major issue. It hasn't been updated in decades, and I think that, not just for these specific students but generally, our curriculum for middle school, which is outdated, significantly hinders the learning process. New subjects have been added, new materials have emerged, and new teaching and examination methods have appeared, but the curriculum itself hasn't been updated. Therefore, whatever new comes in cannot bear fruit when the core structure you need to work with is ancient.* (E9)

One key challenge in implementing interdisciplinary lessons is the allocation of teaching time, which often limits the depth of exploration and the ability to address students' understanding comprehensively.

> *The curriculum that needs to be covered is an issue because you can't insist on certain things for too long since you need to move on and cover the material. Of course, I believe that covering the material for what purpose, for what reason, when the majority of the class hasn't understood the previous material? How can you proceed further, and why rush? Nevertheless, the curriculum is a stress, a duty that needs to be fulfilled, and in this sense, you don't have as much time as you'd like to focus on and revisit some things. Generally, both I and others tend to take liberties and try to intervene in the curriculum in various ways to simplify things and achieve our goals, given that there's no possibility through the syllabus or schedule to do something else.* (E9)

A major challenge is, in addition, the inadequacy of current textbooks. Four out of ten educators deem these materials outdated and unsuitable for bilingual and multilingual students. Educator E2 notes,

> *The textbooks, dating from 1998, should have been updated. They do not support students with linguistic challenges well. Even Greek-speaking students find them difficult. While exposure to such texts has its merits, they do not cater to our region's needs. We must explore alternative methods and utilize modern tools like the internet and projectors for more relevant content.* (E2)

E10 criticizes state-provided textbooks as unsuitable due to their poor quality "These books are poorly written and full of errors. They fail to stimulate students, who often use superior materials in their private tutoring sessions,"

These observations highlight a crucial need for updated and culturally relevant educational resources. The current textbooks fall short in meeting the diverse needs of students, forcing educators to seek out supplementary methods and materials.

High academic demands also place significant pressure on teachers. The extensive content coverage required often limits the opportunity to incorporate engaging or creative teaching methods as well as the excessive volume of content in the curriculum, which hinders the

possibility of student collaboration and discovery, forcing teachers to prioritize coverage over deeper engagement.

> *The problem we have is with the amount of content; it's so much that it can only be covered when a teacher is at the board. It's not designed for being covered through group work, student collaboration, exploration, or discovery of knowledge, etc. They say it in theory, but the content is such that it's not feasible. If you try to do it differently, you end up saying that you won't have time to cover everything and start rushing. The curriculum should be 50% less.* (E1)

Language barriers exacerbate this issue, as bilingual and multilingual students struggle with basic vocabulary and concepts in both Greek and their native languages. This struggle affects their comprehension of more complex topics and their overall participation in class activities. Balancing the need for comprehensive curriculum coverage with providing individualized support remains a persistent challenge.

Resistance from various education "players"—including students, parents, and policies — further complicates implementation. Misconceptions and incorrect perceptions about inclusive practices create additional hurdles, especially when time for addressing these issues is limited. Structural and collaborative challenges within the educational system, such as inadequate teacher collaboration and an inflexible educational timetable, also impede the effective application of new strategies.

The diverse composition of classrooms adds another layer of complexity. The individual differences among students require constant adaptation of strategies, making consistent application a daunting task. Furthermore, a lack of adequate teacher training and professional development in teaching diverse learners, along with limited availability of specialized educational resources and materials, contributes to the difficulties educators face (Tsrektsi, 2013).

ICT in Diverse Classrooms

In our investigation of how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) influences student engagement and learning in secondary education, we explored teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of incorporating new technologies in diverse classrooms. Our findings reveal a nuanced landscape where ICT serves as both a powerful tool and a potential stumbling block in fostering an inclusive educational environment. In terms of the strategies in which teachers tend to use new technologies in their teaching, there is a reference mainly to experiential activities, research projects (projects), their utilization as a starting point for discussion with the use of audiovisual material, while there are also individual reports, where the use of ICT is exploited as a source of teaching material (worksheets, exercises).

It should be noted here that the rooms of the school units, in which the participants work, are all equipped with the necessary technological means (PC, video projector, interactive board, etc.) Several of the teachers (4/10) consider it necessary to use technologies in their teaching, as it is an efficient means of managing the educational needs of their students.

Teachers consistently highlight the significant role of ICT in enhancing classroom dynamics. The majority of educators report that well-equipped classrooms, featuring tools like PCs, projectors, and interactive whiteboards, are essential for meeting diverse educational needs. Approximately 40% of teachers deem ICT indispensable for managing their students' varied

learning requirements, noting that technological tools facilitate a more dynamic and engaging lesson delivery. E4, for instance, underscores the impact of using audiovisual materials to deepen students' understanding, saying, "The movie or video they watch clearly plays a significant role in absorbing certain things that might otherwise go unnoticed if I were to convey them verbally."

The students will also present their projects using new technologies. They will bring their flash drives with their projects. Handing it to me printed out in the traditional method holds no interest. Presenting it together with their classmates – the four or five who worked on it – sharing it with us, and then discussing it with the whole class to draw some conclusions together. Dividing the lesson into these categories… the use of new technologies is very beneficial, with the caveats of the internet always being that we read about intellectual property rights and, of course, that not everything online is true."

Additionally, some delve deeper into the topic, detailing the process of using ICT in lesson planning. Specifically, E7 mentions that she utilizes ICT as much as possible, particularly "during the presentation of new lessons. There is no way I will enter the classroom without the help of the interactive whiteboard. Sometimes, I use online exercises, asking them to solve the exercise with the help of the computer right then and there. I ask them to bring me material they have gathered from the internet. [...] I don't have high-level demands, but they engage and participate actively. This is the part that interests them the most."

E5 The lesson outline is made in PowerPoint, and along with the photos they will see and other things we will discuss, I even include sources directly in the PowerPoint. They definitely pay more attention because, to show the PowerPoint, I stand at the board; I never sit at the desk. This movement and the visuals capture their attention more. I also make sure to move among the desks so they don't "fall asleep," making them move and follow along, participate as much as possible with questions and discussions."

E6 uses ICT for short group research projects, noting, "I avoid showing only videos or long videos because I believe that, although they may not make noise, they become passive receivers of something they do all day long. They are on their phones all day watching videos. They show interest in solving exercises I give them with Hot Potatoes, like multiple-choice questions, even in ancient Greek. Or I might ask them to search, research, and find information. [...] Usually, these are two-hour projects. [...] Since we have the capability, there are many computers in the school, and these kids search in groups for a topic I give them and then present it."

1. **Effectiveness and Accessibility**

   Teachers consistently highlight the significant role of ICT in enhancing classroom dynamics. Most of the educator's report that well-equipped classrooms, featuring tools like PCs, projectors, and interactive whiteboards, are essential for meeting diverse educational needs. Approximately 40% of teachers deem ICT indispensable for managing their students' varied learning requirements, noting that technological tools facilitate a more dynamic and engaging lesson delivery. E4, for instance, underscores the impact of using audiovisual materials to deepen students' understanding, saying, "The movie or video they watch clearly plays a significant role in absorbing certain things that might otherwise go unnoticed if I were to convey them verbally."

2. **Motivation and Engagement**
   ICT proves to be a strong motivator, significantly enhancing student participation and enjoyment. Teachers report that digital resources and interactive presentations help maintain students' interest and promote active involvement. E7 emphasizes the effectiveness of incorporating online exercises and digital tools during lesson presentations, noting that such methods "engage and participate actively" in a way that traditional teaching methods often do not.

3. **Teaching Strategies**
   The strategies employed by educators illustrate the varied applications of ICT in lesson planning. Teachers use experiential activities, research projects, and audiovisual materials to create a rich learning environment. E5, for example, utilizes PowerPoint to make lessons more engaging, integrating photos and sources directly into presentations. Similarly, E6 employs ICT for short-term group projects, finding that students are more involved when using digital tools to research and present their findings.

4. **Challenges and Considerations**
   Despite its advantages, ICT use is not without challenges. E5 points out that the extensive use of technology can sometimes lead to decreased student participation, as students become accustomed to a faster-paced, more visually stimulating environment. This can result in a passive reception of information if not managed interactively. Furthermore, the preparation of digital content can be time-consuming, and balancing ICT integration with traditional teaching methods requires careful consideration.

5. **Student Interaction**
   Multimedia content is noted for enhancing student interaction, enabling collaboration, and fostering a deeper understanding of subject matter. By integrating digital resources, teachers create opportunities for richer discussions and more collaborative learning experiences. However, as E7 acknowledges, the common language of technology helps bridge gaps but does not entirely replace the need for differentiated instruction based on individual student needs.

6. **Inclusivity and Support**
   ICT helps address the linguistic and cultural diversity in classrooms by providing a common platform for communication and learning. It supports students from various backgrounds and encourages participation from those who might otherwise be marginalized. Nevertheless, ongoing professional development is necessary to effectively balance ICT use with traditional teaching methods and to address the diverse needs of all students.

Teachers recognize that while ICT offers substantial benefits, it is not a panacea for all educational challenges. The integration of technology must be complemented by traditional pedagogical strategies and supported by continuous professional development. As E7 reflects, *"We try to use technology a little, because it is a common language, nothing more is needed, all the children know it, as much as we can and we limit our requirements a little to*

the level of speech production, either spoken or written. In the class as a whole, I will necessarily differentiate myself. I will have different requirements from some, so I treat the cases with difficulty in understanding basic concepts a little more individually."

Overall, the research underscores the critical role of ICT in modern education while also highlighting the need for thoughtful implementation and professional growth to fully harness its potential in diverse classroom settings.

Shaping Citizenship

The goal of intercultural education is to prepare students as citizens of a multicultural society by fostering mutual respect and acceptance of diversity. There are multiple conceptions of the meaning of democratic citizenship education (civic, social, human rights, political, etc.). There is a close link between the model of citizenship which a society adopts and the practices promoted by their educational institutions (Dusi et al., 2012)

Inclusion in education serves as a cornerstone for fostering a sense of belonging among students from diverse backgrounds. By addressing the varied needs of our learners, we promote equity, ensuring that every student feels valued and has an equal opportunity to succeed. This commitment to inclusivity not only supports academic achievement but also cultivates a sense of belonging and self-worth, which is essential in today's interconnected world. Inclusive practices can profoundly impact students and effectively integrating multicultural education into the classroom goes beyond teaching students about different cultures. It also demonstrates how they can apply this knowledge to improve themselves and contribute positively to their families, communities, societies, and the world, making it a better place for everyone (Tarman, 2011).

Moreover, these practices play a crucial role in developing intercultural competence. In a society where global interactions are commonplace, understanding and respecting cultural differences are indispensable skills. Our educational strategies immerse students in diverse cultural experiences, preparing them to navigate and contribute meaningfully to a multicultural world. This exposure helps students appreciate varying perspectives and fosters a greater understanding of global issues.

Collaborative learning and interactive methods enhance social skills that are vital for personal and professional success. Through activities designed to build communication, teamwork, and empathy, students are equipped with the tools needed for effective interpersonal interactions. This approach not only enriches their academic experience but also prepares them to engage thoughtfully with others, both within their communities and beyond.

Encouraging civic engagement is another key benefit of inclusive education. By fostering an environment that values participation and community involvement, we inspire students to take an active role in societal issues. This engagement is especially important in times of sociopolitical disruption, as it empowers students to become proactive citizens who understand the significance of their contributions to societal well-being.

Despite these benefits, implementing inclusive educational strategies is not without its challenges. One major hurdle is the resource intensity required to effectively execute these practices. From the financial investment in professional development to the acquisition of

necessary educational tools, the demands can be considerable. Yet, these investments are essential for maintaining the relevance and efficacy of our teaching methods.

Additionally, managing the diverse needs of students introduces complex dynamics that can sometimes lead to cultural misunderstandings or conflicts. Navigating these complexities requires a nuanced approach and continuous effort to create a respectful and inclusive classroom environment.

Language barriers also present a significant challenge. Ensuring that all students can engage with the curriculum despite differences in language proficiency requires innovative solutions and ongoing support. Addressing these barriers is crucial for enabling full participation and understanding.

Resistance to change further complicates the implementation of new educational strategies. Some students, parents, and educators may prefer traditional methods and view new approaches with skepticism. Overcoming this resistance involves demonstrating the value of innovative practices and fostering a culture of openness and adaptability.

By leveraging the benefits of inclusive education and addressing its inherent challenges with creativity and resilience, we can foster a generation of informed, compassionate, and active global citizens.

Regarding the extent to which teachers believe they provide opportunities for minority students to **express their identity** within the school context, the expression of an individual's intercultural identity can be additive rather than isolating or marginalizing, especially in a dominant cultural environment like the school (Mantzaniadou, 2009). As a sub-question, the significance teachers place on empowering their students' identities was explored.

Encouragingly, all teachers strive to provide minority students with opportunities to share elements of their culture, whether within the classroom or through school-organized activities. Specifically, 7 out of 10 teachers mentioned implementing practices during their lessons, and half of the total number of teachers reported being directly or indirectly involved in school activities aimed at fostering intercultural interaction among students.

Data indicate that most teachers design their lessons and operate using intercultural practices, often prompted by the subject matter they teach. Many emphasize building trust with their students. For instance, E4 stated, "I strive to let everyone voice their opinion. Initially, I faced difficulty because the students didn’t know me. There is a lack of trust at the beginning of the year, but gradually, familiarity grows, and the students start to respond. There's a phenomenon where a student is too shy to speak up, but their written work is excellent. I had Muslim female students who were very quiet initially, but their written assignments were outstanding, above average. They admitted they were shy and feared being mocked, but their writing was superb in spelling and syntax." E2 considers building trust with the children through interpersonal contact to be the most effective practice.

E2: "Personally, I have found personal contact to be very important. With these children, I try, and I enjoy it, and they respond as well, and we create a personal connection. We talk during breaks whenever we can and have the opportunity. I learn from these children. Many of them also work; they might act a certain way at school, but they work during the summers, helping their parents in the fields or with the animals. This is significant to me, showing a quality and a sense of contribution. So, we have conversations. As a 'strategy,' interpersonal contact is key."

Conclusion

In the context of an increasingly globalized world on the verge of sociopolitical disruption, the role of education in shaping citizenship and fostering intercultural competence is more critical than ever.

The implications of this research call for significant reforms in policy and practice to better support students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Promoting cultural diversity and inclusion within educational settings should be a priority for policy makers. Additionally, professional development programs focused on cultural competence and inclusive pedagogy are crucial for equipping teachers to meet the varied needs of their students.

A shift toward more flexible, learner-centered curriculum designs is necessary to accommodate the diverse needs of students. Enhanced teacher training and stronger institutional support are also essential to address the specific educational challenges faced by minority students. Implementing these changes will contribute to creating a more supportive and equitable learning environment.

The research focused on how collaborative learning in diverse groups enhances students' social skills, empathy, and teamwork abilities. By promoting mutual support and discussion, collaborative learning can create a supportive learning environment where students from various backgrounds feel valued and included. Differentiated instruction and culturally sensitive teaching methods affect students' sense of belonging, motivation, and academic performance. By incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum and adapting teaching methods to varying language proficiency levels, educators can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

However, implementing these strategies is not without challenges. The study will identify the primary obstacles educators face when applying inclusive practices and ICT in multicultural classrooms. These challenges include resource intensity, managing diverse needs, overcoming language barriers, and resistance to change from students, parents, and educators accustomed to traditional teaching methods. By addressing these challenges, the research aims to provide practical solutions for educators. The integration of ICT in multicultural classrooms is another focal point of this research. The study will examine the impact of ICT tools, such as interactive whiteboards, projectors, and educational software, on student engagement, comprehension, and retention. By utilizing these technological means, educators refer to more dynamic and interactive lessons that are enhancing the learning experience for students from different ethnicities. The study also demonstrated how ICT can be used to facilitate the presentation of projects and encourage active participation through digital resources.

Future research should explore the long-term impacts of educational practices on identity formation and social integration to further refine and develop effective educational strategies and policies.

Overall, by fostering a participatory and safe community within the classroom, these strategies can motivate students to become more involved in civic matters, consider decision-making roles in their communities, recognize the importance of active citizenship. As social and educational environments become more diverse, it is crucial for educators to receive continuous training on effective strategies for teaching multicultural and multilingual students.

That change, says Cummins (2004, p.11), 'will come only when educators walk in their classrooms burdened, not by the anger of the past and the disdain of the present, but with their own identities focused on transforming the social futures towards which their students are travelling (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2006, p.36).

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Youth Participation Workers as Social and Institutional Interpreters[1]

Roy Smith[2]

Abstract

English Youth work exists on the fringes of professional practice, struggling for political recognition and suspicious of attempts to control its agenda. It is often associated with informal and organic approaches to work with young people that are people-centred and support them to influence their world. Yet, youth work is often funded and directed by state or faith-based institutions that prioritise control and safeguarding over support for young people's democratic learning and engagement. Their unique position places youth workers on a fault line between the lifeworld and system (Habermas, 1987). They are part of the system while aiming to support young people to influence it. Youth participation work can be understood as a form of interpretation, navigating various 'ecologies' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and connecting the broader systems surrounding young people with their lived experiences.

This paper explores the thoughts and experiences of young people and youth participation workers from across England who took part in a year-long series of collaborative workshops, considering how to make participation work more meaningful and inclusive, and exploring the role of supportive adults.

The participants of this study value organic approaches that respond to young people's ideas, experiences and interactions and were critical of organisation-directed approaches they associated with institutional settings (including local authorities, schools, health, and voluntary organisations.) They saw a need for greater transparency about their aims and methods, ensuring that both young people and organisations understand the scope and democratic intentions of their practice. This paper concludes that participation workers navigating between lifeworld and system across the various 'ecologies' benefit from ongoing reflection and supervision to develop sensitive and considered judgement within their practice. Increasingly varied and networked approaches to participation work allow opportunities for greater flexibility and inclusion while enabling more organic and people-centred approaches.

Keywords: youth participation work; young people; democratic socialisation

Introduction

Adults supporting young people's democratic participation experience a range of conflicts and difficulties related to balancing the values, needs, wants, and experiences of young people with the demands and structures of the organisations that employ them. I have previously argued that "it may be helpful to explore alternative ways to present these conflicts that facilitate a better understanding of their complexity" (Smith, 2023, p. 87). This paper reframes the role of participation workers as one of interpretation between the various aspects of young people's lives and the organisations, communities, spaces and places where they spend their time. By understanding conflict in terms of interpretation it furthers the argument that conflict is not resolved but handled (Galtung, 1996), and that its handling through interpretation can lead to growth, learning and change for all involved. It draws from my PhD

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Smith, R. (2024). Youth Participation Workers as Social and Institutional Interpreters. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 130-142. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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research at the University of Huddersfield, which examines the role of participation workers, considering what advantages young people's participation and the barriers they face, the navigation of conflict over values and attitudes between young people, families, professionals and organisations and how young people can be better supported to participate in democratic processes.

Approach and Context

The primary research was conducted in England between 2021 and 2023. It involved participation workers from across the country in a series of workshops discussing different aspects of their practice. It also engaged young people from local and national youth participation organisations. The research took place against a backdrop of austerity, following a series of cuts to public services since 2010. The English youth sector has experienced significant financial difficulties in both the public and voluntary sectors, reducing access to support services and participation opportunities. Reduced funding has driven a shift from universal approaches toward increasingly targeted responses to those perceived as most needy or risky by authorities (Davies, 2019), such as NEET young people or young offenders, care-experienced young people or those with disabilities. However, it is fair to say that these trends had already started pre-2010 and were accelerated rather than created by austerity. More recently, attempts have been made to address gaps in the youth sector, with the government providing stronger guidance for local authorities on sufficient youth provision (*Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities' Youth Provision*, 2023). However, it is too early to see how these will impact young people and services.

The 4th July 2024 election presented two very different political outlooks for young people. The Conservative Party announced intentions to introduce a form of compulsory national service, with Prime Minister Sunak suggesting that this would tackle "unemployment and crime", offer "valuable work experience", as well as fostering "national spirit", and "create a shared sense of purpose among our young people and a renewed sense of pride in our country" (McKiernan & McGarvey, 2024). Meanwhile, the Labour Party pledged to cut the voting age from 18 to 16, with the opposition leader Keir Starmer arguing that "if you can work, if you can pay tax, if you can serve in your armed forces, then you ought to be able to vote" (Sherwood, 2024). These two distinct visions demonstrate the divide between rights-based and responsibility-based attitudes toward young people's participation and citizenship (Crick, 1998; Marshall & Bottomore, 1987), where young people's position and role in society continue to be debated. Those working with young people to encourage or develop their participation and democratic engagement must understand these divisions and are equally affected by them. The meaning of their work, the pressures and expectations of funders and government are as changeable as the lives of young people. Therefore, participation workers must be able to adapt their practice to their circumstances. If participation work is understood as a form of social and institutional interpretation, what challenges and issues might need to be considered to better understand its practice?

Discussion

Conceptual models used in youth participation emphasise different levels of leadership, influence or autonomy of young people compared to adults (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001). The workers involved in this study favoured informal and what I will describe as organic

approaches to participation, which tend to indicate a high level of youth leadership but also relate participation to young people's everyday lives (Bang & Eva, 1999; Percy-Smith et al., 2021). These approaches value work that emerges from young people's experiences, where workers guide young people toward their goals, reacting to their thoughts, actions, ideas, and experiences rather than organisational requests or worker direction. They value emergent possibilities over prescribed outcomes, preferring informal over formal engagement, even when working in formal settings and consider accidental and incidental learning that happens along the way.

Liberators or Operators of the System?

Youth participation workers in this study describe these organic approaches to their work in terms of liberation and empowerment, as they support young people in struggles with authority and the organisations they often represent. This position presents a dilemma for workers, who may be supporting a young person's struggle but are also "an operator of the system" (youth worker). Regardless of a participation worker's approach or liberationary aims, they represent their employer, often local or regional government and part of a system that young people may be struggling against. While their position offers opportunities for young people to influence or shape an organisation, they must broadly support the system's goals or face unemployment. This challenge may lead to participation work that focuses more on how an organisation interacts with young people and carries out its duties rather than working on whatever young people wish. Essentially, workers operate within the parameters of organisational and legal frameworks that may dictate what elements of its system are open to being influenced and which are not. Workers also have responsibilities for safeguarding young people, which override or actively oppose young people's wishes in certain circumstances. One worker spoke about how young people's views were less likely to be heard as risk and concern about them are heightened, giving the example of police dispersal zones that aim to tackle anti-social behaviours and indicating that young people's views are seldom heard in these situations.

Many young people recognise the limits associated with working with an organisation and, to a certain degree, accept them as a consequence of engaging with that organisation or activity:

We're stuck doing kind of what we're allowed to do. So, we can only meet here; we can only go to events that are run by other people, and we can do what's within those restrictions. (young woman, age 15)

Despite her statement, the young woman spoke positively about engaging with her local youth council and spoke passionately about what she had achieved. When young people engage voluntarily, they accept some limits on their freedom, complying to varying degrees with organisational rules and expectations. Workers describe engaging with young people informally, from within their organisational context. By valuing organic and informal approaches, while maintaining their connection with their organisation, they create a bridge between young people's everyday lives and political and systemic decision-making.

Balancing Emancipatory Ideals and Social Control Between Lifeworld and System

Workers in this study hold differing views on the dichotomy of liberation and social control and how it manifests in their work. Some suggest participation work creates an illusion of

democratic involvement that can have a pacifying influence, where young people gain an illusion of voice and control by sharing their views but remain powerless. In these situations, young people may feel they are involved, and so obliged to "toe the line" (youth participation worker) to maintain the position and progress they have gained. Others described how young people had achieved real change by working with organizations and democratic institutions such as local government. One worker questioned whether it was "wrong to educate young people to conform to society" (youth worker), arguing that understanding and conforming to some societal expectations is to young people's advantage as well as their society, assuming that the intentions of the state are not wholly exploitative. In this way, participation in democracy or democratic processes promotes the continuation of democracy and its processes. It has been argued that young people tend to broadly support the social and economic systems they grow up with (Flanagan, 2013), suggesting democratic socialization has a normative impact on young people. Deviating wildly from generally accepted societal expectations would likely disadvantage a young person in many aspects of their life, impacting their relationships, finances, social standing, health and well-being. Therefore, if participation workers want the young people they work with to thrive and do well in their lives, perhaps a certain amount of conformity should be expected to result from their work. This conformity does not preclude the need and role of challenge or disagreement, as it is possible to agree on broad views, such as supporting free health care, whilst disagreeing on how this should be delivered or financed. Instead of conformity to oppression, these disagreements might be characterized as conversations or dialogues happening between people's life experiences and the systems and organizations that impact their lives. In this way, participation can represent a form of social learning whereby 'power relationships manifest autonomy and dependency in both directions' (Wildemeersch et al., 1998, p. 2) in a continual process of negotiation. Young people's social interactions with each other, authorities and organizational representatives create new meanings and actions that are continually evolving. The worker's role as an interpreter is to assist both the young people and the organization in managing these negotiations and attempting to understand their meaning.

The concepts of lifeworld and system (Habermas, 1987) are useful for understanding this form of interpretation. Lifeworld refers to people's everyday lives, their families, values, and informal participation in society, and the system refers to the organizations, rules, and structures that govern aspects of people's lives. Habermas suggests that the lifeworld should influence the system but also needs to be protected from 'systems' influence and its attempts to colonies the lifeworld. This description suggests the lifeworld is fragile and characterizes the system as powerful and oppressive. Lifeworld and system can be portrayed as opposing forces in conflict. However, understanding these states or spaces as positive/negative, good/evil or helpful/harmful fails to understand that they can contain both possibilities. Both contain the potential for harm and oppression as well as hope and liberation but operate in different ways. The young people involved in this study spoke about how informal characteristics, such as the attitudes and behaviors of their peers, influence their decision to join a group, sometimes more so than its stated purpose, rules or procedures. However, the rules and procedures of a group may protect their freedoms and prevent discrimination. Indeed, legal frameworks and policies are key to struggles for equality and social justice (Ahmed, 2012). A more nuanced understanding views democratic activity as a collaboration between lifeworld and system, one where both system and lifeworld change and are changed through interaction with each other. One where 'professionals use the information coming out of boundary tensions between their own and their participants' lifeworlds and those of

the system' (Weil et al., 2005, p. 159) to interpret and negotiate meaning. This collaboration involves risks associated with inequality, the balance of representation and the management of power. Youth participation workers find themselves mediating these challenges and supporting understanding through translation, whether preparing young people to understand and navigate the systems around them or encouraging the system to attend to the needs of young people through advocacy.

Translating Between 'ecologies' & 'micro-polities'

Work that happens at the junction of the personal, private and political worlds of young people deals directly with issues related to identity, values and attitudes. Such work requires careful thought and reflection to consider its impact. One worker indicated:

> It's not just politics, but it's so closely ingrained with someone's identity and sense of self…it can have a much wider impact than just whatever your sessions about. (youth worker)

Participation work as interpretation, therefore, goes beyond the locations of lifeworld and system, including the various social contexts where young people develop their identities and sense of self. An ecological understanding of human development suggests that people develop their identity through a series of complex interactions in a variety of locations, starting with family and moving outwards to school, community, and eventually overarching political and social systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Interactions between young people's various social groups provide them with experiences of difference, demonstrating inequality and views that deviate from those of their parents or immediate community. Youth clubs, school classes, faith groups, and afterschool clubs all become micro-polities (Flanagan, 2013), where young people are exposed to different views and ideas, interacting, learning and forming their own perspectives. Some evidence suggests engagement with multiple voluntary groups (Quintelier, 2008) and that mixing with culturally diverse networks promotes further participation (Quintelier, 2009). Participation workers and other adults supporting young people's engagement have a role in understanding and supporting connections between such groups, both recruiting and maintaining their membership.

Working across these ecologies or micro-polities reminds us of the importance of understanding that political values can be deeply personal and that what is expressed in one location can have different meanings and resonance in others. For example, a discussion over animal rights in a school setting may be experienced differently by a young person whose family are involved in farming and one whose family are all vegans. The interaction between young people and how potential conflicts are navigated, along with many other factors, will affect what each takes away from the discussion and how it impacts their views in the future. This impacts both feelings about the subject discussed and on the act of discussing differences of opinion, politics and lifestyle in that particular setting. Youth Participation Workers support young people's navigation of these conflicts, helping each other understand or interpret the differences in their personal and systemic ecologies that may not always be obvious. If participation workers hope to foster further democratic participation, they must handle dialogue and conflicts in ways that both promote the sharing of differences and help young people feel comfortable to continue contributing following any disagreements.

Experiential, Relational and Democratic Youth Work

Approaches that value organic participation and see participation as connecting with young people's lifeworld can be linked to shifts observed toward young people favouring participation in everyday experiences and away from more formal participation such as joining political parties or unions (Bang & Eva, 1999; Percy-Smith et al., 2021). Rather than focusing on adult-led consultative approaches, the participation workers in this study were interested in creating spaces where "young people know they can go if they want to make a change" (youth worker). These spaces respond to young people's interests and experiences and are activated by their presence and engagement. One participant suggested they offer:

> That consistent relational response, being there for the young person over a period of time…supporting them to have their very basic needs met. But having alongside that, that continuous dialogue, and relating it to other aspects constantly or supporting them to see that wider picture. (youth worker)

Youth work and its organic approach to participation can provide some helpful insight into how to create spaces that support everyday participation. Organic practice could imply a lack of structure or direction. However, despite its informality, youth work is a deliberate practice. It is relational in that it deals with social interactions (Batsleer et al., 2021) and holds democratic potential because youth workspaces are "deliberately curated by skilled youth workers, in collaboration with young people" (de St Croix & Doherty, 2023, p. 11). This relational, collaborative curation is at the heart of youth work's potential as a democratic practice. Youth workspaces are created with young people working in partnership with adults. When these spaces are created through collaboration, young people are not only being encouraged to share their views and opinions in adult spaces; they are invited to participate in a micro-democracy where they are founding citizens. Workers hold important roles in these collaborations, attending not only to those who engage but also to those who join, careful to "create spaces without institutionalizing…them" (Batsleer et al., 2021, p. 214). Young people shape these spaces, but workers must find room for new young people who join to continue to shape and change these spaces, which can involve both opening and closing of new spaces to enable change.

Contextualizing Individual Needs as Social Issues and the Role of Identification

Some workers described resisting the neoliberal trend towards individualization (Taylor et al., 2018), where personal problems are blamed on character faults or personal circumstances to be tackled or overcome. They spoke about consciousness-raising (Watts et al., 2011) drawing on the work on theories of education that link personal problems with their societal contexts (Freire, 1965). They aim to raise awareness and help young people think about the systemic causes and solutions that might help them and others. This approach aims to build solutions that respond to personal challenges by working with others. One worker spoke about encouraging a young person to support another, to help both. This approach has the potential to help a young person understand their own challenges differently and to build solidarity and connections with their peers.

> You might have a 14-year-old feeling pretty low; families in problems at home, they come to the homework club first, and then they see someone who is 12. And then I'll say to them: they're struggling. Can you help them? And all of a sudden, they feel a bit better themselves; they're not…the lowest person in the group; they're helping somebody else. (youth worker)

This approach creates the potential for greater collectivity by building social connections. It recognizes that personal problems may have external solutions or understands them as normal experiences best tackled by working alongside others. By working together, it may be possible to reframe personal challenges that impact multiple people and work toward societal solutions.

When engaging in participation work, young people usually choose to join a group and work with others socially. This choice contrasts with other settings where their socialization is limited to default groups formed through compulsory or accidental engagement, such as with their family, at school or in their immediate neighborhood. Situations, where participation requires an active choice involve some of the challenges described earlier around organic forms of inclusion and exclusion. Some young people involved in this study linked their decision to participate with their ability to make connections between their personal identity, youth groups, workers and aims of participation work.

> Children specifically need to have someone that they relate with and someone that they identify with as well so that they can feel valued as well…It'll be helpful if services find different ways to connect with young people. (young person)

They felt connections between their personal identity and that of their workers, and the activities they participated in supported their confidence and likelihood of participating further. This view supports recognition theory, which suggests recognition of identity is needed to underpin redistributive forms of social justice (Fraser, 2007) helping those marginalized in their efforts to effect change. In youth work, there has been discussion of how identification with street-based youth workers around fashion and cultural interests helps build relationships and support engagement (Glynn et al., 2018). These discussions suggest cultural connections between workers and young people encourage the participation of marginalized young people. Finding common ground or understanding of young people's interests aids workers engaged in social, political and institutional interpretation by signifying familiarity with their interests, values and potentially their lifeworld. These connections are also about "cultural safety", recognizing that minoritized young people face various pressures in mainstream environments, meaning "even when the social context is supposed to be sympathetic, they can never relax" (Sercombe, 2010, p. 155). Sercombe discusses the position of "culturally-specific workers" that can increase cultural safety but that there are risks it can "ghettoize the practice" arguing workers must "learn what you can, and what you need to, in order to give the young person what they need" (Sercombe, 2010, pp. 156-7). For participation workers and youth workers, this is about developing cultural fluency for communicating with the young people they wish to engage.

Participation workers must, therefore, recognize the pressures and issues minoritized and marginalized young people experience, considering cultural safety and the role of culturally specific workers in creating spaces where young people feel able to participate. Participation workers as interpreters must understand and speak the languages of both the system and the young people they support. Through these interactions, young people and the institutions and systems they encounter increase their familiarity and understanding of each other, bringing them closer together and supporting effective communication, participation and change.

Connecting Young People, Organizations and Decision-Makers

A more fundamental interpretation relates to convening groups and bringing young people and decision-makers closer together, both spatially and in terms of thinking. Participation workers link groups of young people around shared interests, forming and supporting access to networks that influence change. Participation workers in this study valued the proximity of young people and decision-makers, describing how it often made it easier for young people to influence change. Proximity can also relate to how approachable or trusted a decision-maker appears to young people. Decision-makers who were trusted were highly valued.

One worker discussed a positive relationship between a youth council and a politician, where "young people feel like he is a genuine individual who has their interests at heart" (youth worker). The politician had built trust by attending to the young people's interests and demonstrating a level of reliability and responsiveness to their needs. Workers' interest in proximity suggests participation benefits from decision-makers and organizations presenting a level of "accessibility, openness, and receptiveness to others…an absence of hierarchy, an ease of communication, and a certain immediacy of interpersonal relations" (Rosanvallon & Goldhammer, 2011, p. 203). These qualities have strong parallels with organic approaches to participation favored in this study. They can be seen as reducing both physical, situational and psychological distance, as well as tackling power differentials by reducing barriers to communication.

Workers related spatial proximity to both decision-makers visiting spaces used by young people and young people participating in spaces normally occupied by adult decision-makers. One worker said:

> Come out and see us and come and be with us and meet the young people and experience it and learn what we're doing, and how the sessions work and how chaotic they are, and how people don't sit around in a nice little table and just discuss. (youth worker)

This invitation emphasizes the opportunity to learn from young people and highlights the complexity of interpreting between young people and institutions. The reference to chaos seems exaggerated, as chaos implies unpredictability and that anything could happen. However, the worker is likely describing how the process of communicating is less direct and orderly than might be expected, arguing that proximity aids understanding. What appears to be a simple request for an outcome from the system's point of view requires a good deal of process to reach an answer representing the young person's perspective. By reducing the distance between young people and decision-makers, participation workers aim to tackle the tendency of organizations to over-simplify their understanding of social systems and processes, supporting organizations to become "multifunctional, plastic, diverse, and adaptable" (Scott, 1998, p. 353) institutions that are fundamentally shaped by those who experience them. Returning to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, proximity is used as a tool for interpreting young people's immediate social reality and the wider political and organizational systems that operate in different, often distant ecologies. By reducing distance and creating spaces that link young people with decision-makers, they attempt to open channels of social communication that are two-way and promote a form of translation.

Making it Everybody's Business - Towards a Participative Culture

One way to reduce distance and increase young people's proximity to decision-making is to normalize their involvement as part of organizational culture and practice. Some workers

involved in this study argued for making participation everybody's business. They spoke about offering training to colleagues and attempts to engage them in participatory practice with young people. One spoke about shifting away from having specific workers concerned with participation altogether to ensure all workers understood youth involvement in decision-making as part of their role. By wanting all parts of their organization to consider participation their responsibility, they support colleagues to appreciate young people's needs and value their input. This approach is a step toward creating "a culture that values the participant (and) lays a foundation for shared communities of practice where social transformation is a reality" (Frankel & Westwood, 2023, p. 191) where children and young people work in partnership with adults to solve problems rather than merely contributing their views. A participative culture humanizes organizational systems and improves young people's everyday experiences through collaboration. Rather than just engaging them at the most senior levels in formal groups or through surveys, these approaches include everyone who encounters an organization as part of its work and processes, creating organic decision-making structures.

When considering participation workers as social interpreters, a participatory culture suggests that either all workers in an organization must become adept at social interpretation or that interpretation becomes unnecessary when that culture is fully realized. When young people, decision-makers and organizations are able to communicate and understand each other, they can collaborate organically. Participatory cultures link well with interactive democracy, where "government decisions will not be seen as legitimate unless they have been developed, debated, tested in public forums" (Rosanvallon & Goldhammer, 2011, p. 216), where involvement is a part of the decision-making process rather than a way of gathering information to inform decisions.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that youth participation workers are engaged in an act of social and systemic interpretation or mediation. They prefer organic and informal approaches to engagement that support them in finding links and communicating between young people's lives and organizational systems. This act of interpretation has a democratic and social learning function that supports young people to gain agency within the system but also fosters a level of social compliance and acceptance of the democratic system itself. It thus has both potential for liberation and social control. The participation worker's role includes interpretation and negotiation related to the various power structures (Wildemeersch et al., 1998), ecologies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and micro-polities (Flanagan, 2013) that young people experience through spatial and relational practice that draws from youth work practice (Batsleer et al., 2021; de St Croix & Doherty, 2023). Supporting young people to form links between their personal problems and social issues (Freire, 1965; Watts et al., 2011), and challenging trends towards individualization (Taylor et al., 2018) by working toward collective solutions. These efforts are aided by recognition and identification (Fraser, 2007; Glynn et al., 2018), especially for those who are minoritized or marginalized. Interpreting within organizations is aided by increasing the proximity of young people to decision-makers both spatially and in terms of understanding. Ultimately, the goal is to humanize systems and work toward more interactive forms of democracy (Rosanvallon & Goldhammer, 2011) where there is understanding and organizations (including the government) that involve young people as an integral part of their decision-making processes.

If youth participation work is understood as a form of social and institutional interpretation, then future research should examine the skills, practices and systems needed to improve communication and understanding between young people and institutions. These may include how to publicize and recruit young people to engage in participation work and promote participatory values across organizations. Interpretation between young people and organizations, lifeworld and system and crossing between the various ecologies and micro-systems requires careful navigation and for workers to make good judgements about their practice. It would be helpful to gain greater insight into the role training and supervision play in developing, maintaining and improving worker judgement, as well as other ways to support workers. The organic approach to participation also deserves further investigation, especially related to how workers plan and prepare their work and explain their approach in organizations that demand clearly articulated outcomes and accountability. Further work could explore the role of an organic understanding of participation in developing participatory organizational cultures and embracing the potential of interactive democracy.

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Effecting Social Change: School, Refugee and Immigrant Reception[1]

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Abstract

One of the principal objectives of the school is the provision of equitable opportunities and the fostering of respect for diversity. In recent years, a new and innovative course, namely the Skills Workshop, has been incorporated into the school's curriculum. The primary aim of the course is to cultivate in students the capacity to transcend passive reception of knowledge. Instead, the goal is to empower them to effectively utilize the knowledge imparted, autonomously discover new insights, establish objectives, collaborate proficiently with peers, and demonstrate initiative. Within the section entitled "Engage and Act: Social Awareness and Responsibility," endeavors are undertaken to foster a culture characterized by mutual respect and the embracement of diversity. Educators in Greek schools are called upon, through these workshops, to instill in their students social life skills and to develop codes of communication and behavior grounded in principles of equality, avoidance of discrimination, and respect for diversity in their daily lives. To facilitate the research, semi-structured interviews were administered to seven (7) educators from a primary school located in Patras. This educational institution serves as a reception center for Ukrainian refugees, with its student body comprising individuals of diverse linguistic backgrounds, including both non-native speakers and local residents. The examination of the interviews will elucidate the educators' viewpoints regarding the extent to which the Skills Workshop facilitated their students in the equitable and unbiased treatment of all individuals. It will also shed light on the establishment of conducive conditions fostering respect for diversity and inclusion. The study aims to highlight how this innovative course serves as an agent of social change, ensuring collaboration among all students in the class, including refugees, immigrants, and locals, within a school environment where the principles of social justice prevail.

Keywords: Skills workshop; refugee; immigrant; primary school; diversity

Introduction

Racism spreads everywhere in all countries of the world and is present in the school reality. In schools today, the forms of diversity vary. Students of different national origins (immigrants, refugees) as well as students with various other forms of diversity based on appearance, socio-economic profile, etc., are often treated as "special" cases. Teachers' expectations remain low, these students are categorized into groups of reduced abilities, and they are neither encouraged in their efforts nor receive adequate help from the teacher and the system. These students hear comments that offend them, affecting their psyche. They may remember these incidents even after graduation. Some manage to complain to their class teacher about the racism they experience, while others lack the strength to do so. Stereotypes, discrimination, and prejudices permeate a school, affecting everyone, but especially students from historically oppressed racial groups. The harmful effects of

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Bouchagier, A. Spinthourakis, J.-A. & Georgopoulos, K. (2024). Effecting Social Change: School, Refugee and Immigrant Reception. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 143-151. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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discrimination include excessive discipline, achievement gaps, and racial tensions. Eliminating all these discriminations is necessary to ensure that all students receive a quality education that leads to graduation and lifelong success (Dowd, n.d.; Joorst, 2019; McQuier, 2008; Samuel & Wellemayer, 2020).

Students who experience racism from classmates or teachers may respond with anger. Such behavior can lead to severe discipline and further hinder the child's progress. Teachers experience the world's problems intensely and feel the significant political and social changes that arise in societies, as the school—especially the public school—reflects all significant developments. Therefore, they must be prepared to address any issue that arises (Dowd, n.d.; Joorst, 2019; McQuier, 2008; Samuel & Wellemayer, 2020).

The establishment of a new course, the Skills Workshop, in Greek kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools aims to bring about social change by creating a society that instills respect and love for diversity in everyone, fostering excellent relationships between native, immigrant, and refugee students. The Skills Workshops are an innovative, dynamic, educational action consisting of adding new Thematic Units, focusing on skills, to the compulsory curriculum of Kindergarten, Primary, and Secondary schools, utilizing modern and innovative learning methods. The basic principle of the Skills Workshops is to combine the knowledge field of the Curriculum with the development of essential skills for students to shape them into free and responsible citizens. The purpose of the "Skills Workshops" is to enhance the cultivation of soft skills, life skills, and technology and science skills in students. The specific goals of the Skills Workshops include learning through collaborative, creative, and critically reflective teaching methodologies, enhancing life skills, mediation and responsibility skills, and strengthening digital learning, technology, and programming thinking skills. They create in the student the ability to resolve conflicts now and in the future, based on the principles of social justice (Law 4807, 2021).

The curriculum and educational materials for the "Skills Workshops" are grouped into four (4) Thematic Units. These Thematic Units are derived from the Global Sustainable Development Indicators (environment, well-being, safety, civil society, social awareness and empathy, modern technology, and entrepreneurship) and relate to the topics developed during the pilot implementation of the "Skills Workshops" during the 2020-2021 school year (Law 4807, 2021).

In the thematic cycle of the course: "I Care - I Act," social awareness and responsibility aim for students to bring about social change by learning about human rights, volunteerism, and mediation. Through experiential and collaborative activities, students learn about inclusion, mutual respect, love, and respect for diversity. These skills are reinforced lifelong (metacognition), enabling citizens to evolve in changing work environments and society, as well as to cope with the complexity and uncertainty of the modern world (Law 4807, 2021).

Through this innovative course, traditional teaching models are challenged, and processes that promote student participation in discussions and narratives about their own experiences are emphasized. This process essentially creates a fertile classroom environment where students can freely express their concerns about society, broader social discrimination, and specific issues within the school environment (Smith et al., 2002).

Concepts and values in the Skills Workshops, such as human rights, dignity, tolerance, and respect for others, are learned through experiences and practices, through experiential and participatory processes, rather than standardized procedures and strict regulatory rules.

Based on this assumption, the goal of this program is for students, through workshops and activities that cultivate 21st-century Learning Skills (4Cs - Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication), to become sensitized, develop empathy, and adopt attitudes and behaviors that recognize, accept, respect, and benefit from diversity rather than ignore or exclude it (Tsoutsouva, 2023).

It is very important that through the program, teachers are provided with rich educational material enriched with ideas related to otherness and diversity. Teachers should have this valuable material in their classrooms to instill respect and love for the "different" in their students. They can incorporate books on discrimination and diversity into the educational process. All of the above help to establish an anti-racist policy in schools with the assistance of teachers and participating students (Anderson, 2019; Law 4807, 2021).

Methodology

The purpose of our research is to investigate the perceptions of educators at a primary school located in the center of Patras, Western Greece, regarding the extent to which the implementation of Skills Workshops helps students respect and appreciate diversity. Specifically, we proceed with the formulation of the following research questions:

- To capture the educators' views on whether the Skills Workshops promote respect for diversity.
- To investigate which activities and actions carried out within the framework of the workshops have most helped students in their relationships with refugee, foreign, and native peers.

For the present study, we utilized a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. An interview is a 'meeting' and conversation between two or more people aimed at achieving a predetermined purpose. What distinguishes it from ordinary forms of conversation is the presence of a goal and the systematic effort made to achieve it (Vamvoukas, 2007). We chose the interview method as it is perhaps the most widespread method for gathering qualitative material and information, allowing for an in-depth examination of the issue. Moreover, the personal communication between the interviewer and the interviewee may elicit information that the interviewee would not provide through other methods, such as a questionnaire, while also allowing for clarifications and in-depth explanations. In this study, we had greater flexibility in structuring and presenting the questions (Paraskevopoulos, 1993).

The semi-structured interview was non-directive. Open-ended questions were used as qualitative-oriented research better aligns with an open format that allows for richer and more detailed exploration of topics. In formulating the questions, basic rules of semi-structured interviewing were considered, such as using simple, specific, and understandable vocabulary, asking single-dimensional questions that refer to one topic, and phrasing questions in a way that does not prompt a specific answer. Additionally, efforts were made to organize the questions into two themes based on the research purposes to facilitate data analysis. General questions related to personal characteristics (such as age, education, years of service) were asked at the end, once an appropriate atmosphere had been established. The time and place of the interviews were set in locations convenient for each educator after coordination with the researchers. Most interviews were conducted on school premises at

the teachers' request, outside of their working hours (Creswell, 2016; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008; Kyriazi, 1999).

By adopting this methodology, we aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the educators' perspectives on the effectiveness of Skills Workshops in fostering an inclusive and respectful school environment.

Our research sample consisted of seven (7) educators. Five (5) of them were general education teachers, and two (2) were English teachers who taught the Skills Workshops in their classes to fulfill their teaching hours. The school serves as a reception center for Ukrainian refugees, hosting ten (10) refugee students. Additionally, the classes are multicultural, with students not only from the local population but also from immigrant families from India, Albania, and Romania. Two (2) of the educators were substitute teachers, and the remaining four (4) were permanent staff members. Their years of service ranged from five (5) to twenty (20) years. Therefore, the sampling method we used in this research is "convenience sampling," wherein the researcher selects the closest individuals to serve as respondents to fulfill the research's purpose (Creswell, 2016).

The interview was divided into three parts. The first part included questions about the contribution of the Skills Workshops in promoting respect for diversity. In the second part, the educators were asked which practices of the course they thought helped the most in improving relationships and resolving conflicts among local, foreign, and refugee students. The final part included basic demographic questions about the educators (specialty, years of service). Through the research, participants were given the opportunity to discuss their interpretations of the world they live in and express how they approach various situations from their personal perspective. Thus, the interviews did not merely collect data on life-related issues but became a part of life itself, where the human element is inescapably present (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008).

After conducting the interviews, we processed them through content analysis. Content analysis is a technique used for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of content in written or spoken communication (Filias, 2001). In content analysis, the unit of recording was the general theme developed in a sentence, paragraph, or the entire text of the interviewees. This unit of recording was used because our study focuses on investigating the values, attitudes, and opinions depicted in a text. In other words, what matters is the main idea being developed, whether in part of the text or the entire text (Kyriazi, 1999).

Results

From the processing and content analysis of the teachers' interviews, notable responses emerged. These are presented below based on the sections we had developed prior to the interviews and have been mentioned above.

Educators' Views on the Contribution of the Skills Workshops to Promoting Respect for Diversity

All research participants expressed during the interviews that the Skills Workshops are highly significant in promoting respect for diversity due to their flexibility and collaborative nature. Specifically, they highlighted that these workshops provide an opportunity for local students to interact playfully with their peers from different backgrounds, including immigrants and

refugees. The process is flexible as each teacher is not constrained by the standard curriculum during the workshop, allowing them to present creative ideas on diversity.

Furthermore, the Skills Workshops facilitate discussions on social justice issues and enable experiential activities to develop empathy. One teacher noted that students have been asked questions such as, "How does the child in the picture feel, standing outside their home destroyed by bombs?" Many educators mentioned that students are encouraged to imagine how they would feel if they were immigrants or refugees in another country, fostering empathy and understanding towards their classmates.

According to the educators, the workshops provide rich digital material showcasing customs and traditions from other countries, which is presented to students across all grade levels. The workshops also allow teachers to teach values and appreciation for diversity in an interdisciplinary manner, integrating these with various subjects. For example, one teacher mentioned that, due to the school's multicultural nature, they implement several Erasmus programs and incorporate many of these ideas into the Skills Workshops by celebrating the native languages of their immigrant and refugee students. However, one educator pointed out that the pressure of instructional time sometimes hinders the implementation of these activities, but with dedication, they manage to accomplish much due to their love for their work and their students.

They also emphasized that the Skills Workshops offer students time to exchange thoughts and feelings. Students develop a sense of social responsibility and learn to care for others, recognizing that not everything is taken for granted.

All research participants noted that the Skills Workshops include worksheets with activities for conflict resolution and anger management. Educators highlighted that, through such activities, their students (both local and immigrant) have managed to resolve conflicts more quickly compared to before.

The majority of educators stressed that the Skills Workshops are particularly effective if the school has fostered a culture oriented towards creative learning and inclusion, encouraging students to become active and responsible citizens. They strongly mentioned that their school has achieved this due to the positive climate created by the educators themselves, which has significantly supported the emotional cohesion of local, immigrant, and refugee students. Educators believe that this approach fosters social change and hope for a better future with a society characterized by equality and equal opportunities for all.

Activities and Actions within the Workshops that Helped Students in Their Relations with Refugees, Foreign, and Local Peers

During the interviews, when asked which activities were most effective in improving students' relationships with refugees, foreign students, and local peers, the majority of educators mentioned the use of literature focused on diversity. Specifically, students at the school engaged with literary works addressing diversity during the Skills Workshops. For example, they read the book *My Friend*, an allegorical tale that teaches the value of friendship and appreciation for differences. The students presented the book at a celebration of joy and unity with the author present. Each group from various classes created a storyboard depicting the journey of the book's protagonists, including their starting point, path, obstacles, how the

different character was accepted, and whether this acceptance was achievable and straightforward.

Additionally, role-playing games were highlighted by almost all educators as beneficial for developing empathy and understanding others' perspectives. Typically, these games dramatized challenging situations experienced by people next door, such as a refugee's first day at school or the approach of a new student. Educators noted that group games are crucial for improving student relationships as they encourage collaboration and help students appreciate diversity. Often, during the Skills Workshops, with the assistance of the physical education teacher, students participated in cooperative games in the playground. One educator emphasized efforts to involve students from different countries (refugees and immigrants) alongside local students to strengthen their bonds and friendships.

Educators also highlighted that the Skills Workshops' projects focusing on human rights have significantly contributed to changing students' attitudes towards diversity. Through these activities, students come to fully appreciate each person's worth, even if they are different. They noted that students typically created drawings and slogans to reflect their changed perspectives and attitudes towards discrimination, emphasizing actions that should be avoided.

One educator pointed out that students connect more deeply when they understand each other's identities in the classroom. By tracing around their hand, students depict key personality traits. When each child explains aspects of their personality, likes, and how they spend their time, it helps others see that despite differences, they are connected, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

The majority of educators also noted that songs and videos with anti-racism and anti-discrimination messages help students develop empathy and reflect on how they can become better individuals and contribute to social change. These songs are usually presented at the end-of-year celebration, sending a message of respect and love for diversity.

Conclusions

For educators, Skills Workshops are highly significant in promoting a love for diversity, as they are flexible and collaborative. These workshops facilitate discussions on social justice topics and enable experiential activities that foster empathy. They provide students with time to exchange thoughts and feelings, help them develop social responsibility, and encourage them to care for others, understanding that not everything is taken for granted.

The majority of educators emphasized that Skills Workshops are particularly effective when a school has established a culture oriented towards creative learning and inclusion, encouraging students to become active and responsible citizens. Educators highlighted that these workshops have greatly enhanced their relationships with students through the use of literature addressing diversity. Role-playing games have also been beneficial in developing students' empathy and understanding others' perspectives.

Skills Workshops allow educators to discuss human rights in the classroom. Activities focused on exploring both our own identity and that of others help students recognize that everyone is equal, even if they are different. Educators noted that visual and auditory stimuli related to diversity, such as videos and songs, are very effective in helping students become a cohesive group based on principles of equality. Collaboration and conflict resolution among foreign,

refugee, and local students are better achieved through Skills Workshops, which promote social change through the reflective activities they offer.

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Civic and Citizenship Education in Teacher Education-A Case Study of Teacher Beliefs and Pedagogies in Assam, India[1]

Parvati Chatterjee Mazumdar[2]

Abstract

This paper examines teacher beliefs about national Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE) and global citizen education (GCE) in Assam, a state in North-East India with immense ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity and a contested history of citizenship issues. Teacher beliefs are of vital importance for teacher education since beliefs determine the way teachers develop their meaning making and decision making about curriculum and pedagogies. Employing a post-colonial approach the paper explores and interrogates teacher beliefs and pedagogies about CCE and GCE. This paper is based on a purposeful sample of 10 participants selected out of a larger group and includes pre-service and in-service teachers. My research study adopts an empirical, qualitative and interpretative research design with a bottom-up approach which foregrounds the voices of teachers and their lived experiences. Methods of data collection are semi-structured, in- depth one on one interviews and field observations. The findings analysis and of subjective teacher beliefs demonstrate how teachers are responsible for the transmission of distinct cultural values and dominant statist ideology reiterated in the static concept of loyal and obedient "good citizens." The curriculum is theory-oriented and teacher centric. While group discussions and debates occur, they avoid addressing real-life issues such as prevailing inequalities, unequal power relations, the dominance of elites and religious and cultural ideology of the majority groups. Contested citizenship issues of minorities and marginalized groups are not raised or addressed by teachers in order to prevent discord among students. The pedagogical approach to teacher education in India continues to be largely classroom based rather than connected with the social and political life of the people. This paper argues that unless critical pedagogy is experienced by teachers in their own education the project of transformative CCE and GCE for learners in schools is bound to fail.

Keywords: Civic and Citizenship Education; Teacher Education; Good Citizen; Teacher beliefs

Introduction

Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE) and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) have become mandated subjects for secondary school students in most countries, gaining importance in view of complex political, socio-economic and ecological conditions within nations and globally (De Schaepmeester et al., 2022). CCE enables learners to develop necessary skills to interpret, judge and act in democratic polity and civil society not just to maintain political status quo but to actively bring about change (Lange, 2020). De Schaepmeester et al. (2021) summarize the discourse of citizenship as being dynamic and having developed from the traditional interpretation of a citizen's engagement and participation with the nation-state and government to a way of being and acting within the nation and the world (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Haste, 2004, Veugelers, 2007, as cited in De Schaepmeester et al., 2022).

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Mazumdar, P. C. (2024). Civic and Citizenship Education in Teacher Education-A Case Study of Teacher Beliefs and Pedagogies in Assam, India. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 152-166. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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This paper is a study of teacher beliefs about CCE and GCE in India, taking the state of Assam in Northeast India as a case study. Existing research on teacher beliefs establishes the vital importance of beliefs for teacher education as beliefs determine the way teachers develop their meaning making. Further, teacher beliefs influence decision making about curriculum and pedagogies that teachers use in their own classrooms (Reichert et al. 2020; Torres, 2020; Reichert & Torney-Puerta, 2019; Brinkmann, 2015; Williams, 2011). Teachers are inherently political as they hold certain values about identity, society, nation, world and their own positions- personal and professional ((Cochran-Smith, 2005, , as cited in Sayed et al., 2020, p. 7). They are "curricular instructional gatekeepers" implementing the curriculum according to their own epistemological and ideological beliefs about learning (Thornton cited in Reichert & Torney-Puerta, 2019, p. 2). Research studies on CCE in India have focused mainly on education policies, curriculum and text books rather than on the role of teacher beliefs (Sarohe, 2021).

In the case of India, a postcolonial, democratic nation-state, with immense socio-cultural, economic and religious diversity and inequalities of gender, caste and class, education in general and CCE in particular is regarded as a powerful instrument of social transformation (Joshee, 2008). Colonized India gained Independence from two centuries of British rule in 1947 on the back of anti-colonial nationalism (Chatterjee, 2010). The colonized nation was partitioned into two new nation-states, India and Pakistan based on religious lines resulting in the unprecedented migration of massive ethno-religious populations across the borders accompanied by unimaginable communal violence (Tan & Kudasiya, 2002). In the light of this historical background, the consistent theme in the national education policies (1948, 1968, 1986, 2020) was unity and integration of the country, a national identity based on an "Uninterrupted Continuity of Indian Culture" (Section VII, Radhakrishna Commission Report, 1948), social justice and developing India into a modern and economically advanced country (Joshee, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

My paper aims to gain an understanding of teacher beliefs about CCE and how it shapes their pedagogies the state of Assam which serves as a microcosm of a diverse, postcolonial country. It further aims to interrogate the concept of a "good citizen" as described in policy documents, curriculum and textbooks (Thapan, 2006; Batra, 2010; Sarohe, 2021) and explore possible alternate conceptions held by teachers. My research aims to assess critical pedagogy through the study of teacher beliefs and practices in the subject area of CCE and GCE in the case. It uses postcolonial and decolonial lens (Andreotti & de Souza, 2012) to analyze whether the dominant statist narrative of a universalistic notion of citizenship and civilizational unity (see Chatterjee, 2021; Batra, 2010) is reproduced by teachers in Assam, which makes subaltern and plural discourses invisible (Jain, Roy, as cited in Sarohe, 2021).

Teachers across subject areas, especially in Social Studies, History and Civics play a crucial role - through formal and informal learning experiences - in how students contribute to society. However, there are few reflexive studies, which show how teachers see their own roles in the teaching-learning process. My research aims to contribute to the studies of teacher reflexivity in the case of Assam.

Conceptual Framework:

Using a bottom-up approach advocated by Lange (2020), the lived experiences of teachers which leads to the formation of beliefs and implications for pedagogies is explored and understood. Skott summarized beliefs as a term used to designate individual, subjectively true, value-laden mental constructs, "characterized by a certain degree of conviction, either positive or negative", that are the relatively stable results of substantial social experiences and that have significant impact on one's interpretations of and contributions to class- room practice (Skott, 2015).

My paper examines the relationship between teacher beliefs about CCE-knowledge, skills and behaviors- and critical pedagogies in the context of Assam, a state with a contested history of citizenship issues. Critical pedagogy is defined as a civic, political and moral practice which enables learners to raise their consciousness and recognize forces that rule their life. It leads to self-reflection, self-management and transformation of their own lives (Freire cited in Giroux, 2010).

Critical pedagogy is emphasized in National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009 for CCE in India:

> Teachers need to re-conceptualize citizenship education in terms of human rights and approaches of critical pedagogy; emphasize environment and its protection, living in harmony within oneself and with natural and social environment; promote peace, democratic way of life, constitutional values of equality, justice, liberty, fraternity and secularism, and caring values (NCFTE 2009, p. 21)

I pose the following research questions:

1. What beliefs do teachers hold about CCE in the context of socio-cultural and economic diversity and inequalities? What factors influence their beliefs?
2. Have teachers experienced critical pedagogy in teacher education and prior education and therefore are teacher beliefs mediated and transformed, if at all?
3. What lessons may education policy makers and curriculum framers derive from these bottom- up understandings of teacher beliefs about citizenship values and citizenship education in teacher education?

Methodology

My research falls within the Interpretive Paradigm of qualitative research and uses Kamrup district in Assam, India as a case study. The state has an extremely diverse population- ethnic, linguistic and religious- as well as a problematic and ongoing situation of citizenship issues. This makes the state an exemplary case for study of teacher beliefs about CCE and the implications for pedagogies of inclusive citizen education in a diverse and contested site.

Case study methodology (Small, 2009) is best suited for my research as it is characterized by its setting in the natural world, its use of multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic and its situation in a particular context. It is emergent rather than tightly prefigured and it is fundamentally interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, as cited in Williams, 2011). The study uses the inductive approach and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the data gathered from two schools and two teacher education colleges in designated rural and urban areas of Kamrup district in Assam. The capital city Guwahati and the administrative capital Dispur are in Kamrup district. The themes which constitute the findings emerged from repeated coding and categorization of the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The Case of Assam: Religious, Linguistic and Population Diversity

The following map of the state of Assam in the country map of India and tables of its religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity presents the setting of my case study.

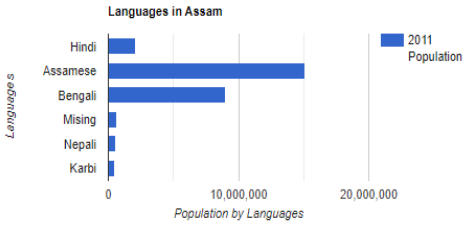
Figure 1. Map of India, with the state of Assam depicted in green with Dispur as the capital in the northeast.

Population of Assam(Census,2011)

TOTAL POPULATION	31.2 MILLION
NON-TRIBAL POPULATION	27.3 MILLION
TRIBAL POPULATION	3.88 MILLION

Tribal Population in Assam	
Boro, Borokachari	1,361,735
Miri	680,424
Karbi	430,452
Rabha	296,189
Kachari	253,344
Lalung	182,663
Garo	136,077
Dimasa	102,961
Other Tribes (21)	436,155

Languages spoken in Assam



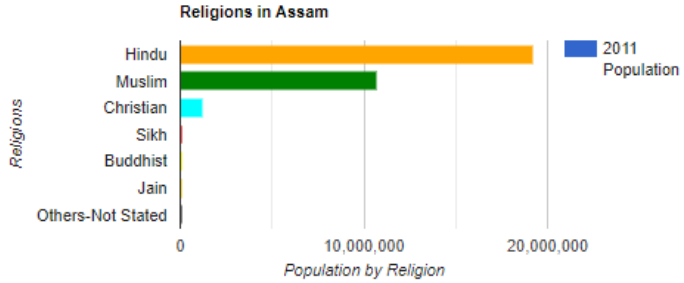


Table and Figures from (Census, 2011)

Background of Contested History of Citizenship in Assam

Soon after Independence and as a result of the migration of populations between the newly independent nations, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) of India had been prepared in 1951 for the entire country. Assam was an exception due to the Assam Agitation (1979 to 1985), a mass movement against foreigners and their inclusion in the electoral rolls, with

subsequent rules in 2003 and 2009 for the NRC to be prepared and implemented in Assam as called for by the Assam Accord signed in the wake of the Assam Agitation.

In 1985, the leaders of the Assam Agitation signed the Assam Accord, an agreement between the Government of India and the agitating parties for detection of foreigners. The Supreme Court of India ordered the updating of the NRC, 1951 in respect of Assam in 2013. As a result, about 33 million residents of Assam were required to prove that they were Indian citizens before 24 March, 1971.The process of updating of the NRC in Assam was conducted between 2014 and 2019. About 1.9 million residents of Assam did not appear in the final list of citizens. Another legislation, the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA) confers citizenship to religious minorities, consisting of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who arrived before December 2014 to circumvent being designated as illegal and therefore qualify for citizenship through naturalization. While the CAA is applicable to the whole of India, the updating of NRC in Assam is a legal instrument which has the potential of producing contemporary and selective statelessness of residents in Assam and India, predominantly among the Muslim and non- Assamese speaking minority population of the state (Hari & Nagpal, 2022). Through various citizenship acts, Assam sought to demarcate a clear line between 'indigenous' and 'outsider' and protect an Assamese regional identity over and above religious and national identities (Ranjan 2021; Sharma 2019; Tarai 2020, as cited in Hari & Nagpal, 2022).

Setting

The two schools and two teacher education college were located one each in the designated rural and metro area of Kamrup district. The teacher education college in the rural area is a government run institute and the teacher college in the urban area is a private institution. Similarly, the secondary school in the rural area is a government school while the higher secondary school in the urban area is a private school. The selection of institutes was done to have a representation of institutions in the sample. All the institutions are accredited to the State University's Department of Education and follow the Teacher Education Curriculum approved by the National Council of Teacher Education.

Participants

The purposeful sample for this paper, n=10, was selected from a larger sample of 28 participants because of a wide range of linguistic, religious, ethnic and gender representation. Three participants belong to minority religions, three to linguistic minorities and two are from ethnic tribes. There are six male and 4 female participants. Of the teacher participants one is male and the other is female. Both teachers teach social science as one of their teaching subjects across middle and secondary schools. Rural and urban representation is also present in the participant sample. One teacher is from a government school in the rural area of Kamrup district while the other is from a private school in the metropolitan area. Four student-teachers are from the Government Teacher Education College in rural Kamrup area studying for the degree of Bachelor of Elementary Education while four student teachers are from a Private Teacher Education College pursuing a two-year post-graduate Bachelor of Education course after their initial Bachelor's degree in humanities and sciences. The average age of the teachers was forty with teaching experience of more than 15 years. The average age of the student teachers in both the teacher colleges was in the mid to late twenties with

several of the participants having done an internship or what is known as practice-teaching in schools, while others were preparing to do the same.

Data Collection

Semi-structure, open- ended, one- on- one interviews were conducted at their institutions. The interviews were conducted in English, Assamese and Bengali. A flexible interview guide was used and questions related to participant beliefs about teaching, sources and factors for belief formation, teacher education curriculum and pedagogies, civic and citizenship values transmitted through education in general and through particular subjects to create beliefs about a good citizen. Challenges in the school setting which get in the way of ensuring equity and social justice for the religious, ethnic, linguistic diversity and social and economic hierarchies that prevail in Assam were also discussed.

Findings

The following themes emerged from the interview data about teacher beliefs, which highlight the importance of education and the role of the teacher in shaping responsible citizens. However, the most significant finding was that the participants even from the religious minority community did not allude to the Assam Agitation (1979-1985) and ongoing citizenship issues, and the possible effect on CCE and citizenship behaviors. The teaching of controversial issues such as the preparation of the NRC, the categorization of residents of Assam as citizens, foreigners, illegal migrants or non-citizens was avoided as it would create disunity and discord among the students. The consequences of these state and legal instruments on minorities were not mentioned by the participants during the interviews unless they were specifically prompted, at which point they articulated their views on the possible pedagogies of controversial topics.

Most participants attributed the source of values and beliefs to their parents and other family members, while some mentioned teachers in their own schools and colleges and teacher colleges. What is of significance is that the participants were not immediately clear about what may be included in the area of Civic and Citizenship Education as these topics are taught within the subject area domains of Environmental Studies and Social Studies at the primary grade level and Economics, History, Political Science and Geography at the secondary level. Therefore, when questioned about beliefs and values transmitted by education content participants focused spontaneously and initially on personal and social behaviors rather than political behavior, political participation or issues of inclusion and exclusion. Most participants had beliefs with an affective element such as respect for parents and elders, kindness, humanitarian viewpoint, mutual respect for people of different religions, language and ethnicities. On further discussion and rejoinder questions on the topics about education for democratic participation, political behaviors, citizenship issues in Assam, participants articulated their views and beliefs about content and pedagogies that they experienced in their own education and also in the case of the teachers their own pedagogies.

All participants agreed that education is vital for students to develop their inner potential, become responsible, disciplined members of society and the nation. Several participants said it enables learners become members of society and contribute to the development of the state and nation.

Beliefs are Drawn from the Discourse of Citizenship in the Constitution (1950).
Foremost among the beliefs was the idea of Rights and Duties as given in the Constitution and the concept of "Unity in Diversity" of both the state of Assam and the nation-state.

Most of the participants emphasized the concepts of rights and duties as given in the Constitution. The phrase-Unity in Diversity- present in all Civic text books and National Policies was reinforced by all participants. Living in peace and harmony was accorded a lot of importance. Being loyal to the state of Assam and India and being proud of the nation's and state's cultural and civilizational heritage, language, and emerging scientific and economic power of India was a belief held by most participants.

One of the student teachers said:

> I think it's the North-East, this entire disconnection from the mainland, not simply geographically, psychologically, historically, its many ways, but…we are at the core Indian in our value systems everything […] is being one thread throughout the nation

A minority student teacher from the tribal community referred to the Constitution when asked who is a Citizen of Assam?

> **…**since we, our or since it is described in the Constitution itself, that we are the citizens of India, so surely, I mean, I may live anywhere, maybe in Assam or maybe in Nagaland or maybe in any place, any other states, I…I have the right to say I am the citizen of that particular state.

Beliefs about Qualities of a "good citizen" with Reference to the State of Assam.
Most of the respondents described a good citizen of Assam as someone, who has a sense of belonging, speaks the language of the state-Assamese, shares the culture and contributes to the development of Assam. One of the participants said that they should not feel ashamed to be an Assamese. In the light of the turbulent past of the Assam agitation the participants believed that promoting unity, peace and harmony was an integral quality of a good citizen. All the participants acknowledged that the population of Assam is very diverse. Most of the participants however emphasized the cultural unity of Assam overriding the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity.

No Conflict with State, National and Global Citizenship.
Another significant finding was that participants found no conflict of state citizenship with national or global citizenship. One of the student teachers said on being asked whether one can be simultaneously a state, national and global citizen:

> Definitely, we are all human beings after all, so we all have the same requirements, the same needs, this is just a very confined identity that we say we are Indian, we are American, after all we are all human beings, the same body, the same soul, the same mind.

All participants called for controversial topics of Citizenship to be resolved by Constitutional provisions and legal mechanisms instituted by the state. The primacy given to preserving unity of the state and country led to almost uniform responses about discussion of controversial and contested citizenship issues in the classroom, such as the NRC and the exclusion of minorities, one of the student teachers from the minority Muslim community responded by saying:

English Translation (my own):

> In my view, in the class there is no need to discuss politically sensitive topics, which will break our unity, we should discuss among the students what rights are guaranteed by the Constitution. Now who is an Indian and who is not an Indian is the responsibility of the government and the documents of proof that are required. In my view students should not discuss these topics.

When asked whether current issues of citizenship are discussed in any subject area, most of the responses were in the negative. One student teacher said:

> I would say, they can include certain portions, which won't incite too much of violence maybe, like because now a days it is a kind of like volatile society, like this, we would not like to disrupt it too much.

Another student-teacher said current topics about human rights are not part of the curriculum and discussed,

> very briefly. It's more like since we are discussing the topic, yes, like let's also discuss (current topics) say 5-10 mins of our entire course, just that much, that is the priority given

This student teacher was an exception in that she felt that topics of citizenship would benefit the students if discussed in class.

> because aware citizenship is first thing… And you are going to be guiding future citizens, so that's even more important that teacher trainees are not left out we live in structures, we live in governments, we live in societies to know how societies function, that is, we definitely need to know what is going on.

There was a tacit acknowledgement among all teachers, even members of the minority community that ongoing contentious citizenship issues had a serious potential to cause upheavals in the state and lives of the people and unanimously they were not amenable to the return of the politics of agitation.

Pedagogies in Social Sciences and CCE advocated by teachers and student teachers were dramatization, group discussions, debates, excursions. Inclusive pedagogy in both teacher education colleges was mentioned in there being instruction in multi-lingual pedagogies to teach in the languages of the smaller ethnic tribes when teaching in schools in the tribal areas. The topics of CCE and GCE are included in subject area of History, Political Science, Social Science, English and language and culture as.

One of the Teachers in Private School Described his use of Critical Pedagogy as:

> We, we generally do the open discussion. We permit them, we encourage them to give any kind of interpretation, any kind of, the way they think, it is open expression, open discussion and they, the way we try to help them, to have a free mindset of a free citizen. In course of time, they will decide what was applicable in 100 years ago, 50, 50 years ago. You should not tell them that you should go by abiding all those values and all those rules and restrictions. Instead of that you decide, because that is another world for you. We are just counting our days. So it is all about free thinking.

Challenges to implementation of pedagogies

The teacher in the rural government school commented that her teaching pedagogies were criticized by her colleagues as they were not acquainted with professional teaching methods, thus making a distinction between teachers in urban and rural schools. She said:

> That so whatever procedure, method I'm applying here, especially in this government schools. They do not know. Other teachers do not know, and they're complaining.

Importance of Discipline was emphasized by the same teacher.

The teacher said:

> Although…the schools are student oriented but some rules and regulations should be there for students also, in government schools specifically, not in private school**…** Students are coming late, no rule nothing, no action taken. That is not written also, action should be taken. Students are not coming school for 3 months then also nothing is there. … they are absent. They are failing also, make them pass then what will be this future generation? **This generation will not know anything**.

Other challenges mentioned are that education is mainly classroom bound both in teacher education and school education. In teacher education, the relationship between theory and real-life situations-political, social and cultural is lacking in the curriculum.

Teaching in Schools is Regarded as a Respectable Profession and Teachers are Regarded as Very Important for Shaping Responsible Citizens, but for Many of the Participants it was not Always the Profession of First Choice.

The participants said they wished to help young people, have aptitude to teach and loved being with young children.

Idea of real India and real teachers

A teacher who was born and spent his youth in a rural part of Assam and now teaching in a private school believed that the real India was in the villages and students could learn by going to the villages and learn from the real teachers. He said:

> Mahatma Gandhi said the real India is in villages… So what is village? The cultural epitome, the cultural center. You can say the cultural hub of a society, basically in India all these are basically coming from the villages. It is all about cultivation, all about those open fields, about the forest, about the nearest river of my village.

In another part of the interview, he said:

> they are the real teachers, they can be and surely the real teachers for me, those cultivators, those small businessmen, those artists, everyone.

Teachers in the Teacher Education Colleges are Extremely Sensitive and Helpful to Students from Minority Language Backgrounds and Remote Areas.

Teacher educators are inclusive and help the students with notes in English language and catching up with Assamese where it is the medium of instruction. Most of the student teachers while offering recommendations

Emphasis on Beliefs and Values Formation about Personal Traits, Social Competences and Character.

All participants cited the parents and family members as the major influence of value formation both at the earlier stages and guiding beliefs and values throughout life especially. Some mentors were teachers and professors in school and university. Outlier response of a minority student who had to discontinue his education after high school because of financial constraints, stressed knowledge of English gained in high school and self-study from online open academies as his path to knowledge. He learned the value of self-study and autonomy in learning almost anything he wanted.

Emphasis on Social Behaviors

and Personal values, cleanliness, discipline, obedience, respect for all persons rather than political behaviors and contentious citizenship issues which persist in the state.

Recommendations Given by the Teachers:

All the participants recommended that teacher education should be more practical and project based. Real life topics, may be discussed.

Several of the participants stressed that rural schools and schools in remote tribal areas were severely under- resourced as compared to schools in the urban areas, both in terms of infrastructure and teachers and teaching materials, and therefore this huge gap should be bridged in order to reduce inequalities in the quality of education received by the majority of students who live in the rural area. One of the student teachers from a tribal community in a remote area commenting on how the curriculum and material was not properly used in the rural areas suggested:

> from my point of view is that the practical application should be audited, steps should be taken and should be more applicable in the remote areas to bring in the much-desired effect.

Discussion

Teacher beliefs about importance of character building as a major value transmitted through CCE is a major theme in the case study. It has both colonial and nationalist roots and is drawn from the discourse of civics textbooks, as pointed out by Kadilal and Jain (2020). It includes a variety of concerns such as compassion toward the poor, a sense of responsibility, discipline, duty, obedience to one's parents and elders, the spirit of sacrifice, and service to the community and nation. The focus on personal virtues and relation of the citizen to the state marked by obligation and paternalism is the standard script for civics textbooks even in the postcolonial period (Kadilal & Jain, 2020)

The main theme derived from the participants' data about beliefs about education in general and CCE indicate a tension in teacher beliefs about the latter, especially with regard to controversial topics. The beliefs of most of the participants about preserving unity over diversity, promoting peace and harmony among the student population and society, emphasis on social behaviors and competences and larger societal good conforms to the personally responsible citizen described as a citizen who "acts responsibly in his or her community", (Westheimer & Kahne,2004). This aligns with the traditional and conservative approach of citizenship as summarized by De Schaepmeester et al. (2022) and failed citizenship of Banks (2017).

In this approach teachers subscribe to a status quoist (Kennedy, 2019; Knowles, 2018, as cited in Schaepmeester et al., 2022) and dominant imagination where homogeneity, which in the case of Assam is the use of Assamese language and the imagined idea of a united, secular culture is the norm. Therefore, citizens are not imagined as autonomous individuals, but mainly as social and political persons who must ensure that social order and unity must be preserved (Kennedy, 2019; Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Leenders & Veugelers, 2006, as cited in Schaepmeester et al., 2022).

No spontaneous reference to NRC and exclusions experienced by a particular religious minority who are migrants from Bangladesh, or other contested and exclusionary identity markers such as minority languages by participants resembled the proverbial elephant in the room during the interviews focused on CCE topics. All participants reinforced the legalistic process of resolving contested issues of citizenship, and emphasized these issues should be settled legally according to Constitutional provisions and laws of the land but also peacefully.

The idea of good citizen described by the participants is constructed through "banal" nationalism (Billig, 1995, as cited in Trohler, 2020) or sub-nationalism in the case of Assam. The phenomenon of "everyday nationhood" (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Skey & Antonsich, 2017, as cited in Trohler, 2020) is reinforced by singing of the song praising the land in the daily assembly. According to Banks' (2017) typology of failed citizens, recognized citizens, participatory citizens and transformative citizens, he states the ways in which schools have contributed to failed citizenship by using assimilationist approaches to civic education that required minoritized students from diverse groups to deny their home cultures and languages. In the case of beliefs of teachers and student teachers in the sample, while there was a strong emphasis on acknowledging diversity of the state's population the overwhelming emphasis on unity and cultural assimilation of the minority communities runs the risk of failed citizenship for members of the marginalized communities and at best recognized and participatory citizenship falling short of transformative citizenship.

Several participants highlighted the huge resource gap between the rural area where they grew up and the teacher education colleges they were now. They also commented how they were not even aware of the available resources and thus felt they had been disadvantaged in terms of opportunities they could have availed. A teacher participant who belonged to the Assamese speaking community, while acknowledging the existence of polarizing issues, cited economic inequalities and rural urban divide as the major challenge in ensuring equity and social justice rather than religion or language. He said that issues of language and religion are created and exploited by "others".

The discourse of promoting peace and harmony and underlining the unity of culture that underlines the diversity of the state population reifies the dominance of the Assamese language and Hindu religious and ethnic majority in the state. According to Andreotti and de. Souza (2012) the post-colonial framework of analysis acknowledges how everyone is complicit in dominance of the majority culture. This is evidenced in the primacy given to a particular version of composite Assamese culture such as the celebration of *Bihu*, a "secular" and unifying harvest festival, which however has songs in the Assamese language.

Pedagogies of inclusion as stated by a student teacher:

> I don't think there is any obvious discriminatory behavior on anybody's part. It's not very obvious, but, subtle, where say, Christmas holidays are not as important as Diwali holidays. Things like that [...] so […] Eid holiday, like coming up with one example, so it is not deliberate on anybody's part, but it has not come into the awareness yet, that those are things we need to work on.

One of the student-teachers of the minority community, whose home is in a remote rural area, with very little access to even newspapers and even less to quality education institutions came to the conclusion that inclusion of topics about the diverse populations and languages occurred in the curriculum when there was representation of that population in the class. In this case he said there were very few members of his community in the institute and suggested that the education of minority communities must be targeted so that more persons

from his community could receive teacher education. In this way he believed social inequalities could be removed.

Implications

Beliefs of teachers about CCE, in the case study in Kamrup district in Assam, although very limited in terms of the sample population, reinforces the assertion of Kadilal and Jain (2020), that in postcolonial countries, teachers accept and reproduce the dominant discourse of the state to produce loyal and obedient national citizens, as opposed to critical citizens, who can question the claims of ruling elites.

Discussion of controversial, political and social issues is avoided in classroom for fear of provoking disharmony and discontent among students and parents may be resolved through the post-colonial approach advanced by Stein and Andreotti (2016) and critical pedagogy in teacher education in Assam. This approach poses important questions about existing approaches to social justice and citizenship in education and provides a framework for practitioners, in this case the teachers and student- teachers to engage continually in self-reflexive critique about their own situated, partial perspectives, including recognition of the limits of their own understanding and fear of cultural and linguistic identity being subsumed by growing population of minorities.

Postcolonial studies ask: What kinds of questions, critiques and potential futures are foreclosed in the demands issued around being a 'good' national citizen? (Stein & Andreotti, 2016)

Future research may focus on how critical pedagogy can create greater teacher reflexivity and appropriate culturally sensitive and contextual pedagogy. In this way, teachers may feel equipped to explore controversial topics in the class without fear of disruption or discord not just in the case of Assam but in several similar cases in a globalized world where as Stein and Andreotti (2016) point out citizenship rights are differentially distributed within national borders, and sometimes altogether denied or otherwise inaccessible.

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Forgotten Humanism in the Development of Inclusive Education in Latvia[1]

Sandra Rone[2] & Māra Vidnere[3]

Abstract

In adopting the State Reform Plan, Latvia has set out to move towards implementing inclusive education, developing the education system by the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Today, the ineffective implementation of inclusive education in Latvian schools, which is difficult for teachers to implement, is becoming a topical issue.

The main problems faced in the context of inclusive education in Latvia are:

it is necessary to promote cooperation between teachers, students, and parents, as well as to educate society to dispel the negative attitude towards the Other - a student with special needs, by providing recommendations and implementing the skills necessary for the inclusion of students in classes.

The concept of the importance of the humane approach in improving the inclusive education process is presented.

The results of the research on the awareness of life goals of students with special needs and the differences in attitudes between students with and without special needs are presented, based on the results of the work of the Jūrmala Inclusive Education Development Center, based on which new self-regulation strategies are proposed for work with students with special needs.

All students have the right to equal access to appropriate education and an integrated lifestyle of their choice. The goal and direction of educational activity: on the one hand, the other hand, education together: different nationalities, and subcultures - is the inclusion of the entire educational process. The problem is no longer attributed to the individual, but the educational environment itself investigates the causes and seeks humane solutions.

To successfully implement support measures for students' inclusion, it is necessary to learn how to develop a humane and strong support policy to change and evaluate inclusive education.

Keywords: inclusive education; forgotten humanism; teacher professionalism; special needs; life goals; learning disabilities

Forgotten Humanism in the Development of Inclusive Education in Latvia

In contemporary times, the ineffective implementation of inclusive education in Latvian educational institutions is becoming a pressing issue, one that teachers often struggle to address. It is crucial to identify the problems teachers encounter while implementing inclusive education. A paradigm shift in society demands the replacement of the existing educational paradigm with a humanistic educational paradigm, recognizing each individual as talented and capable of shaping their own education based on personal experience and interests. This educational paradigm envisions that the entire educational process, its organization, environment, and the activities of involved professionals and educators, are directed towards assisting and creating conditions for learners to achieve qualitative personal development

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Rone, S. & Vindere, M. (2024). Forgotten Humanism in the Development of Inclusive Education in Latvia. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 167-181. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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during the educational process. The situation in the Latvian education system raises questions about whether and how the transition to a humanistic paradigm in education has occurred. The education model for individuals with special needs intensifies the practice of institutionalization and marginalization of the disabled, as it emphasizes the element of differentiation, thereby reducing alienation and social exclusion for learners with disabilities.

The interactions and interrelations among family, school, teachers, and the learners themselves shape a worldview. The competence, personality, worldview, and professional identity of a teacher are determining factors that can promote the formation of a learner's worldview. The formation of a worldview is influenced by the environment—both physical and social—where it is necessary to create conditions for learners to practically engage with society beyond school, the local community, and explore cultural heritage.

Ignorance of the human factor has created a dissonance between the understanding and realization of democratic principles in the country, including the implementation of inclusive education policies. A democratic, human values-based inclusive education institution must operate as a place where a student's personality develops and thrives, and where humanization, individualization, and socialization processes occur, which are understandable and acceptable to Latvian residents in urban and rural areas. It is important to recognize the recommended support measures for addressing these problems. These include the need for a strong inclusive education support policy, the necessity of assessment and evaluation. There must be cooperation among teachers, learners, and parents, as well as a need to educate the society to dispel the negative attitude towards the other- learners with special needs, providing recommendations and advice, and instilling skills necessary for integrating learners into classrooms. When reviewing special education programs, they must be sufficiently differentiated and flexible to meet the diverse needs of learners.

All learners differ from one another, yet all have the right to equal access to appropriate education and an integrated lifestyle of their choosing. Papageorgiou (2015) points out that the current policy on inclusive education in Latvia involves two fundamentally different approaches to the implementation of inclusive education, which are not taken into account:

On one hand, there is an approach with a general educational activity goal and direction that emphasizes the element of segregation in special education, taking into account the diagnoses of learners, their specific needs, and requirements; on the other hand, there is inclusive education, which involves integrating learners of various nations, ethnicities, and subcultures into the educational process to promote the development of students' social and learning skills.

The problem is no longer attributed to the individual (a tactic used in education for special needs) but to the general. (Ainscow, 2020).

Complex barriers are blocking the path to changes in the education system, which hinder the development of inclusive education in Latvia:

A. Lack of differentiated inclusive education policy implementation. The absence of differentiated education leads to the indiscriminate adoption of inclusive education models, which is unacceptable and incomprehensible to residents and educators due to a significant contradiction.
B. Bureaucratic and incompetent solutions by responsible persons regarding the development direction and program design of schools; the diversity of residents,

political origins, cultural direction development priorities, different locations, and needs must be considered to continue working and studying in the usual environment. Despite Latvia being a relatively small country, it is multinational and multiethnic with various cultural universals, traditions, dialects, and economic conditions. People rely on the local features of their place. Bureaucracy in Latvia often prioritizes processes over people. Conflicts and disputes are generally destructive, and these critical points hinder execution, radical changes in educational reality, and the preservation of humane values and principles. Currently, the most acceptable direction for educational development strategy is the liquidation of educational institutions, especially in rural areas. According to the Statistical Bureau, in 2010 there were 858 schools in Latvia, this number has now decreased by more than three hundred, and it is planned to close more than 100 schools in the next two years, ignoring the needs and requests of local people, cultural and educational workers. While the number of schools decreases, educators complain about too low salaries, but politicians promise to raise them once the school network is reorganized. Such an educational plan is inappropriate and doomed to fail because it contradicts the development of humane principles in the country and the education system as a whole. It promotes the emigration of young families, distrust in the government, and loss of perspective in education for children/students with special needs and generally for children in rural areas; contributing to the decline and extinction of rural areas. Decisions on the closure of specific schools do not consider the basic rights and interests of local children.

C. Promoting inclusive education, the environment requires the development of a stable and constantly evolving network of connections: diverse cooperation. It is clear that the state, society, social and support structures, educational environment society, parents, and students - everyone must work together and share common values and ideals. This is difficult to achieve, especially in Latvia where problems are often bureaucratic: the country is dominated by a centralized administration system: lack of immediate positive solution, reluctance for initiatives, and timely exchange of opinions.
D. Curriculum layout. An obstacle to promoting successful inclusive education policy is the current planning of the curriculum: defined by "strict" requirements. This is an organizational barrier - the inflated volume of teaching reports, regulations, changes material that must be covered considering changes within the school; national exams at the end of the year combined with a fixed (limited) time, not considering the specificity of diagnoses for students with special needs. The situation is worsened by infrastructure deficiencies and limited accessibility. Inappropriate textbooks, seminars, qualification courses, lack of appropriate logic.
E. There is a lack of teachers for the implementation of inclusive education, insufficient knowledge in providing inclusive education, insufficient teaching materials, insufficient support staff, insufficient cooperation between teachers and parents. When thinking about the development of inclusive education, it is necessary to consider the experience of other countries, namely that especially in city centers, where classes consist of a large number of students, the units themselves become burdensome and overcrowded. State funding and European funds do little to help improve the situation, as they are relatively low given the magnitude of the problems (Avramidis, 2013). In this way, constitutionally determined equality remains

inapplicable, while at the same time students with limited learning abilities experience increased stress, dissatisfaction, and vulnerability.

F. A significant barrier to the transition to the development of inclusive education is the lack of teacher training; lack of practice in working with The Other. Legally determined teacher training often remains at a theoretical level and becomes inapplicable in further pedagogical work. Thus, diversity not only remains unutilized but also becomes a barrier to progress. (Stergiadoua, 2022).

Although the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education has been reporting since 2003 that a decentralized model would be more cost-effective and more responsive to the needs of local residents and also flexibility in schools' financial resource usage according to their identified needs and demands in the context of national policy is significant, it is levelled and ignored. (european-agency.org) In Latvia, this means - equalize, reorganize, consolidate, or liquidate everything that is not managed.

Those responsible for educational planning (and especially inclusive education policy) must consider diversity and especially be able to determine the needs and peculiarities of local residents. Successful models from other countries can be used with the help of critical thinking, after adapting them to local needs. International cooperation also plays a key role here, as experts from around the world can help in these efforts, formulating opinions and promoting communication channels, aiming for the exchange of experiences and diversity of views.

Jūrmala City State's Approach to Special Education

The focus during classroom activities with students engaged in special education should be on exploring each student's potential rather than on their diagnosis. This approach emphasizes the process of learning, identifying how a student can learn best and recognizing their unique resources. It acknowledges that students with the same diagnoses may possess completely different abilities and resources—for instance, one student may exhibit keen perceptiveness in processing information, while another may struggle with sustained activity or concentration. In this educational framework, the learning process is always prioritized over the achievement of specific outcomes in terms of deadlines and quality. The paramount goal when working with students with special needs is to fully explore and realize their self-potential within the educational process.

Inclusive education serves as a vital context for combating negative social attitudes by fostering understanding, respect, and equality within the educational system. This approach aims not only to enhance the educational experience for students with special needs but also to integrate these values into the broader school community, thereby contributing to a more inclusive society.

Number by Language of Learning

The statistics on student health trends in Jūrmala city reveal concerning tendencies towards significant health problems from an early age and during school years. For instance, the number of students with long-term illnesses from grades 1 to 4 is notably high among preschool learners—205 out of all 428 students enrolled in special education programs. For grades 5 to 9, there are 74 students with long-term illnesses. Between July 31, 2019, and July

31, 2023, the Jūrmala Inclusive Education Development Center was visited by 323 students of Russian nationality, 404 of Latvian nationality, and 1 of another nationality (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Distribution of students by the language of learning in the period 31.07.2019 – 31.07.2023

The distribution of students by the language of instruction indicates the need for additional work in the Jūrmala Inclusive Education and Advisory Center (JIIAC) with Russian-speaking students.

The advisory support from the Education Administration's Jūrmala Inclusive Education Development Center includes planning for on-site student research and consultations, starting with an initial evaluation interview involving JIIAC specialists and the student's parents/legal guardians. This is followed by on-site student research and consultations by a team of specialists and individual work (each specialist in their area) and the creation of an opinion.

The evaluation of results obtained during the consultation, feedback provision, and discussions between specialists and the student's parents/legal guardians are conducted for all students' parents/legal representatives, regardless of ethnic affiliation. Consequently, detailed recommendations and advice are developed for the educational institution to create a support program/individual plan for the student (opinion/consultation/student evaluation card). If parents are concerned about their child's health and are unsure which educational institution would be best for the student and what kind of support and specialists are needed, the municipality's pedagogical medical commission's specialists and director address each case, not based on ethnic affiliation but in the best interest of the student.

Difficulties in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in the City of Jūrmala

The implementation of inclusive and special education in Jūrmala City faces several challenges, primarily related to the accessibility of educational environments. There's a significant need for ramps, accessible entrances, elevators, lifts, appropriately modified classrooms and common areas, and specially equipped cabinets for students in pre-school,

basic, and secondary education institutions. The mismatch between the educational environment's accessibility for students with functional and physical impairments is evident in many educational institutions across Jūrmala.

Another crucial aspect is ensuring the availability of physical activities since none of the schools in Jūrmala, except for the Jūrmala Sports School, have swimming pools. For a long time, there was no continuity in implementing mental health education programs across subsequent levels of education. To provide children with the most suitable educational institution closer to their residence, a special basic education program for students with mental health disorders was licensed at Aspazijas Primary School.

Consequently, the educational institution has included students with mental health disorders, working with the available resources, employing teacher assistants, and convincing parents of other students of the necessity of inclusion for all students.

There is an increasing number of students with various speech and language development disorders, leading to a growing need to expand the implementation sites for special pre-school education programs for speech and language development disorders. In implementing inclusive education, it is recommended, if necessary, to implement a special pre-school education program for students with speech and language development disorders in each municipal pre-school education institution. Pre-school “Mārīte” and pre-school “Ābelīte” have implemented special pre-school education programs for students with speech and language development disorders in minority languages, but following parental recommendations, it would be necessary to also implement special pre-school education programs for students with speech and language development disorders in Latvian. (From September 1, 2023, all pre-school education institutions provide pre-school education programs only in the state (Latvian) language).

To provide support measures for students with mental health issues, various strategies have been employed: the use of reminders (visual, verbal, tactile) for organizing work; the introduction and consistent maintenance of clear rules of conduct; a reduction in the number of instructions given at one time; verbal information supplemented with visual information (and other sensory methods); provision of visual support; an extension of task completion time – up to 30% of the total work time; an increase in the number of breaks; inclusion of dynamic pauses; the development of individual behavior correction plans, ensuring supervision both during and outside of lessons, as well as the provision of an individual approach to adjusting the educational workload.

It is important to note that there is not enough support staff (psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists, special education teachers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, teacher's aides, assistants, doctors, nurses, etc.) with the appropriate professional qualifications in all special education institutions.

In the context of implementing inclusive education, the early diagnosis of a student's educational needs and the transfer of this information when moving to the next stage of education remain pressing issues (often, educational institutions lack detailed information about the student's individual needs, development dynamics, necessary support, etc.).

For in-depth intellectual research, JIIAC's clinical and health psychologist conducts an evaluation of intellectual abilities, determines the reasons for learning difficulties, assesses academic achievements, and evaluates behaviour and emotional areas (WISC-IV) for ages 6-

17. The bilingual situation poses certain challenges since tests are available only in Latvian, and there is a lack of standardized and adapted tests for this age group. There are no standardized tests for students in bilingual situations or for students learning bilingually.

As a result, tests are provided with free translation, which is not always precise.

Special education in Jūrmala city ensures small numbers of students per class, and the availability of support staff allows students to achieve good individual work results. It also enables educators to observe each student's personal growth and potential. Creating an appropriate emotional environment and microclimate is a crucial prerequisite for implementing special education in Jūrmala.

The small class sizes and available support staff in special education facilitate good individual work outcomes for students and allow teachers to witness the personal growth of each student. However, there is a lack of support staff to integrate students with special needs into the school environment effectively.

It's noted that the needs and necessities dictated by the economic and social situations of modern society require a greater diversity of professional education programs, as well as opportunities to continue studies in college and university programs.

Boarding options, providing a chance to stay near the school in an educational environment tailored to the students' needs, sometimes distancing them from overwhelming social family issues, are necessary. Currently, this is something that Jūrmala Primary School can offer.

The significant ethnic and social differentiation in Jūrmala city must not be overlooked. For instance, taking necessary measures for the successful integration of the Roma community is crucial.

However, on July 31, 2023, the Jūrmala municipality decided to close the support operations of JIIAC. Instead of expanding support services in the city, a contrary decision was made. This underscores the bureaucracy's disinterest in addressing support issues, saving financial resources for special education. Only when inclusive development/support centers are established in all municipalities across Latvia will it be possible to fully provide various types of support in addressing inclusive education issues.

In Jūrmala city, students of Roma ethnicity receive education in the state language (Latvian) and in the minority language (Russian). The pedagogical medical commission of Jūrmala municipality provides consultative support and consultations to Roma parents and their children without regard to ethnic affiliation.

In the Roma community, Latvian or Russian is used, and within their community, they also teach these languages to their children, who by the start of compulsory education have already acquired conversational language skills at various levels. They continue to use it as the language of instruction in school, according to the choice made by their parents.

Psychological reports always indicate any research limitations, such as the need to translate some test tasks into Russian or Roma, or any other communication barriers with the student or parents. Sometimes parents openly demonstrate motivation for the student to study at a specific school closer to the family residence following a special education program for students with developmental disorders. Even in these situations, specialists strive to objectively assess the student's abilities and adapt an education program that suits their capabilities and development.

Specialists of the Jūrmala Inclusive Education Development Center's pedagogical medical commission understand this situation well, and insufficient knowledge of the instruction language (Latvian or Russian) by Roma students is not a reason to assign them to special education programs for students with various degrees of developmental disorders or students with severe developmental disorders or multiple severe developmental issues.

The inclusion of Roma ethnicity students in the educational environment of Jūrmala city is seen as a necessity. Parents of Roma children opt for special education programs at Jūrmala Primary School, where a significant Roma community resides. While the school does not collect data on students' ethnicities, evaluating the traditions, habits, and the language spoken by students with their family members suggests that, as of 2022, 26 Roma students were enrolled in special basic education programs at Jūrmala Primary School. These students were admitted to special education programs based on the opinions of the state or municipal pedagogical medical commissions and placed in the recommended educational programs.

Until September 1, 2023, the school implemented special pre-school education programs for minorities, where the language of instruction is Russian. Roma children study in both Latvian and minority basic education programs. There are positive reports from families whose children study at Jūrmala Primary School. Despite a relatively high proportion of Roma students, the school does not foster Roma traditions specifically.

Parents highly value small class sizes (6-10 students), the individualized approach during the educational process, consideration of each student's individual needs, emotional and health conditions, and the opportunity for every student to learn and develop according to their abilities and pace. Support provided to Roma students with special needs is similar to that offered to any school student, fulfilling the special education's mission. The school has all the necessary support staff, including speech therapists, social educators, and psychologists.

From parents, Jūrmala Primary School staff receive praise for understanding each child's individual needs, care, and humanity. The school environment is highly conducive, with Roma students integrating well among their peers without instances of discrimination or psychological violence due to ethnicity.

In ensuring the pedagogical process for students with special needs, the most kind-hearted, professional, and humanely thinking educators are necessary. The greater the difficulty a student faces in learning, the better the educator they need. Students without diagnoses require very knowledgeable teachers for subject learning, while students with special needs need understanding and knowledgeable educators. A fundamental principle in the educational process is not to expect from a student what they are not yet ready to accomplish but to celebrate every small achievement, promptly identify behavioral problems, and foster a positive and purposeful communication.

In making recommendations for the personality development and integration of students with special needs, it is essential not only to establish but also to professionally develop the work of inclusive education development centers in municipalities, staffed by social workers, social educators, clinical and health psychologists, psychotherapists, speech therapists, special educators, doctors, etc.

Students with special needs attending general education institutions or enrolled in special education programs often do not receive appropriate support. This indicates a need for further improvement of the inclusive education system to eliminate barriers to the

development of the quality and diversity of students' further education. Successful pedagogical processes involve the integration of support staff. Individual lessons with special education teachers, sessions with psychologists and speech therapists, involvement of teacher's aides, the work of teacher assistants, and temporarily organized individual learning processes can improve the quality of inclusive education.

Jūrmala is the only city in Latvia where the total number of registered residents has increased in recent years, although it cannot boast of positive birth rates. According to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs data, as of January 1, 2023, Jūrmala had 3% of the total population of Latvia declared as residents. A total of 10.5% of all residents in Latvia have a disability, including 7.2% in Jūrmala, and this number is increasing annually. Despite a decrease in the number of students, there has been an increase in the demand for special education programs. These are significant indicators to pay attention to the legal, social, and educational issues of persons with special needs.

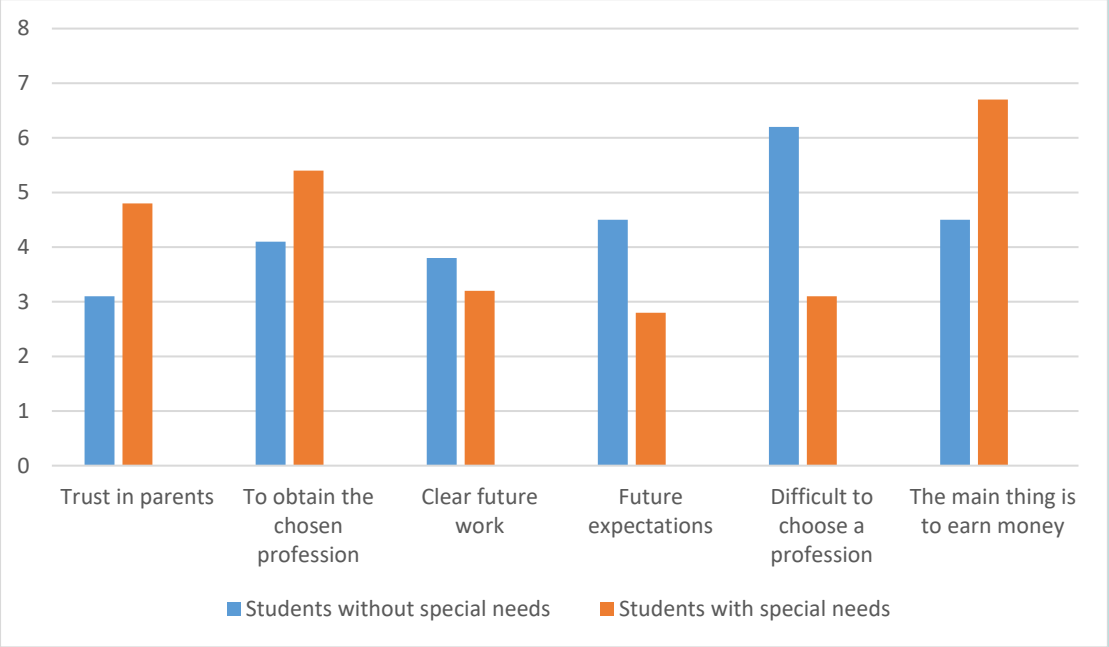
Improving democratic characteristics in society involves recognizing and developing each person's social potential, helping them creatively shape their lives, perfect their abilities, and attitudes, which benefits both themselves and others.

To provide a more comprehensive insight into the qualities of educators and students' personalities, additional research was conducted. This study theoretically and practically explored and compared the pursuits of life's meaning questions - the self-concept and life goals of adolescents with and without special needs.

To understand the self-assessment and life goals of students with special needs, a study on their attitudes, objectives, and situations was conducted. Surveys were carried out among 150 adolescents without special needs and 143 students with special needs, aged 13-17 years, using the "Adolescent Self Concept Scale" (Hofman et al., , 1982). This survey includes five answer categories, ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree), covering attitudes towards family, profession choice, life, religion, peer relationships, and self. Another survey, "Life Goals and Behavioral Intentions Questionnaire" (Ingledew, et al., 2010), also utilizes five answer categories and is aimed at assessing and comparing the life goals, behavioral intentions, appearance, and health among adolescents with and without special needs, including goals related to fame, appearance, wealth, community, relationships, development, health, motives for improving appearance, social conformity, enhancing well-being, protecting from social pressure, and maintaining and protecting health.

Key differences in attitudes and life goal choices between adolescents with and without special needs were noted. Analysis of questions related to life goals for wealth shows that for students with special needs, goals related to material needs are very important. Over 80% of students with special needs believe that they more frequently face material problems, and that material support could help solve their life challenges. Life goals focused on the common good of society indicate a desire to help people in need without expecting anything in return, as well as to work towards making the world a better place and improving others' lives. It can be concluded that students with special needs also possess a marked tendency to offer help to others and contribute to societal welfare. The responses reflect the students' inability to see their life's purpose, accept themselves, and affirm their place in society. This issue also has a social basis: the failure to provide the necessary support for their further personal development.

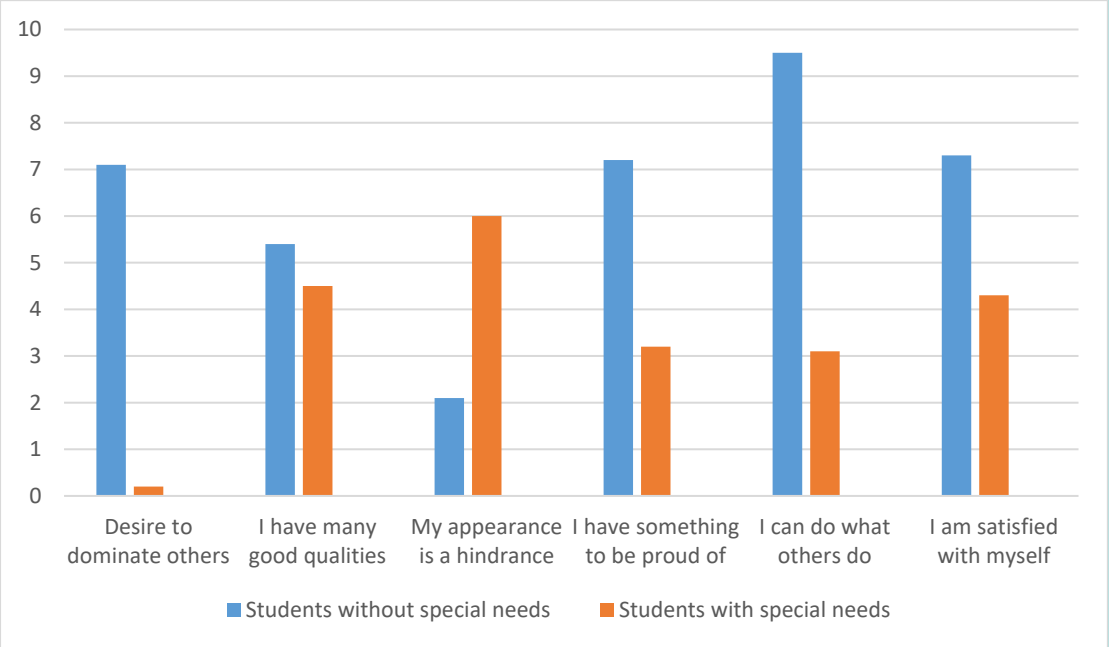
Figure 2. Trust in Close Ones and Future Expectations Among Students With- and Without Special Needs



Analyzing the responses to the statement "The most important thing for me is to obtain the profession I have chosen," it is observed that a majority of students with special needs emphasize the importance of acquiring their chosen profession. However, some students are uncertain, possibly due to difficulties in selecting a suitable future profession caused by the limited options available in their programs. They realize they might not be able to pursue their dream job. The proportional distribution of responses is illustrated in Figure 2.

In summarizing the responses from adolescents with and without special needs within the framework of the "Self-Concept" test, it can be concluded that students from both groups sometimes do not understand their parents' expectations. Yet, they all feel good in their families, contemplate their career choices, have generally had a good childhood, are overall satisfied with themselves, possess many positive qualities, consider themselves equal to others, sometimes lack self-respect, and are generally content with themselves.

Figure 3. Key Self-Concept Aspects Among Students With- and Without Special Needs



Analyzing the statements, the greatest differences are observed in low self-esteem towards oneself and lesser belief in one's abilities (see Figure 3).

Despite the generally favorable attitude towards people with special needs in surveys, society as a whole faces problems with ethical collaboration and psychologically positive orientation, which limits the adequate formation of self-concept and life goals of students, including adolescents, and their integration into general education schools and society at large. Society's inertia, misunderstanding, and differentiated attitude are obstacles. Students, when living in conditions suitable to their abilities, can become creators of significant value for society, not just consumers. Therefore, like any country, Latvia must strive to do everything possible to enable these students to fully integrate and realize their social potential in society.

The World Health Organization has determined that spirituality is an important component of the quality-of-life indicator (Willinsky & Alperin, 2011). The search for the foundation of spirituality is not only a crucial stage in the development of the "SELF" - personality, but also of small or large social systems (Vidnere & Ozoliņa-Nucho, 2009). It is during this period that a reevaluation of previous values occurs and an interest in spirituality emerges both in society and in science. Diana Zohar and Ian Marshall introduced a new dimension to human intellect. They argue that spiritual intelligence (or SQ) is the highest form of intelligence. It is the intellect used to solve problems of value and meaning.

Spiritual intelligence is about finding the meaning of human needs and talents through experience. It involves experiencing higher spiritual truths. We can spend our entire lives talking and deliberating, but we cannot understand the truth of words unless we experience it ourselves. Understanding this can be aided by asking oneself key questions:

"Does my work provide the fulfilment I am seeking?"

"Am I connected with people in my life in a way that promotes their happiness and mine?"

Therefore, the study also utilized the "Biopsychosociospiritual Model Survey" to determine the interrelations between life resilience qualities and spirituality among educators. This included Katerndahl and Oyiriaru's (2007), Biopsychosociospiritual Inventory (BioPSSI), which was translated into Latvian and adapted by Vidnere and Ņikiforovs (2022), as well as the Life Hardiness Survey by (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2001), and the "Spiritual Assessment Scale" (Hatch et al., 1998). Also included was Hudson's (2002) Survey on Life Satisfaction. The number of educators was 160, with an average age of 35.9 years.

Table 1. The interrelations between life resilience, stress, spirituality, and BioPSSI factors

	Stress	Life Hardiness	Engagement	Control	Challenge	Satisfaction with life	Spirituality
1. Stress Level Self-Assessment		-.11	-.067	**-.17***	-.095	**-.79****	**-.79****
2. Life Resilience	-.11		**.93****	**.91****	**.89****	.068	.031
3. Engagement	-.067	**.93****		**.79****	**.74****	.071	-.014
4. Control	**-.17***	**.91****	**.79****		**.70****	.11	.085
5. Challenge	-.095	**.89****	**.74****	**.70****		.028	.033
6. Satisfaction with Life	**-.79****	.068	.071	.11	.028		**.71****
7. Spirituality	**-.79****	.031	-.014	.085	.033	**.71****	
8. Biopsychosociospiritual Model	.081	**.50****	**.58****	**.35****	**.43****	.13	-.11
9. Physical Factors	.089	**.20***	**.28****	.096	.16	.14	-.11
10. Psychological Factors	-.021	**.37****	**.38****	**.31****	**.35****	.074	.013
11. Social Factors	.051	**.52****	**.58****	**.40****	**.46****	.030	-.087
12. Spiritual Factors	.027	**.61****	**.66****	**.50****	**.54****	.082	-.076
13. Functional Factors	.078	.098	**.18***	.022	.043	.15	-.046

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

From the table, we can see that the self-assessment of stress level has a significant negative correlation with satisfaction with life and the degree of spirituality (-.79**); the higher the stress, the less a person is satisfied with life and the less they consider the importance of spirituality. The significance of spirituality correlates especially highly with overall life satisfaction. The more a person is satisfied with life, the less stress they have, and the more they can engage in spiritual questions and practices in everyday life. Meanwhile, life resilience (LH) significantly positively correlates with engagement in the social environment (.93**), control over one's life (.91**), and the ability to accept life's challenges (.89**). Life resilience also significantly positively correlates with all factors of the Biopsychosocialspiritual model, especially the spiritual factor (.61**), and overall provides a significant correlation (.50**).

The functional factors of the BioPSSI model are significantly correlated with social engagement; this means that a person can have a significantly negative social experience, but further social engagement of the personality remains significant, as does physical and psychological health.

Summary

To successfully address support measures for student inclusion, we must learn to develop humane and robust support policies to change and evaluate inclusive education. When

reviewing special education programs, they need to be flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of students.

Special attention should be given to the compensatory talents and potential of students with special needs -to their giftedness- not just focusing on diagnosing their disabilities.

Talented students with learning difficulties thrive in a supportive environment where their individual abilities are recognized and valued.

Students with special needs must be helped to acquire a set of compensation strategies and understand the value of tasks to offset their learning difficulties.

New and appropriate special education programs for students with special needs must be expanded and created so that they can obtain not only basic education and learn a very narrow specialization but also choose to continue their education according to their abilities in colleges and higher education. This implies a humane attitude – helping with the professional skills of educators to fully continue learning, developing their abilities, realizing their goals, their social potential, and increasing the common good of society.

The negative consequences of social changes in the development of the education system can only be addressed by the doers themselves, receiving sincere support, responsibility, and professional respect from the state.

Effective results in inclusive education are based on the collaboration between the teacher, special and social educator, clinical and health psychologist, speech therapist, medical professional, parent/guardian, and student with special needs, setting common goals and tasks, and creating an individual support plan. The operation of inclusive education centers, reflected in the contribution as JIIC work analysis and achieved work results, helps to ensure these goals.

The main challenge for educators' personalities in implementing the humane paradigm in the modern education system is not only to understand the necessity of developing humane principles but also to be knowledgeable and psychologically strong in their implementation. Therefore, the personal characteristics of the educator, professional identity, and professional competence become important, but initially, life resilience and spirituality are key. This is evidenced by the study results involving educators using validated methodologies that confirm the qualities of personal life resilience and spirituality.

It is noted that the developmental needs and necessities of modern society's economic and social situation dictate a greater diversity of professional education programs and the opportunity to continue studies in college and university programs.

Only when inclusive development/support centers are established in all municipalities throughout Latvia will it be possible to fully provide various types of support in addressing inclusive education issues.

It is particularly important today to realize that adherence to and realization of humane education principles in the education system will maintain and support the sustainable existence and development of all Latvian society.

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Film Production as Expansive Learning in Social Studies at an Upper Secondary School[1]

Dennis Augustsson[2]

Abstract

This paper investigates the potential and challenges of utilizing filmmaking in educational settings to foster agency, promote active citizenship, and empower young people to engage in social action. Drawing on activity theory, which emphasizes the dynamic interplay between individuals, social context, and cultural artifacts, the study examines filmmaking projects within social studies in an upper secondary school in Sweden. The concept of expansive learning is employed to illustrate how such projects can transcend traditional subject matter knowledge, fostering agency and engagement in social actions. Based on a thematic analysis of interviews with five students and two teachers, findings reveal that filmmaking encourages active engagement with social studies topics. Students are required to research, analyze, and interpret societal issues beyond the classroom, transforming them from passive information consumers to active participants in the learning process. This hands-on exploration and creative expression have the potential of helping students construct a deeper understanding of complex social studies concepts. However, the study also identifies significant challenges in film production, including the need for both media literacy and technical competencies to effectively explore and represent subject content. An activity theoretical model was used to visualize and make these challenges tangible.

Keywords: Media literacy, Activity theory, film production, Upper secondary school, expansive learning

Introduction

Film production has been promoted as an effective strategy for both learning and presenting knowledge in educational settings (Danielsson 2002; Lindstrand 2006; Snelson, 2018). The potential and visions for education facilitated by digitalization are reflected in policy documents and curricular requirements, emphasizing the importance of 21st-century skills and lifelong learning for developing agency and active citizenship (Trilling & Fadel 2009). According to UNESCO, media literacy is a crucial component for fostering these skills (UNESCO, 2013). Engaging in film production in classrooms has the potential for this, but without adequate support, teachers face the challenging task of identifying and addressing both their own and their students' competence needs, as well as developing methods to meet the demands of curricular reforms and digital advancements (Augustsson, 2018). The primary focus of an upper secondary school course is the subject matter content, which teachers might find conflicting with broader goals of fostering media literacy, creativity and innovation, social and cross-cultural interaction, collaboration, critical thinking, adaptability, communication, and problem-solving (Augustsson, 2018)

In Sweden, the concept of aesthetic learning processes has been used to promote film production as a valuable tool for exploring and producing both subject knowledge and media

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Augustsson, D. (2024). Film Production as Expansive Learning in Social Studies at an Upper Secondary School. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 182-194. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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literacy (Danielsson, 2002; Lindstrand, 2006; Säfbom, 2017). Lindstrand (2006) suggests that filmmaking is an aesthetic learning process through which students learn *about* and *through* film production. Media literacy is developed during the production process, while the content of the films enhances subject knowledge and encourages reflections on identity and representation. Lindstrand highlights the significance of all the different parts of the production process in integrating and developing both media literacy and subject content.

However, engaging in aesthetic learning processes involves certain risks. Although it promotes creativity, innovation, and individual expression, a lack of media literacy development can hinder the goal of effectively representing specific subject matter (Stam, 2016; Augustsson, 2020). The concept of "learning by doing" without a core understanding of the historical development, genres, and semiotic affordances of media production can create high barriers, limiting the activity's objectives and potentially impeding the development of new, sustainable teaching and learning practices.

This paper proposes using an activity theoretical approach to investigate these challenges. By examining a film production project within a social studies curriculum at a Swedish upper secondary school, and utilizing concepts from an activity theoretical framework, it aims to analyze the challenges and opportunities that arise during the process.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Expansive Learning

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is a theoretical framework originated in the Soviet Union and developmental psychology research, with significant contributions from Lev Vygotsky, Aleksei Leontiev and Yrjö Engeström (Engeström, 2015). The core principle is the view of learning and development as an activity - a dialectical movement and mutual dependence between the individual and the surrounding world. Vygotsky emphasized mediated action, where an individual subject interacts with an object (problem) using tools or signs (Vygotsky, 1986) and CHAT explains human activity as an object-oriented, culturally mediated *system* with six interconnected components: subject, object, tools, community, rules and division of labor (Engeström, 2015).

In an activity system, learners have the potential through learning actions to change and create new activities by going beyond the already known and relatively stable practices within the activity system. This process is described as expansive learning where collective action breaks the boundaries of current practices (Engeström & Sannino, 2010).

In this sense, expansive learning has a transformative character. It not only changes individual learners' knowledge and development but also transforms the collective activity and its object by articulating and engaging with systemic tensions and contradictions within the learning activity as a system. Although it is bold to assume that a small classroom intervention could change the schooling system on a larger scale, trying out new curricular activities such as film production in social studies, can be the first step in a transformative process. Furthermore, engaging in hands-on exploration of societal issues outside the classroom carries the possibility to foster agency and knowledge beyond curricular demands, empowering students to become proactive citizens in the spirit of Dewey (2015) and Freire (1970/1996).

Film production is a complex form of multimodal communication that requires several linguistic and technical tools. All are needed to explore and represent subject content matter.

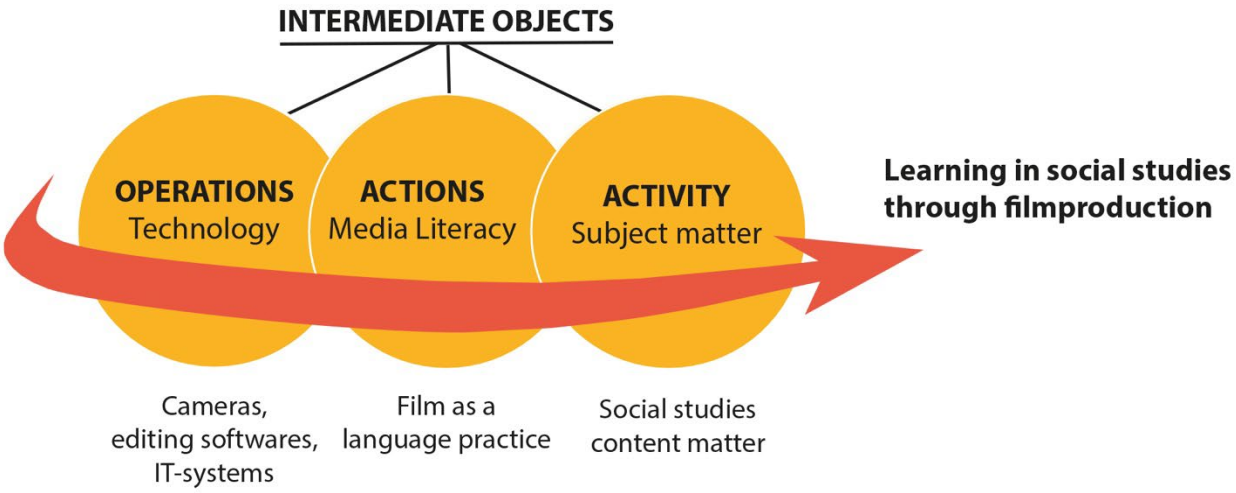
In an educational setting, film production as a learning tool can create many challenges on systemic levels. Contradictions between allotted time in the classroom and the complexity of film production is an example of this and tensions between film production and curricular demands on specific learning outcomes and individual assessments is another example (Augustsson, 2018; Insulander et al., 2022).

Operations, Actions and Activity; Three Levels of a Learning Activity

Leontiev (1978) developed a model in which three levels of an activity can be distinguished; the levels of operations, actions and activity, here interpreted to illustrate the complexity of film production as a learning tool:

1. The first level consists of more or less unconscious actions, where the tools of the activity are used without much reflection (operations). It describes *how* an action is performed. In an ideal world, for example, the technical tools (cameras, microphones, computers, editing software, etc.) are used in this way during film production.
2. The second level describes *what* is being performed, where conscious actions are directed towards clear goals (actions). In a film production these actions are the choices made to convey subject content for example: script, dramaturgy, choice of framing, camera angles, continuity, and communication through editing).
3. The third level describes *why* actions are performed (activity), where the activity as a whole is motivated by a common object. In this case, the activity level and object are interpreted as teaching and learning subject content through film production.

Figure 2. Intermediate objects of activity



An analogy for the three levels could be the work on a traditional essay, where the first level consists of using a word processor and basic grammar, the second level involves adhering to the essay's rules regarding structure, references, and clear and factual argumentation with academic

language. The third level is the subject and content of the essay. For a teacher of social sciences, the primary goal is to work with the subject content matter, but knowledge of the technical tools and film as a literacy practice is required to get there (see Figure 1).

There is no clear boundary between the different levels, which aligns with Lindstrand's (2006) argument that there is an integrated process in aesthetic learning between learning about and through video production. However, if the knowledge of the technical aspects is too low, the focus of the activity shifts to the use of technology - which then becomes the primary focus of instruction (level 3). In this case technology can be regarded as an intermediate object were conscious actions with clear goals (level 2) is used to learn the technology. This knowledge gradually becomes routine and used without much thought (level 1) giving room for the next intermediate object – the development of media literacy which is needed for the final object of communicating subject content matter. My previous research has shown that the entanglement of these intermediate objects can create frustration and backlashes in the development of teaching practices involving film production with students (Augustsson, 2020).

The Case, Data and Analysis Method

The Case – A Participatory Design Project

The data analyzed in this study comes from the first iteration of a participatory design project conducted with an upper secondary school in Sweden in the spring of 2023. Together with two teachers in social studies the researcher collaborated to design, implement, and evaluate film production as a tool for learning. In this first iteration, two video assignments were performed by a group of 32 students aged 17-18 years. The activity theoretical model was used in the design process to discuss challenges and opportunities. As both teachers and students had very little experiences with filmmaking, the teachers started to participate in a workshop at Malmö University to get experience of their own. The first assignment for the students was built on those experiences. It was a short assignment lasting for four hours where students choose a prewritten text about different psychiatric diagnoses and filmed short interviews with their peers asking about their conception and perspectives. These were edited together with images and clips explaining and illustrating the diagnosis based on the prewritten information. The films were shot and edited in the students' smartphones. The second assignment lasted for 4 weeks in which the students conducted a classic sociology study, conducted through qualitative interviews with people outside of the school, answering a research question on societal issues of their own choice. These were documented with video and edited together with visualizations to create a representation of the research and their findings.

Data – Qualitative Interviews

Video documentation of the design process and classroom observations were conducted throughout the implementation to be used for analysis and furthering the next iteration. For this paper, post interviews with five students and the two participating teachers were analyzed to investigate their conception of film production as a learning tool. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for flexibility in exploring the participants' experiences while ensuring that key topics were covered (Kvale, 1996). The interview questions for students aimed to elicit detailed responses about their experiences, perceptions, and reflections on the use of film production in the educational setting. Questions for students included inquiries about their experience participating in the film production project, what they learned from the experience, how film production impacted their understanding of the

subject matter, challenges encountered during the project, and their thoughts on film production compared to other learning activities. For teachers, the interview questions were designed to explore their role in facilitating the film production project, the educational goals they aimed to achieve through the project, the impact of film production on student engagement and learning, the challenges faced in integrating film production into the curriculum, and their reflections on the overall effectiveness of using film production as a learning tool.

Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the interview data, allowing for the identification of key themes and insights related to the educational benefits and challenges of integrating film production into the school curriculum. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The process followed Braun and Clarke's (2016) framework for thematic analysis. Initially, all interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the researcher read through the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the content. The next step involved generating initial codes by systematically coding interesting features of the data across the entire data set, highlighting significant statements, and assigning labels to them. Following this, the codes were collated into potential themes by grouping codes that appeared to be related and identifying broader patterns. The themes were then reviewed and refined, checking if they worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. The final step involved writing up the thematic analysis, including selecting extract examples that captured the essence of each theme and relating them to the activity theoretical model and relevant references.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Analyzing data from a participatory design project in educational settings presents challenges, including the risk of researcher bias due to close involvement in the design and implementation of the intervention (Barab & Squire, 2004). However, this inside knowledge can lead to a deeper understanding of situated needs and problems. Balancing involvement and detachment is a hallmark of design-based research (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). To ensure research credibility, all records and data are meticulously documented to create an audit trail (Halpern, 1983, as cited in Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The study employed member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), allowing participating teachers to provide feedback on the data, interpretations, and conclusions. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews. Participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses, and no sensitive data were recorded or stored. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Results

Six themes were identified and related to a central theme of "agency". Agency, in this context, refers to students' capacity to act independently, make their own choices, and influence their educational activity through intentionality, forethought, self-regulation and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2001). Participants never used the term themselves but words like

creativity, independence and engagement used, points to the concept of agency. The integration of film production into the social science curriculum has according to participants provided students with a varied learning experience, highlighting both the benefits and challenges they encountered. The six themes found in the analysis include technical and media literacy challenges, collaborative learning, active learning and engagement, addressing real-world issues, the application of theory to practice, and the crucial role of teacher support and training. These themes collectively illustrate the potential of film production in social science education while identifying challenges and areas for improvement.

Table 1. Summary of themes

Theme	Students	Teachers
Technical and Media literacy Challenges	31.25%	62.22%
Collaborative Learning	25.00%	4.44%
Active Learning and Engagement	15.63%	6.67%
Addressing Real-World Issues	12.50%	6.67%
Application of Theory to Practice	9.38%	2.22%
Teacher Support and Training:	6.25%	17.78%

In this table, the six themes are presented with the frequency of each theme within the dataset expressed in percentage.

Technical and Media Literacy Challenges

Students and teacher testify to technical difficulties during the film production projects. Issues with video editing software, storage space on devices, and exporting final videos were common. The lack of standardized tools led to inconsistencies and additional learning curves, adding to the already time-consuming nature of the projects. Despite efforts to introduce teachers beforehand and make use of technical tools available, the technical level of the activity became an intermediate object hampering the development of both media literacy and subject matter content in many of the films. The degree of frustration on these issues were highest among the teachers (62.22% frequency in the data set) and surfaced in the second assignment where the demands on the content of the films where higher:

> It's demanding to conduct good interviews, as well as to present them in a decent way. But I think the additional challenge here was also managing the film process, which made it a bit too much for them. Then there was the issue of the technology being more complicated than I had expected. Many had problems with it. (Teacher 1)

> We would have needed a bit more prior knowledge; everyone knows how to write an essay, and everyone knows how to do a presentation. But here (When making films) everyone used different methods. There was no general structure for how to film, and many had problems with their phones, like not having enough space on their phones, which made it difficult to export and edit the videos (Student 3)

As technological issues emerged, some students tended to ignore the importance of the second level of the activity; film production as a media literacy practice which also frustrated teachers:

> I would say that there were many films where it was noticeable that the students did not manage to incorporate what you had talked about regarding form, content, and so on. It feels like there were quite a few who had just focused to pull something together in the end. I think I might have given them a task that was a bit too complex (…) The puzzle pieces had become too many or too difficult to put together… (Teacher 1)

From a student perspective, the time allocated was the main issue for dealing with these issues:

> It was a bit unusual to do a school project this way. I have made films for school projects in middle school, but those were mainly acting in language lessons where you had to show your ability to pronounce the language and all that. But this was the first time we did an analysis in a (social science) lesson in this way, in the form of a film. (…) I thought you would film and edit differently when doing this kind of analysis rather than fiction. All film is cinematic, but I didn't really have time to do that. (…) You should film from different angles to make it varied. But our film probably became a bit stiffer because we only had a straight-on shot when we were talking, simply because I didn't have time to edit in the other angles we had filmed. (…). We spent an incredible amount of time on the project, but it still turned out quite simple in the end. (Student 1)

Using the activity theoretical model for analysis it is arguable that the technical issues hindered both the development of media literacy skills and a satisfactory presentation of subject matter content in many of the films, primarily in the second assignment. The takeaway from this is to assign more time for development of technology skills and media literacy combined with creating smaller assignments to give room for the development of all three levels of the model. This was also a result of the reflections from participating teachers. These observations are in line with my previous research that argue for technology skills and media literacy to be incorporated at all levels of education and takes time to master (Augustson, 2020). Despite these challenges, both teachers and students perceived the film projects as important for the understanding of media literacy concepts and their connections to an active citizenship:

> What works? What looks good? Do you maintain the viewer's attention? How do you work within a (film) format? It's something you don't usually work with, but it's still very relevant and something you see every day on TV, for example. And on YouTube and everywhere. On mobile phones. It's primarily information that comes via video, and I think being able to work with that myself is valuable. (…) Not just being an observer of content, but actually creating it. In a world where we consume so much, getting to try producing as well is important. It's good to be involved, I think. In a society, producing means being engaged in a different way than just consuming content. (Student 1)

Collaborative Learning

Despite the technical hurdles, students and teachers appreciated the collaborative nature of film production. Working in teams fostered teamwork and communication skills, allowing students to learn from each other's strengths, as the interdisciplinary approach demanded various skills from different fields, including writing, critical thinking, creativity and film production. Some students reported on issues with collaboration but generally they saw it as both engaging and necessary for the projects, testifying to both the challenges and learning opportunities in collaboration:

> Yes, it definitely made the work easier. Since we hadn't done this before, it wasn't as overwhelming for each person. We could divide the tasks, so each of us conducted an interview... and even during the process, we could sit down and decide which questions and answers we found most interesting. Yes, we had to work hard together on this project and collaborate a lot, trying

> to put in equal effort... It's almost like a paradox, much more demanding, but also much more fun. (Student 3)
>
> I worked hard with my friends on this project... Yes, I think it was fun. Even though it took a lot of energy and time, I think it's a more enjoyable way to work compared to preparing for an oral presentation or a test because it's more creative and you get to work in various ways within the project. (Student 4)

Division of labor and collaboration made some of the challenges easier to overcome and enabled a collective agency, expanding learning beyond the individual learner's capacity. Both teachers and students articulated the interdisciplinary and multimodal learning process as something that they believed to be effective and important but required a collaborative approach. Collaboration was not always easy and expressed with CHAT terminology, the film production process sometimes created tensions between the division of labor and the object of the activity (Engeström, 2015).

Active Learning and Engagement

According to the participants, film production engaged students in ways traditional methods often do not. The creative and hands-on nature of the projects increased motivation and participation despite the technical challenges. Students valued the opportunity to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, finding the process both enjoyable and educational. This active learning approach also encouraged reflection, leading to a deeper understanding of the material.

> There is a creative aspect that the school may not be as good at harnessing. At least in the subjects I teach, where the instruction can easily become... You have thirty-two students, and it can turn into a lot of listening and repeating what the teacher says. So here, you really get something different. In terms of motivation in the school environment, I think it breaks away from the regular teaching. There were other students who stood out. It's a good insight for me as a teacher to understand that how I assess and allow students to demonstrate their knowledge also affects the results I get and which students excel. Partly, those who might find traditional methods more difficult excel in this, and those who find traditional methods easier find this challenging. They thought it was a bit tough, and I thought it was quite good to see that as well... (Teacher 2)

The film production enabled a diversity of learning approaches in which some students could flourish and others feeling inadequate. There was no consensus among participants on whether the film projects led to more or less knowledge of the subject matter content, and there was no way to measure and compare the actual impact. However, there were testimonies on how the film production immersed the students in the content and forced them to actively engage with it through reflection and repetition:

> I think I have learned a bit more, probably. I needed to hear our interviewee say the same thing three times (in the editing process) and then hear my friend's analysis of it. (…) so I'm incredibly sure of what this sociologist thinks, for example. So repetition works... (Student 4)

Using the concept of expansive learning, these film projects provided an activity where students could go beyond traditional boundaries of knowledge acquisition. Expansive learning encourages students to participate in activities that not only deepen their understanding of the subject matter but also enhance their ability to think critically and solve problems in diverse contexts (Engeström, 2015). By engaging in film production, students were not merely passive recipients of information; they became active producers of knowledge. This process involved negotiating meanings, experimenting with new ideas, and reflecting on their experiences, all of which are key components of expansive learning.

Addressing Real-World Issues

Both teachers and students testified to how the film production enabled them to go beyond reproducing knowledge and the benefits of engaging with societal issues in the real world outside of the classroom.

> We learn a lot about psychology, society, and people, and how everything works in theory and in a classroom. And I think it's very important and educational to get out there and see it for real as well. And I think if we turn it into a film, it's the same. Then you get to do it in film format and can learn from it in that way too. (Student 5)

> with film, we have worked with diagnoses, for example. And some have also gone out and interviewed, for example, doctors or caregivers or people who have such diagnoses. And you can see there…the better understanding the students get compared to those who do not do it, there is something important that happens. (Teacher 2)

The film production activities outside the classroom developed agency and active citizenship by engaging students in these real-world contexts, thereby making learning relevant and meaningful. These activities foster critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication skills. By creating films on genuine societal issues, students felt empowered and gained a sense of agency. Interaction with community members enhanced their knowledge of societal issues through direct engagement crucial for active citizenship. This is also connected to the concept of expansive learning; students not only acquired knowledge but also transformed their understanding and capabilities through collective engagement, leading to deeper and more sustainable learning outcomes.

Application of Theory to Practice

The theme of Application of theory to practice is closely connected to the theme of Active learning and engagement and addressing real-world issues. Through film production, students could apply theoretical concepts in the practical context of film production, improving knowledge retention and comprehension. The planning, filming, and editing processes required deep analysis and critical engagement with the material. This approach integrated various practices, such as writing, media literacy, and technical skills, promoting active learning.

Creativity and hands-on practice as driving forces for learning were often used to describe how the filmmaking process enabled students to actively engage in the subject at hand:

> It feels more playful and there's less pressure. Even if you need to do a good job, it feels like you can. You get to play more too, because it's something new and quite unfamiliar that we don't usually do in school. But it's also a bit more exciting and relaxed. And I felt that it was easier to learn. (Student 5)

> But I think that variety is good precisely because it is so different. Instead of just having a test, seminar, or oral presentation, you get a combination of all those working methods. Finally, thinking bit more broadly… it's (film production) a multifaceted approach… So, I think there should be more of that (Student 1)

> You need to plan a lot. You start thinking about the content. I need to include this or that for to convey a long text, or what we would normally want to write, like an analytical response. And you have to plan more and think more about the content. And then, working on it for a long time, editing it, and then looking at it afterwards... It feels like the whole process is a bit more... You need to engage with the knowledge a bit more. (Student 3)

Theoretically, these experiences could be described as a both a transformative and transductive learning process (Selander and Kress, 2010). The concept of transformation describes how we negotiate the content within one form of representation of knowledge (for example, a scientific one in the form of words and text) and make it our own within the same form. The concept of transduction describes how we negotiate the content and shape it into a new form of representation, for example, from words and text to a visual representation. A film production as a learning process within social studies offers a movement of both transformation and transduction between theory and practice.

Even here, the concept of expansive learning is useful. We can see that these processes of transformation and transduction are not merely about converting content from one form to another but are part of a broader, dynamic process of learning and development. Expansive learning involves the creation of new knowledge and practices through collaborative activities, often transcending traditional boundaries and involving multiple stakeholders. In the context of film production within social studies, students engage in a collective inquiry that enables them to reinterpret and recontextualize subject matter knowledge. They collaborate to produce a film, requiring them to not only understand the content but also to express it creatively and critically in a new medium. This process fosters deep engagement, critical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge in diverse contexts, reflecting the core principles of expansive learning where learners are active participants in the co-creation of knowledge.

Teacher Support and Training

The importance of teacher support and training emerged as an important theme. Students expressed the need for clearer guidelines and more structured assistance from teachers, especially concerning technical and creative aspects of film production.

> I think it also has to do with our teacher not having done this before, this thing with film. I believe it was quite new for him too. He had only done it once before, and I know that he maybe hasn't quite gotten the hang of it; how to make a film, the best way to do it, you know. (Student 4)

Teachers, in turn, recognized the need for professional development to better support their students. Teachers admitted to not fully understanding the processes, which in turn affected their ability to guide students effectively. They expressed a desire to keep the projects smaller in the future to make room for both their own and the students' development of filmmaking skills:

> Partly, I think I was a bit naive when I chose the assignments; partly, they were a bit too large but also a bit too rigid to fit into a film. It's like you'd want to do something a bit quicker, a bit more popular science-like, something like that. Because it felt like they liked film as a medium. So my lesson to take with me for next year is that I plan to try film again. The thing is, I will probably do something significantly smaller (Teacher 1).

Using the activity theoretical model, analysis suggests there is a need for a deeper media literacy and technical competencies among both teachers and students to more effectively explore and represent subject matter content when engaging in film production as a tool for learning. Training and reiteration were expressed by teacher as the solution and looked forward to continue this curricular activity in the future. Teachers and students alike also faced difficulties due to the absence of a common framework for handling technical tasks. Implementing a standardized set of tools and ensuring that teachers are well-trained in their use can streamline the educational process and prevent being stuck on technology as an

intermediate object and give room for important development of media literacy and it´s connection to the subject matter of social studies.

Conclusion

This study utilized concepts from an activity theoretical framework to explore the challenges and opportunities that arise in the use of film production in the field of social studies at an upper secondary school. The analysis of participants interviews demonstrates the potential of film production as a powerful educational tool in social studies. The themes identified from the interviews underscores how film production can enrich educational experiences and prepare students for real-world complexities. One of the central themes emerging from the study is the development of student agency. The process of film production required students to research, analyze, and interpret societal issues, transforming them from passive recipients of information to active participants in a collaborative learning activity. This hands-on approach not only enhanced their understanding of complex social studies concepts but also allowed them to connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications, making learning more relevant and meaningful. By documenting and visualizing societal issues and conducting interviews in the form of a film production, students gained firsthand experience in addressing real-world problems, thereby fostering a sense of agency and active citizenship. This aligns with the principles of expansive learning, where learners engage in collective activities that transcend traditional boundaries, leading to deeper and more sustainable learning outcomes (Engeström, 2015).

However, this study also highlights significant challenges related to technical competencies and media literacy in utilizing film production for learning. The theme of Technical and Media literacy Challenges made up the predominant issue in the dataset. Even though the activity theoretical model was used to discuss and plan the project with participating teachers, the issues and challenges of the different levels in the model still emerged and created high thresholds in the production process. This insight points to the necessity of technology skills and media literacy to be incorporated at all levels of education and that it takes time to master (Augustson, 2020). Participating teachers expressed awareness of this, and the experience will be brought into the next iteration as the model made these challenges visible and tangible. A common framework for handling technical tasks and implementing a standardized set of tools was perceived as the first step of this development, followed by more in-depth teaching and learning on media literacy.

Acknowledgements

This study was made possible through funding from Region Skåne and the research program; Disciplinary Literacy and Inclusive Teaching, Malmö university, Sweden. The author has no competing interests to declare.

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European identity – A success story? A Comparative Study between German and Spanish Students[1]

Ulrich Kerscher[2] & Andreas Brunold[3]

Abstract

As a first step the paper summarizes key targets for the teaching of the EU at school in Germany and Spain and identifies the construction of a European identity as a main goal of the curricula of both countries. Against this background, the contribution first examines the significance of emotions for individual identification processes towards a collective European identity and points out connected implications for EU-related learning in schools. As a second step, the paper offers a comparative analysis of emotionalization strategies applied in German election posters used during the European elections of 1979 and 1984. It is shown that political parties aimed at constructing a European identity using different forms of realization of the abstract concept. At the same the poster analysis shows that national and European identity construction processes often interfere each other. As a third step and to discuss the question of transnational community and identity formation, a research project on European identity concepts of German and Spanish students is presented, which exemplarily examines the status quo of European identity formation within the mentioned group.

Keywords: European Identity, Election Poster Analysis, Identity Construction, Emotions, Teaching the EU

Introduction: Teaching the EU at school in Germany and Spain

Both in Germany and in Spain Europe and the European Union have been established as topics for their national school curricula. In Germany the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz) first formulated guidelines for the teaching of Europe and the EU at school on June 8, 1978 to strengthen the European integration process. Nowadays these guidelines include a European competence encompassing both cognitive and emotional-affective aspects. Thus, in addition to Europe- / EU-related knowledge and multilingual competencies, the awareness of a European identity as part of one's individual identity is to be initiated among learners. It is therefore the task of schools to promote awareness-raising processes targeting at a European consciousness and a sense of European togetherness (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2020). In the course of Spain's entry into the European Community 1986 the principles and values of European integration also started to become a part of the national curricula. The role of the EU in Spanish education has continuously developed and solidified since then. Through various educational reforms and participation in European programs, Spain has systematically integrated European-oriented education into its curricula to enhance students' knowledge and awareness of the EU and its significance which is supposed to contribute to the development of a European

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Kerscher, U. & Brunold, A. (2024). European identity – A success story? A Comparative Study between German and Spanish Students. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 195-204. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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identity (Eurydice, n.d.). A comparison of the curricula shows that in both countries EU-related learning plays an important role for subjects such as civic education, history and geography. Moreover, it becomes apparent that the teaching of the EU at school not only aims at the transfer of knowledge about e.g. the multi-level-system of the EU but also at awareness-raising processes concerning the significance of the European integrations process and the construction of a European identity.

European Identity and Emotions

European identity, as a form of collective identity, should be understood as a constructed, dynamic, and adopted category that reflects on the individual level of the personal identity (Prutsch, 2017). Therefore, a European identity is not a priori determined by birth. If at all, it is developed through social negotiation processes following suitable identification offerings (Kresic, 2006). Adapting Bendict Anderson (2005) learners are to be constituted and perpetuated as part of a transnational European in-group.

Identification processes, or the placing of an individual within a socially constructed collective category, encompass three dimensions. While the cognitive dimension describes the awareness of a group-membership, the emotional dimension includes the feeling of connection with or rejection of a group. The evaluative dimension finally covers the assessment of group membership as positive or negative. These three dimensions must be integrated to generate a person's affiliation with a particular group. Regarding the objectives of the European competence as established in Germany, EU-related learning processes should therefore not only focus on cognitive knowledge transmission but also consider the emotional and evaluative dimensions of identification processes. It is to point out that there is a two-fold challenge connected to this objective: on the one hand, individual or collective identities are multidimensional and somewhat intangible and abstract concepts; on the other hand, there is an ambiguity about what is meant by the term Europe and how identification with Europe can be distinguished from identification with the EU (Prutsch, 2017). What it more, it is critical to recognize that a European in-group implicitly or explicitly entails non-European out-groups (Anderson 2005). The distinction between 'us' and 'them' can entail hierarchical rankings and evaluations of groups which would contradict the goals of an education aiming at fostering autonomy. At the same time, it is important to ensure that processes of overwhelming are avoided in the promotion of an affirmative identification with Europe (Langer, 2023). To make the European identity a success story, learning processes have to present inclusive identification offerings aiming at all three aspects of the identification process which at the same time neither possess excluding potential concerning other groups nor carry the danger of overwhelming learners. Furthermore, the identification offerings should not have the respective national state as a secondary reference point as this would interfere with European identification processes (Prutsch, 2017).

Election Poster Analysis: Emotionalization Strategies and European Identity

This overlay of European and national identification offerings can for example be found in Germany election posters of the European Elections 1979 and 1984. A comparative analysis of the historical posters shows that they were used with the aim of achieving a positive evaluation of Europe and the EU on the side of the recipients. They are based on different

conceptualizations of a European identity, each aiming at constructing a collective European identity as a complement to national identities (Prutsch, 2017).

Generally speaking, election posters often address the emotional and evaluative dimensions of individual identification processes. From a pragmatic perspective, election posters can be seen as performative media due to their inherent emotionalization strategies. They not only fulfil a mere descriptive function, but can also constitute new realities. Media such as election posters can, therefore, initiate identification processes (Bublitz, 2009).

European and National Identification Offerings in Election Posters

The election poster of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) from 1984 features a smiling truck driver in front of an open barrier who is happily greeting a border guard (not shown in the image). In the upper third of the poster, there are two inscriptions that verbalize the content of the image. The slogan written in red means: "Upwards with Germany," while the blue inscription says: "With us for open borders in Europe." The red of the slogan is reflected in the CDU's party logo, attributing the upward trend in Germany to the Christian Democratic Union. The blue inscription corresponds to the colors of the flag of the European Community. This color scheme ties the 'open borders for Europe' back to the European Community (EC) as the actor. The final graphic design element is the merging of the German flag with the flag of the EC. This element expresses both Germany's status as a sovereign national state and its integration into the European integration process. Additionally, the symbolic content of both flags refers semiotically to complementary national and transnational identities. As another identity-offering element, the CDU represents the EC as an economic community. The poster conveys the message that open borders bring advantages for Germany's economic development. The poster doesn't portray the cultural or political value of a united Europe, but rather the economic progress and benefits that open borders bring.

Figure 1. Election Poster CDU 1984

Figure 2. Election Poster SPD 1979

The election poster of the SPD (Social-Democratic Party Germany) from 1979 combines textual and visual elements. In the upper third of the poster, architectural symbols for the member states of the EC are depicted, including the Tower of London, Cologne Cathedral, the Atomium in Brussels, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, a Dutch windmill, the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen and the Eiffel Tower in Paris. As architectural symbols, these buildings manifest a European collective memory or are intended to culturally constitute this memory due to its performative nature. By using familiar architecture and significant monuments across Europe, the poster aims at fostering a collective European identity. In the foreground of these architectural symbols there is a colorful bouquet of flowers. Embedded in this bouquet, there is a bird escorted by nine red hearts representing the nine member countries of the EC at the time. The nine different types of flowers tied into a bouquet symbolize the European integration process that had taken place up to that point. Below the visual representations there the slogan "Germans say YES to Europe," can be seen with the words "YES" and "Europe" written in red color. In the same color, an arrow pointing from the bottom left to the top right and the SPD party logo are positioned to the left below the slogan. The SPD focuses on Europe as a cultural community in the poster, presenting the European identity as a cultural identity.

Figure 3. Election Poster Die Grünen 1984

Figure 4. Campaign Poster EC 1979

In the lower half of the image, the election poster of the Green Party (Die Grünen) depicts a male-only European Parliament and caricatures its members. They are portrayed as behaving in a less than dignified manner, contrary to their mandate. This serves as a critical satire of the European Parliament at that time. In the upper part of the poster, Europa, riding on a bull, is leaping into the European Parliament—represented as an arena or Greek theatre—to inject new political life into it. Deviating from the Greek mythological founding myth, it is not Zeus

who abducts Europa, but rather the highest Olympic god is grabbed by the horns and tamed by the female figure. Moreover, Europa is characterized by her alternative and emancipated appearance. Her casual outfit of jeans and a T-shirt and the fact that she is riding the bull barefoot contrasts the European Parliament which had been dominated by male members up to the time. The EC is symbolically represented by the Europa's T-shirt, which is made up of the flags of the member states offering a national and a European identity both at the same time. The peace dove on the left upper arm of the figure also symbolically refers to the peace function of the EC and to the Greens as a party of the peace movement at that time. Despite the re-interpretation of the founding myth and criticism of the state of the European Parliament, the Green Party combines elements of both a cultural European identity and a political European identity. Thus, Europe or the EC is depicted both as a cultural community with a shared heritage and historical experiences and as a community with common democratic procedures (Prutsch, 2017).

Elections poster 4 is a notable exception as it is an election appeal by the European Community itself. It is captioned in blue with the slogan "Europe is building its parliament." In the same shade of blue, a complex comic-like scene is framed, adapted from the French comic series "Asterix and Obelix." This unfinished and chaotic depiction of the European Parliament in 1979 highlights the novelty of the European elections, the incompleteness of the EC's institutional system and the ongoing European integration process. The figures depicted are strongly exaggerated with common national stereotypes. This humorous overrepresentation of well-known stereotypical cultural differences between the member states is intended to induce a positive attitude towards the EC and a sense of European togetherness among recipients. In the lower right corner, there is a specific reference to the elections to the European Parliament graphically supported by a cross on a ballot. The cross is made up of the flags of the nine member states at that time. This element emphasizes the intended communal character of the European Parliament to be elected. Overall, the depiction of the EU Parliament as a community project and the stereotypical portrayal of the representatives in the form of comics are meant to highlight the added value of the European project. In this poster, elements of Europe as both a cultural and political community are presented together as an offering for European identification processes while elements of a national identity are incorporated in the poster at the same time.

National and Regional Identification Offerings in Election Posters

The election poster of the CSU (Christian-Social Union), a Bavarian regional party, from 1984 is designed as a text poster and almost entirely leaves out visual elements. It is headlined with two terms: In blue the poster refers to the election "Europe '84" and in black to the party CSU. Below this there is the dominant slogan in black: "Europe's Task: Peace. Europe's Essence: Freedom." The slogan is signed by the Bavarian Prime Minister of that time, Franz Josef Strauß, in a handwritten and flowing script. In the lower third, there is a ribbon in blue and green colours, which refers to the CSU as a party. The ribbon features the CSU logo—consisting of a lion—which also refers to the state of Bavaria or the Free State itself. Although the words "Peace" and "Freedom" might have some integrative potential, the focus of this election poster is on the national or regional identification processes. Especially the signature, the ribbon and the lion emphasize the Bavarian impetus of the CSU. The poster still conveys a positive evaluation of the European Community.

Figure 3. Election Poster CSU 1984

Figure 4. Election Poster FDP 1984

The election poster of the FDP (Liberal Democratic Party) from 1984 is difficult to categorize into a specific type of poster as it significantly differs in design from typical election posters. While the core message of the previously presented election posters can be deciphered quickly while passing by, this one requires a longer period of viewing and interpretation. The poster is titled in blue with "Achievements of European policy in the Federal Republic of Germany." In the same shade of blue, the party logo of "F.D.P. - The Liberals" is placed on the left and right of the highlighted term "Achievements," framed by yellow bars at the top and bottom. The colour scheme alone indicates that the FDP attributes the "achievements" depicted in the poster to themselves. Unlike the other parties, the FDP uses the 1984 European elections to address national policies. The poster features an oversized map of Germany. A large number of coloured text boxes are connected to various locations in Germany like and refer to subsidies and transfer payments from the EC to businesses in Germany. This highlights the economic benefits of the European Community for Germany and claims this as an achievement of the FDP. Overall, the FDP only indirectly appreciates the EC. This election poster entirely omits any notion of European identity offerings. The poster is limited to the economic aspect of transfer payments without presenting Germany as part of an economic community. In terms of design this election poster was likely considered unsuitable for the campaign purposes of persuasion and mobilization.

Questionnaire Study on European Identity concepts in Germany and in Spain

Between 2019 and 2021 the Chair for Civic Education and Civic Education Didactics at the University of Augsburg conducted a research project on European identity concepts in Germany and Spain. The aim of the project was to investigate the cognitive and affective

evaluations of the EU by students in both countries and to derive implications for EU-related learning through a comparative analysis. The data collection process took from May 2019 to September 2021 and included a total of 200 participants from Germany and Spain. The data basis for Germany consisted of students from the University of Augsburg (n=93) as well as passersby in downtown Augsburg (n=53). The data basis for Spain included students from the University of Valencia (n=54). Data collection in Spain was conducted in September 2021 as part of an Erasmus+ Staff Mobility at the University of Valencia. The data collection was conducted using standardized questionnaire interviews. The questionnaire consisted of among others 27 Likert-scale items. For the data collection process in Spain an English and a Spanish version of the questionnaire was generated. The election posters analyzed above served as visual stimuli and thematic anchor points for the formulated items. To generate authentic contexts for data collection the questionnaire was aligned with the six election posters. The purpose of answering the questionnaire items was not to reproduce the content of the posters but to examine the political positions and evaluations of the respondents connected to the different conceptualizations of a European identity.

European Identity Concepts among German and Spanish Students

A comparison of the collected data shows significant similarities and differences between German and Spanish students. From an educational point of view a first similarity is that in both groups more than 70% of the participants rate their knowledge about the EU as inadequate. The data points to a lack of knowledge for both groups. What is more, 27% of German students and 32% of Spanish students ticked the answer “I don’t know” for the item “Germany / Spain is thriving thanks to the EU”. This seems to further underline the results above.

When evaluating the statement, "The decisions of the European Parliament directly concern me in my everyday life" there is a highly significant difference ($p=0.0024$) between the two groups. Spanish students show a lower awareness of the importance of the EU compared to German students. While 65% of German students show an awareness of the importance of the EU Parliament, the number for Spanish students is much lower at 18%. In line with the results above more than 25% of the students in both groups cannot evaluate the importance of the EU-Parliament at all. Students of both groups show a rather critical stance towards the European Parliament and its members. In both groups more than 85% fully agree or agree that “The members of the European Parliament easily lose touch with citizens”. Moreover, only 60% of German students and 45% of Spanish students fully agree or agree that “The European Parliament represents my interests”. As a result, only 44% of German students and 27% of Spanish students are in favor a further transfer of competencies from the national to the European level. Generally speaking, these results only point to a limited potential for the European Parliament as a unifying factor and suitable identification offering.

Concerning economic prosperity, both groups agree or fully agree on the contribution of the EU to the economic success of the country with 90% or more of the responses. This suggests a general understanding and positive evaluation of the economic significance of the EU for its member states. When it comes to the EURO as a common currency, its introduction is rated significantly higher ($p=0.0249$) by Spanish students. While in Spain more than 60% see it as an advantage, only 41% do so in Germany. Concerning the different conceptualizations of a European identity more than 80% of the students in both groups agree or fully agree that the

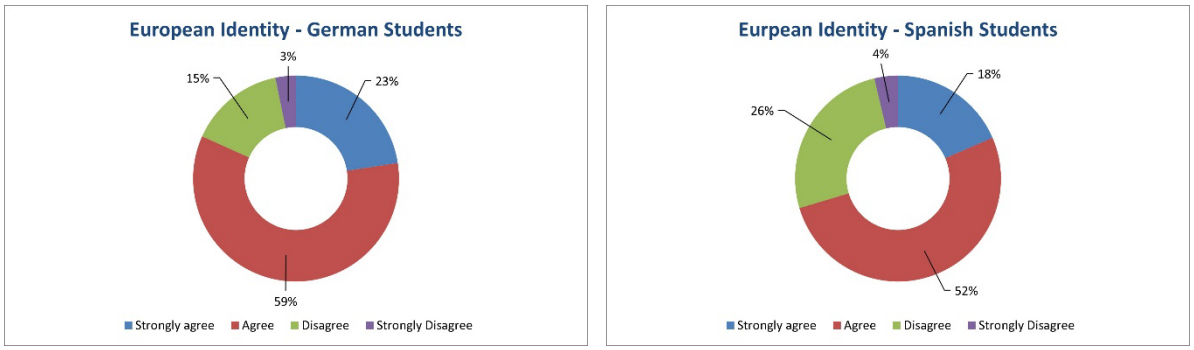
EU is to be seen as more than an economic union. Adding to this is the fact that both groups also show comparable results in evaluating the importance of open internal borders within the EU and the free movement of goods as part of the single market, with each group rating these aspects as important or very important by over 90%.

Regarding the general approval of the European idea, there is a highly significant difference (p=1.8691E-06) between the two groups. While 95% of German students indicate their general approval, only 56% of Spanish students do so. What is more, 37% of Spanish students indicate that they cannot assess their overall approval of Europe. While the latter is in line with the lack of knowledge about the EU and the only moderately developed awareness of the EU's relevance to everyday life among Spanish students, it also suggests that the European idea is less emotionally grounded among Spanish students compared to German students.

Although the data shows a significant difference between the two groups (p= 0,001), the peace-keeping function of the EU is still evaluated positively by a majority of both groups. 90% of Germany students fully agree or agree that the EU fulfils this function; the approval rate for the Spanish group is at 72%. Furthermore, 76% of the Spanish students and 69% of the German students fully agree or agree that the EU has a positive impact on the freedom of its inhabitants. This suggests the assumption that the narrative of the European Union as a project for peace and freedom still offers unifying potential.

Data material shows a significant difference (p=0,0221) between the groups concerning the EU as a community of shared values following its motto “united in diversity”. While 86% of German students fully agree or agree to the EU as a community of shared values, only 68% of Spanish students take the same stance. At the same time 14% of the German and 32% of the Spanish group reject this notion. These numbers still indicate some potential for the EU as a shared community of values as a possible identification offering.

Figure 7. European Identity among German and Spanish Students



There is no significant difference between the two groups concerning the item “I feel like a citizen of the European Union”. Among German students 82% and among Spanish 70% fully agree or agree with this statement. Hence the majority of both groups see themselves as citizens of the European Union although the data among other things also indicate a lack of knowledge and an awareness gap concerning the significance of the EU for everyday life.

Discussion

Considering the data presented above the question whether a European identity constitutes a success story cannot be answered by simply saying yes or no. At a first glance a clear majority of both German and Spanish students consider themselves as citizens of the European Union. At a second glance, the lack of knowledge concerning the EU among the students, the awareness gap regarding the significance of the EU-Parliament on everyday life and the relatively high number of Spanish students who cannot fully reflect their approval or disapproval of the European idea put another complexion on the matter.

Furthermore, some conceptualizations of a European identity seem to offer more unifying potentials than others. The data suggests that the narrative of the EU as a project for peace and freedom is still evaluated positively by young adults and hence can be didactically translated into identification offerings. The same assessment seems to be true for the concept of the European Union as an economic community. Approval ratings of more than 90% in regard to the added economic value for the member states give reason to assume that the European Single Market and its four basic freedoms can constitute an integrative factor for the EU-member states and their citizens. Although there is a significant difference between German and Spanish students concerning the EU as a community of shared values following its motto “united in diversity”, more than two thirds of the students of both groups assume common European values and see them as a factor constituting a European togetherness. Considering the data on whether the European Parliament represents the interests of the citizens and whether MEPs are out of touch with their constituency, the EU as political community united by common institutions apparently is the conceptualization of a European identity with the least unifying potential.

Overall, these findings point to two things: Firstly, the necessities of embedding EU-related education in all phases of teacher education to make sure that teachers can actually meet the requirements set by the national curricula. Simultaneously, EU-related learning should further be established as an interdisciplinary teaching principle (Brunold & Kerscher, 2020). Secondly, the questions whether a European identity is supposed to be a replacement of existing national identities or a complement of other collective identities has to be further researched and answered (Prutsch, 2017). From the authors point of view, European identification processes have to be bottom-up movements aiming at replacing national identities. As long as national identities are the predominant narrative, a European identity can never fully become a success story.

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Teachers' Perspectives About Promoting Human Rights Education in Multicultural Classrooms in Greek Primary Education[1]

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Abstract

Education has an upgraded social role not only to educate students through knowledge transmission, but also to create active future citizens, who will embrace a democratic mindset toward human rights respect, social justice and sustainability. In view of this aim, teachers' role is crucial as they share an immense responsibility to implement Human Rights Education, and specifically to promote ideals and attitudes of inclusion, tolerance, respect to human freedom, dignity and rights, intercultural openness and understanding, and empower all learners to critically think and dismiss intolerance against discriminatory and racist stereotypes, especially in culturally diverse educational settings. However, this is not an effortless task, as themselves need to be equipped with certain knowledge, skills, and competences to develop their own content knowledge along with their pedagogical content knowledge to overcome everyday challenges, which expand to a broad multilayered array, and deliver transformative quality education. We qualitatively investigated through twenty semi-structured interviews teachers' perspectives about Human Rights Education in urban multicultural educational settings (Thessaloniki/Greece). The aims of this research were to explore: 1. What content knowledge do teachers have about Human Rights Education, 2. What kind of pedagogical practices do teachers employ to teach about, through and for Human Rights, 3. What challenges do teachers face while engaging into Human Rights Education. Findings highlighted that teachers have content knowledge on Human Rights Education and that they employ various teaching strategies and teaching materials to teach about, through and for human rights, such as cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, project method, dramatization, role playing. However, teachers reported a set of serious challenges, such as the language barrier of migrant students, the national curriculum, educational materials, the increased demand for training in Human Rights Education, the lack of a holistic and pervasive approach toward Human Rights Education, the demand for increased parental involvement and state support.

Keywords: Human Rights Education; Democracy; Citizenship; Multicultural Classrooms; Quality in Education; Teachers' Training

Introduction

In an inextricably interconnected globalized world characterized by rapid changes and multiple challenges -political, economic, social and environmental- (Granados-Sánchez, 2023) and intensified immigration flows, the role of HRE is becoming even more relevant and crucial, as the above changes and challenges are integrated within education, which has become multicultural. However, although education embraces and promotes the concept of human

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Pliogou, V.& Tromara, S. (2024). Teachers' Perspectives About Promoting Human Rights Education in Multicultural Classrooms in Greek Primary Education. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 205-218. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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rights, human rights violations continue to exist, to a various degree, throughout the world (Brantefors et al., 2016), while intolerance, violence, racism and widespread threats against democracy are increasingly pressing forward (Quennerstedt, 2019). Human Rights Education (HRE) –teaching and learning of human rights- has received increased research attention and been constantly placed at the heart of the educational agenda. HRE aims to establish a more humane educational environment that respects, strengthens and advocates the idea of human rights, democracy, citizenship rights, individual freedoms, respect, tolerance, empathy, intercultural communication, solidarity, cooperation, peaceful interaction, social justice and a critical understanding of social inequalities and any kind of discrimination based upon gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation political opinion, socioeconomic status and ability/disability (OHCHR, OSGEY & UNESCO, 2022). Therefore, education has an upgraded social role not only to educate students from an early age through knowledge transmission, but also to create active future global citizens, who will embrace a holistic democratic mindset toward human rights respect, social justice, sustainability, and global interconnectedness, in a way that respects diversity and upholds diverse human interests (Hutchison, 2022; Osler & Skarra, 2021). Finally, HRE is embedded within the 4th Sustainable Development Goals -Quality Education- of the UN's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development consisted of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which overall have an implicitly transformative character and aim to bring a peaceful, prosperous, democratic and sustainable future for all (UN, 2022).

The effective implementation of HRE is a complex and multifaceted topic as it depends upon several factors either relevant to content or processes (Bajaj, 2011). Notwithstanding current approaches based upon research evidence suggest a whole-school approach (UNESCO, 2024a; Amnesty International, 2017) strongly attached to the reciprocal relationship between four dimensions of school life (Amnesty International, 2017): 1. governance -how the school is run both (including decision-making in formal and informal settings), 2. interaction of all involved stakeholders (teachers, students, educational leadership/administrators, complementary staff, families and the wider community), 3. the curriculum, teaching strategies/pedagogy, and learning materials (Decara et al., 2021; Tibbitts, 2015), and, finally, 4. the environment (the settings within teaching/learning and interactions take place), with an emphasis on positive relationships, which aim to connect cognitive, emotional, social and economic aspects, resulting in well-being (McLaughlin, 2022). The emphasis, regardless the approach is on the notions, which also form an aim, of inclusion, participation, accountability/transparency, and empowerment (Amnesty International, 2017) through teaching and learning, something closely related to transformative and/or critical approaches that may have tangible outcomes and a broader societal impact (OHCHR, OSGEY & UNESCO, 2022; Osler & Skarra, 2021; Tibbits, 2017; Bajaj, 2011; Tibbits, 2005).

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks for Teachers' Responsibilities

Ample prior empirical evidence supports that teachers' role is crucial as they share an immense responsibility to merge Human Rights Education (HRE), while expanding on topics related to citizenship, especially in ethnic/culturally diverse educational settings (Liang, 2020). However, this is not an effortless task, as themselves need to be equipped with certain knowledge, skills, and competences to develop their own content knowledge along with their pedagogical content knowledge (how to teach) to overcome everyday challenges, which

expand to a broad multilayered array, and deliver transformative quality education (Rinaldi, 2017). In view of this aim, teachers are called to promote ideals and attitudes of inclusion, tolerance, respect to human freedom, dignity and rights, intercultural openness and understanding, and empower all learners to critically think and dismiss intolerance, and any kind of discriminatory and racist stereotypes (Osler, 2020).

Teachers' role under a holistic perspective is or should be largely guided by the framework outlined by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UNDHRET), the World Programme and Tibbitts' (2002) theoretical framework. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UNDHRET) (2011) has proclaimed a holistic and comprehensive conceptual framework for Human Rights Education (HRE) as part of formal education. According to Article 2(2), HRE encompasses education: *About* human rights: it includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights principles and norms, by focusing on the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for protecting them. *Through* human rights: it includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both teachers and learners. *For* human rights: it includes empowering students to exercise their rights and to respect and defend the rights of others. In line with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the World Programme, which endeavors to promote HRE within schools (Robinson et al., 2020), states that HRE must involves the following three features (UN, 2006, p. 12): *Knowledge and skills*: learning about human rights and acquiring the skills to apply them in everyday life. *Values, attitudes and behavior*: involves developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behavior, which are aligned with human rights. *Capacity for action*: involves the development of the capacity to promote and defend human rights. Furthermore, the World Programme mandates that HRE should be an integral part of the curriculum (overt and covert) and be diffused in praxis at the entire school system (UN, 2006). Additionally, the Council of Europe (2020) mandates that HRE should encompass gender equality and mainstreaming about ethnic minorities and intercultural communication/understanding, while highlighting that states must provide support through training/professional development for teachers/educators both as part of formal, informal and lifelong education (Decara et al., 2021; Rinaldi, 2017; Amnesty International, 2017). Additionally, Tibbitts (2002) has classified three models of HRE, based on the prerequisite that HRE is achieved when it brings changes in attitudes and behaviors: 1. *Values and awareness model*: it involves knowledge transmission, promotes an in-depth understanding of human rights and cultivates critical thinking. 2. *Accountability model*: the notion refers to teachers' responsibilities to promote, protect and monitor students' rights, while the latter are also responsible for protecting individual and group rights. 3. *Transformational model*: which is the most difficult to be implemented, as it aims to empower students to recognize, discuss incidents and/or lived experiences of human rights violations and promote action taken against them in order to bring justice and balance (Pliogou & Karakatsani, 2022). Jennings (2006) outlines, also, a holistic framework by posing specific HRE standards for teachers, who should: 1. Engage and support all students learning about human rights. 2. Create and maintain effective environments that embody the principles and concepts of human rights. 3. Understand and organize subject matter to promote student learning about human rights; 4. Plan instruction and design learning experiences for the HRE of all students. 5. Use assessment strategies that embody human rights concepts and principles. 6. Develop as a professional human rights educator (Jennings, 2006, pp. 292–294, as cited in Robinson et al., 2018, p. 227).

Finally, another body of research emphasizes on the pedagogical approach or teaching strategies that can promote human rights related learning outcomes more effectively. Decara et al. (2021) suggest that learner-centered and participatory teaching methods, such as case studies, discussions, debates, brainstorming, games, dramatizations, storytelling, interviews, media use and many more can have positive outcomes, Quennerstedt (2022) and Osler and Skarra (2021) support the paradigm of Critical Pedagogy for delivering more transformative outcomes and social justice, while Rinaldi (2017) and Decara et al. (2021) stress the importance of the teaching materials, expanding on various aspects, such as the level of difficulty (it should be age appropriate), the content (it should be culturally relevant and responsive to the everyday life of learners), the language (not only in majority languages), and accessibility (not to create impediments that could result in discriminations based on age, gender, race or any other analytical category). In the Greek context, it should be referred that the UNHCR program 'What if it were you?' approved by the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA) is realized since 2015 until now. The program by focusing on experiential learning offers training, seminars, workshops to teachers, group encouragers, students and the local community, drama/theatre workshops addressed to students, and interactive theatrical performances addressed to all involved stakeholders, with the aim to promote the cooperation among schools with local communities and the inclusion and peaceful coexistence of refugee students (Choleva, 2017).

Teachers' Role and Challenges in the Implementation of HRE

Moreover, prior empirical evidence highlights significant challenges related to the implementation of HRE, which can be summarized in the following: in some cases HRE is vaguely defined (Struthers, 2014), it is conceptualized under different perspectives (Zembylas et al., 2015), it is not holistically integrated within the curriculum (Russell & Suárez, 2017), whereas integrated partially within other subjects, such as citizenship education (Struthers, 2014) and the implementation within classrooms is generally superficial and/or limited (Robinson et al., 2020). Other research, which has focused on teachers' role, has stressed that the implementation of HRE depends on the will and interest of teachers (Burridge et al., 2013), while in some cases teachers seem to have various understandings of HRE, interpret and implement it thus in a different way (Osler & Skarra, 2021; Robinson, 2017). In other cases, teachers do not seem to have any particular knowledge about human rights and are not feeling confident in teaching the particular subject (Zembylas et al., 2015), do not fully comprehend their responsibilities, do not know how, in other words they do not have the pedagogical competence (Brantefors et al., 2016) or have a lack in pedagogical strategies and the materials (Pliogou, 2021), which can cultivate human rights related skills, such as students' agency (Jerome & Starkey, 2022), raising thus aspects of insufficient professional development (Robinson et al., 2020). Other challenges related to teaching about and through human rights and creating an inclusive learning environment in a multicultural classroom are related to the language barrier (Biasutti et al., 2020), insufficient training in multicultural education and insufficient competence in implementing culturally responsive practices (Izza & Harvani, 2023; Cooc & Kim, 2023; Papapostolou et al., 2020), and parental involvement - effective communication and collaboration with immigrant parents (Pliogou & Tromara, 2024; Norheim et al., 2023).

Methodology

The Present Research

The present research aimed to explore twenty teachers' perspectives about the implementation of HRE in multicultural Primary schools at Thessaloniki.

The Research Questions (RQs) were the following:

1. What content knowledge do teachers have about Human Rights Education?
2. What kind of pedagogical practices do teachers employ to teach about, through and for Human Rights (HR)?
3. What challenges do teachers face while engaging into Human Rights Education?

Design

The research questions were formulated according to bibliography, by focusing on teachers' roles -responsibilities, content/processes, challenges- following the framework outlined by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UNDHRET), the World Programme and Tibbitts' (2002) theoretical framework. Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were selected as a tool, as they are offering flexibility and were reified through open-ended questions, which offer the opportunity to elaborate on surfacing themes or further clarifying the participants' perspectives (King et al., 2018).

Participants

Twenty (20) teachers (T) of Primary Education participated in the present research through snow-ball sampling. Seventeen (17) were female (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T9, T10, T11, T13, T14, T15, T16, T17, T18, T19) and three (3) male (T8, T12, T20). The female overrepresentation is common in the level of Primary Education globally and in Greece (UNESCO, 2024b). Their age varied from twenty (25) to fifty (50) years old and their teaching experience from one (1) year to twenty-seven (27) years. All twenty (20) participants held a Bachelor's Degree and three (3) a Master's Degree (T6, T9, T20). All participants had a working experience in public Primary Schools with students from diverse ethnic/cultural backgrounds located at Thessaloniki/Greece.

Procedure

Data collection lasted four (4) months -it begun in February and ended in May 2023. The first step was to ensure the participation of teachers. Interview appointments were set according to the free time of the school staff. The interviews lasted approximately 40-45 minutes and were all conducted on school settings. Two interviews were pilot. Before the interviews, all participants were informed about the aims of this research and were reassured about the anonymity and confidentiality of their replies. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before any data collection started. During the entire process the ethical guidelines and principles of research were followed.

Measures

One measure was applied in the present research. The interview guide included 14 open-ended questions. Questions, which were divided into three main axes according to the RQs, explored teachers' perceptions about HRE, their efficiency about implementing HRE, the pedagogical strategies they use and the main challenges they are facing while implementing HRE in multicultural classrooms. The first axe (content knowledge) included five (5) questions. The second axe (pedagogical content knowledge/teaching strategies) included five (5) questions. The last axe (challenges) included two (2) questions.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was selected for data analysis, as it is widely acknowledged that it provides flexibility in data interpretation and can allow extracting valuable and in-depth knowledge in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers followed the six stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012). First, all recorded interviews were transcribed and read carefully three times. Second, initial coding was generated from excerpts in relevance to the RQs. Third, codes were combined in overarching and meaningful themes and sub-themes according to the literature review. Fourth, the emerging themes were reviewed and revised to eliminate any possibility of overlapping themes and to secure coherence. Some excerpts were reorganized. Fifth, emerging themes took their final form and were also re-examined to secure that each theme generated different kind of information. Sixth, the report was written.

Findings

In the following section, we present the findings of the TA of teachers' responses to the open-ended questions about the implementation of HRE in multicultural Primary schools located at Thessaloniki/Greece. All twenty (20) participants described their perspectives and experiences about the implementation of HRE, according to the RQs. In the following section, we summarize the major themes that emerged along with quotes. The following six (6) themes emerged from the TA, outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Emerging themes from Thematic Analysis

Theme#	Theme
1	Content knowledge about human rights
2	Benefits from HRE in a multicultural classroom
3	Efficiency in implementing HRE in a multicultural classroom
4	Teaching practices-pedagogical strategies
5	Challenges faced by teachers
6	Suggestions for improvement-solving challenges

Theme 1: Content knowledge about human rights

First, all teachers (20) described what they know -content knowledge- and how they perceive human rights:

T1: We all in a way know about human rights… they are basic principles and values to which all people are entitled since they are born.

T5: They are rights mainly …. The right of freedom, equality, the right to education, to free expression and speech and many more.

T10: Human rights in a classroom in Primary schools are focused largely on children's rights.

T20: Human rights have mainly to do with types of freedom … and rights and must be the same for everyone and be secured … without any form of discrimination based on difference in ethnicity, race, gender or in the language.

Theme 2: Benefits from HRE in a multicultural classroom

Additionally, all teachers referred to various benefits deriving from teaching/learning about human rights, while fifteen (15) teachers highlighted that HRE offers more benefits in the case of a multicultural classroom:

T9: There are many benefits … children must be aware of their rights, freedoms and how to protect them.

T4: In a multicultural classroom learning about human rights is very important… children must know about difference, respect, tolerance, peace, democratic values.

T11: Children can become aware of how others live around the world … become more sensitive in a way and have empathy …understand that all people are equal and face the same challenges.

Theme 3: Efficiency in implementing HRE in a multicultural classroom

All teachers (20) referred to their efficiency when teaching human rights. They all mentioned that they feel efficient, but for various reasons (experience, professionalism, personal will and motivation) and they differentiated their replies in relevance to the degree.

T2: I have experience and know how to cultivate democratic values, respect to human dignity and the feeling of equality.

T13: Human rights are part of the curriculum … in quite a few subjects. I try to expand their knowledge when teaching the specific lesson.

T6: I feel confident because I have a Master in Intercultural Education.

T19: I try to enhance my knowledge … I have my own motives and will… and combine some of it to transmit it to my students. They enjoy combining human rights with other topics, such as environmental protection, children's rights, global peace.

T15: I feel efficient, because I know how to teach human rights and other related topics but this doesn't mean that I know everything or have an expertise on the topic.

Theme 4: Teaching practices-pedagogical strategies

All teachers (20) referred to a variety of teaching/pedagogical strategies and materials used while implementing human rights education:

T13: You have to be creative and flexible … use your imagination and not only stick to the schoolbook …otherwise the results are poor.

T6: I use children's rights as an example to teach my students that as children are entitled to rights as well, like every other citizen.

T9: I use fiction stories … there are so many nice literature books, web resources, educational games on the Internet, arts and crafts, music videos and games ….

T19: Collaborative and group learning in projects.

T10: Dramatization and role playing … they always enjoy it.

T3: Differentiated instruction … all children don't have the same capacity

T17: It's not the same to know some human rights or know about human rights theoretically speaking … experiential learning can help realize them in praxis

Theme 5: Challenges faced by teachers

All teachers (20) referred to various challenges they are facing during the implementation of HRE in their multicultural classrooms. Some participants (17) reported a broad array of challenges related to HRE and three (3) participants to the ethnic/linguistic diversity of the classroom:

T2: Children have a superficial level of knowledge or can't fully comprehend the topic. Sometimes they need concrete examples to understand the deeper meaning of human rights.

T7: At this age I'm not sure if they can relate it to their lives or the lives of others … they' re too young and don't have many experiences.

T10: Sometimes they already have formed their own beliefs based on their parents' opinions in most cases and it's difficult to explain something else than what it's already learned.

T15: Human rights are part of the curriculum … in some subjects at least, but this is limited … it depends on us to promote a more expanded approach and teach in everyday life how to respect ourselves and others … to learn how to live peacefully with all people.

T18: The language barrier is important in a multicultural classroom.

T20: It's up to us to become creative and expand the topic more playfully … we need more guidance on this part.

Theme 6: Suggestions for improvement-solving challenges

All teachers (20) referred to a wide array of possible solutions that can improve HRE implementation in a multicultural classroom:

T18: Add more topics on HRE and enhance the curriculum … students must understand that you can't only find children's human rights in one or two subjects.

T9: Provide more materials ... Texts, fairytales, small stories, games, videos … I usually bring my own and improvise.

T3: Training through state-supported/funded seminars in HRE even as part of intercultural education … we need more support to get an expertise.

T15: Parents must collaborate with us … to build more trustful relationships and that our work here is significant.

Discussion

The present research aimed to explore teachers' perspectives about HRE in urban multicultural educational settings. The first RQ explored what content knowledge teachers have on human rights. All twenty (20) participants expressed how they perceive human rights and provided some definitions for human rights. However, these perceptions appear different, partial and vague and do not expand to other current aspects promoted within the human rights agenda –gender equality, ethnic diversity, social justice, sustainable development, while similar findings are supported by prior empirical evidence (Zembylas et al., 2015). It is indicative that only T19 reported that connects HRE with topics related to environmental protection to realize HRE more effectively. Also, different understandings and interpretations denote that HRE is implemented accordingly in different ways (Osler & Skarra, 2021; Robinson, 2017). Additionally, participants' responses prove that there is neither a holistic conceptual approach of human rights education (*about, for, through*) nor in terms of the universality, pervasiveness, interdependence, interrelatedness, inclusion, equality and accountability of human rights, something also reported in prior empirical research (Robinson et al., 2020). Instead, there is a focus on knowledge transmission, something that responds more to teaching/learning *about* human rights (Struthers, 2014), while other more intrinsic skills necessary for teaching/learning *for and through* human rights and with a more transformative impact are absent (Jerome & Starkey, 2022; Osler & Skarra, 2021). Finally, participants' responses also revealed that in many cases children's rights are conflated with human rights in a broad sense or considered as identical, while in some cases (T6, T9, T10) the paradigm of children's entitlement to human rights was exclusively used for teaching about human rights in primary education, something supported by prior empirical evidence as well (Quennerstedt, 2022). However, all (20) teachers highlighted the benefits for children deriving from HRE and fifteen (15) teachers highlighted that cultivating tolerance, empathy, acceptance and intercultural understanding are crucial within multicultural educational contexts, as the specific values can function against intolerance, conflict and racism (Liang, 2020; Osler, 2020).

The second RQ explored what kind of pedagogical practices teachers employ to teach about, through and for human rights. Participants' responses revealed a broad array of positive teaching strategies and materials implemented, which are learner-centred and experiential, such as playful learning, collaborative learning, multimodality, drama/theatre, role playing, stories (fiction) and can promote more effectively HRE, something supported by prior literature as well (Pliogou & Karakatsani, 2022; Decara et al., 2021; Tibbits, 2015). Overall, it was highlighted that tangible outcomes come from interactive and more innovative teaching strategies, which are not confined to textbooks (materials) and the curriculum and that pedagogical content knowledge (how to teach) on human rights is equally important to content knowledge (Brantefors et al., 2016). It is crucial that participants perceived their teaching strategies as an integral part of their responsibilities (However, in this case as well teaching strategies focused more on learning *about* human rights (Struthers, 2014), something that endangers HRE to become superficial or trivial, something supported also by prior empirical evidence (Robinson et al., 2020).

Finally, the third RQ explored what challenges teachers face while engaging into Human Rights Education. Participants revealed a number of challenges related either to HRE or to their multicultural classrooms. Most responses highlighted that the curriculum does not provide the chance to expand in an in-depth teaching/learning about human rights and that human rights are confined in specific subjects, something that hinders an interdisciplinary, concrete and holistic approach (Decara et al., 2021; Tibbits, 2015). Furthermore, teachers were problematized that children are immature or have a limited range of experiences due to their young age to handle intricate and controversial in some cases topics, thus, to fully understand and gain the benefits of HRE, something supported by similar prior research on the field (Rinaldi, 2017). Moreover, it was also suggested that parental involvement plays a decisive role in socialization and in the formation of values and ideals and thus interpretations related with human rights; in this case teachers were reluctant about the content and outcomes of their human rights related teaching (Robinson et al., 2018). However, although teachers' responses revealed participants' self-reflection, self-awareness and a degree of self-confidence and efficiency about their roles and responsibilities, as they have to become flexible and follow alternative pathways to overcome challenges, they also revealed that the implementation of HRE is partially confined in specific subjects (Russell & Suárez, 2017) and the degree/scope of teaching is mainly based on teachers' personal motivation, will, initiatives and teaching strategies. Findings are supported by similar prior empirical evidence (Robinson et al., 2018). Additionally, it became apparent that there is not any holistic approach embedded within the entire school culture (OHCHR, OSGEY & UNESCO, 2022; Osler & Skarra, 2021; Tibbits, 2015). Fewer responses targeted challenges attached to the linguistic/cultural diversity of the multicultural classroom (Biasutti et al., 2020; Papapostolou et al., 2020). Most importantly, all twenty participants suggested a broad array of possible solutions that can increase the effectiveness of HRE in the specific multicultural context also supported by similar prior research. Teachers highlighted that there is an increased demand for curricular changes (Decara et al., 2021; Tibbitts, 2015), for training in HRE and Intercultural Education to get expertise in the field, enhance their intercultural competence and their culturally responsive teaching practices (Izza & Harvani, 2023; Cooc & Kim, 2023) and for professional development (Decara et al., 2021; Zembylas et al., 2015), for state support (Zembylas et al., 2015; Tibbits, 2015) and, finally, for more effective and meaningful collaboration with parents, as parental involvement, especially when it comes to Primary Education and multicultural settings, plays a decisive role in shaping norms, values and attitudes and promoting the effective inclusion of all children through meaningful relationships (Tromara & Pliogou, 2024; Norheim et al., 2023).

Limitations

It has to be acknowledged that the specific research has certain limitations. First, although, the size is adequate for qualitative research, is not large to delineate any generalizations. Second, the specific research could have expanded to include students' perspectives and draw more in-depth conclusions through the triangulation of responses. Third, the present research might have addressed to a larger sample with quantitative methods.

Conclusion

The present research contributes to the expansion of knowledge and understanding to the field of Human Rights Education especially in a multicultural educational context and can be also capitalized for further research, by the educational leadership and the educational authorities both national and international. It offers an in-depth exploration for curricular improvements, which have been set at the forefront of the agenda of HRE (Decara et al., 2021; Tibbits, 2015). As it has been supported the curriculum reflects the national, political, social, economic, cultural/ethical and environmental values of any given society (Quennerstedt, 2022), something that urges for strong commitment toward upholding human rights through education, especially in volatile times, where threats against democracy and peace are gaining ground. The comprehensive and concrete HRE framework that involves *knowledge and skills; values, attitudes and behavior; and the capacity for action* (UN, 2006) can deliver positive and tangible learning outcomes to multiple directions. Furthermore, the present research highlights the importance of teachers through their multifaceted role and their responsibilities when implementing HRE (Decara et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2018), by focusing both on content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Findings stressed the increased demand for teachers' training, professional development and state support. Finally, it became evident that the whole-school approach is an approach that redefines the aims and scope of modern quality education and demands the reciprocal relationship of all stakeholders (teachers, students, the educational leadership, the community), teaching and learning, the curriculum, governance, and interactions within the school environment, as crucial actors to bring change and social justice, realize democracy and open the potentiality to a prosperous and sustainable future for the society at large.

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Perspectives of Education for Sustainable Development in the Curriculum of Civic Education in Italy[1]

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Abstract

The paper provides a pedagogical analysis of the curriculum design of civic education in Italy, highlighting the link with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), considering the international debate and UNESCO and European Union guidelines on this issue. The risk of a fragmented approach, based on the good will of teachers and linked to a multiplicity of projects, is common to many educational proposals on social and civic issues. It would therefore be important for civic education to strengthen its own disciplinary identity, based on a "social paideia" rooted in the Constitution of the Italian Republic.

Keywords: Civic education; Sustainable development education; Curricolar design; Paideia; Italian Constitution.

Introduction

Our study is a pedagogical analysis of the curricular design of Civic Education in Italy. We will try to understand how the current discipline is configured and whether it is adequate to generate, in the younger generations: a sense of belonging (multiple citizenship), active citizenship, intent to promote sustainable development. During the work of the Constituent Assembly, there was an awareness of the importance of activating civic education in the schools of the Italian Republic. Since then, the institutional path of civic education in Italy has been very troubled, with an awareness of its cultural importance, but with the difficulty of giving it a solid institutional position (Corradini & Mari, 2019; Porcarelli, 2021).

Initially The landmarks for building the curricular design of civic education were the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). Over time, other educational themes have emerged that are now inescapable, such as education for sustainable development based on the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015; UNESCO, 2012 & 2017). Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is now at the center of the attention of scholars (Edwards et al,., 2020), but also of national governments, which are called upon to play their part in promoting the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The European Union has also developed useful guidelines for national education policies (Jucker & Mathar, 2015).

Civic Education in Italy: A Troubled Path

On the 11th of December 1947, the work of the Constituent Assembly was over, and Mr. Aldo Moro took the floor with a proposal for a program in which the new constitutional charter would immediately have an appropriate place in the educational framework in schools of

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Porcarelli, A. (2024). Perspectives of Education for Sustainable Development in the Curriculum of Civic Education in Italy. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 219-228. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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every order and level, in order to make the young generation aware of the moral and social achievements that had just become a sure heritage of the Italian people (Corradini & Mari, 2019). Having become Minister of Education, Mr. Aldo Moro himself elaborated the first law on civic education teaching in Italy (DPR n. 585/1958). The founding fathers were aware that this document was the fruit of a binding agreement, born at a particular historical moment when the will of all converged towards a common goal. The aim was to work together to rebuild a country that had been devastated by twenty years of dictatorship and a dramatic world war and civil war.

The Constitution of the Italian Republic can therefore be considered not only as the fundamental law of the State, but also as a treasury of social and civic values. It is a paideia for the teaching of civic education in schools.

Despite this awareness, the configuration of citizenship education in the Italian school system has always been weak (Porcarelli, 2012, 2021). The 1958 law required all teachers to devote special attention to citizenship education, but only history teachers were required to devote two hours a month, without a special evaluation. For many years, civic education was culturally strong, but institutionally weak, which meant that it was cultivated, depending on the sensitivity of the teachers involved.

In 1996, a draft revision of the teaching of civic education was drawn up (Ministerial Directive no. 58). It provided for a discipline of one hour per week and independent evaluation. Although it was never implemented, this project helped to re-focus civic education, which is closely linked to constitutional culture. Legislative Decree 59/2004 introduced *Civic cohabitation education*. It was not a discipline, but a set of educational priorities linked to health education, the environment, affectivity and citizenship. All teachers had to take responsibility, linked to their discipline, without a set timetable and without independent evaluation.

The next stage in this troubled journey was Law 169/2008, which established the teaching of *Civic and constitutional education*, preparing specific curricular indications that were approved in 2009. This teaching also did not have a specific timetable or independent assessment, although it has a cultural structure clearly defined by the curriculum. The curricular guidelines for citizenship education focused on four thematic areas which provided cultural tools for developing the personal capacities of students: 1) human dignity, 2) identity and sense of belonging, 3) otherness and relationships, 4) active participation.

The new Design of Civic Education in Italy

Law 92/2019 establishes the teaching of *Civic Education*, which is defined as "transversal to the disciplines", in the sense that it is not entrusted to a single teacher, but that all teachers are called upon to take responsibility for it, for a total amount of 33 hours per year. The law reaffirms the fundamental value of the Republican Constitution and lists important topics to structure the educational programs. These are the subjects listed in Article 3 of Law 92/2019: a) the Constitution; b) the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; c) education for digital citizenship; d) the basic elements of the legal system; e) education for ecology, sustainable development and ecological protection; f) education for lawfulness and combating the mafia; g) education for respecting and promoting cultural heritage; h) basic training in civil protection.

In this discipline we can find a rich and strong cultural identity, but a relatively weak institutional situation. Civic education is defined as "cross-curricular", which means that all teachers in the class are required to offer lessons, totaling at least 33 hours per year (Law 92/2019, art. 2). At the end of the school year, there will be a specific assessment for civic education, resulting from a collegial evaluation.

The curriculum guidelines approved by the Ministry of Education the year after were structured around three themes: 1) the Constitution, the law (national and international), education for legality and solidarity; 2) sustainable development, environmental education, knowledge and safeguarding local heritage; 3) digital citizenship (MIUR, 2020, pp. 2-3).

The first thematic area revives the constitutional paideia that has characterized all the above-mentioned norms of civic education, starting with the declarations of Aldo Moro in the Constituent Assembly. The curricular guidelines state that the knowledge of the Constitution permeates all the subjects and is the key to the understanding of the ordinary laws, regulations and organizational provisions of all the public subjects. Knowledge of international organizations, starting with the European Union, but also issues of education, legality, the meaning of the anthem and the national flag, are also linked to this first conceptual core.

The second thematic area concerns education for sustainable development and is the one that we are going to explore in depth in the course of this article, because it is the subject on which we are focusing our attention here. The third thematic area concerns digital citizenship, understood as the ability to use virtual media in a conscious and responsible way. It is a journey that must begin as early as kindergarten. As children and young people become familiar with the tools of digital communication, they must be taught to take responsibility for their use and be warned of the dangers they must avoid. This is not the place to address this topic, which is at the center of a larger debate that could deepen the relationship between media education and digital citizenship (Soriani, 2018).

Human rights is a cross-cutting issue in the three thematic fields, being addressed in the first one, in particular with regard to the ethical and legal foundations of human rights, as part of the sustainability of some specific rights to be mentioned shortly, and in relation to digital citizenship, because it raises the complex issue of people's rights, even when “online”.

A web portal has been set up by the Ministry of education, to help teachers integrate citizenship education into their teaching programs and activities: "Citizenship education - a way to educate responsible citizens"[3]. The portal contains legal sources with current regulations, curricular guidelines, the national teacher training plan promoted by the Ministry of Education, some useful news (funding sources, national competitions), links to other websites dealing with civic education issues.

Social and Civic Education for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda is explicitly mentioned in the curriculum guidelines for civic education, which include a specific thematic section on sustainable development. Agenda 2030's 17 goals become a *paideia* of sustainability goals, not just about protecting the environment, but building inclusive and respectful livelihoods. The 2030 Agenda goals challenge social

[3] https://www.istruzione.it/educazione_civica/ (accessed on 20 July 2024).

policymakers to build political communities that respect everyone's right to health, food security, decent work and equal opportunities. For all this to be truly possible, it is necessary to ensure that people acquire a mindset oriented towards these values from an early age.

The ESD *Sourcebook* provides a definition of sustainability from a social and political perspective, outlining the pedagogical background of each possible educational action: "Sustainability is a paradigm for thinking about a future in which environmental, social and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. These three spheres – society, environment and economy – are intertwined" (UNESCO, 2012, p. 5). It is a vision of the common good that is not limited to the material aspects of civil coexistence, but also to the rights of present and future generations. Therefore, to overcome all forms of social, political and economic discrimination, it is important to combine ESD and education for respect for the environment with education for equal opportunities. It is a vision that takes up the noble ideals of many great thinkers, such as Aristotle, whose purpose "was to build a virtuous society of happiness, good, perfect and self-sufficient, an urban creative society of perfect life and self-sufficiency and not a mere survival of a multitude of inhabitants" (Karydas, 2017, p. 52). Only through intensive educational work can this political perspective be achieved. The ESD *Sourcebook* presents the need for a re-orientation of the curriculum to address sustainability. This reorientation can take place at the level of individual classes, at the initiative of teachers, or at the national level (and that is what interests us here). Explicit comparison with the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals can be a tool for curriculum redesign at both levels (UNESCO, 2017). According to the latest Eurydice Report, learning for sustainability can be mainstreamed into the curriculum through different approaches:

> (1) inclusion in existing subjects (typically science education, geography and civics / citizenship subjects); (2) project-based integration through specific sustainability modules or topics based on local challenges and in collaboration with stakeholders and the community; (3) focusing on teaching and learning methodologies rather than on thematic integration; (4) inclusion through extracurricular activities with the involvement of external partners, including associations, outdoor environmental education centers or student clubs; and (5) creation of a stand-alone subject on environmental sustainability through multidisciplinary approaches (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2024, p. 24).

The Italian Republic's interpretation of this mandate has been the inclusion of a section explicitly dedicated to ESD in the curriculum guidelines for civic education: integrating the first and fifth possibilities listed above. Choosing to place ESD within a transversal teaching probably corresponds to some considerations that we can read in the contributions of several scholars.

> The proper application of ESD requires a transformative, action-oriented pedagogy that focuses on interactive learning contexts. Traditional learning objectives therefore need to be complemented by a set of new key competencies identified by UNESCO (…). These sustainability-related learning objectives to be achieved are systemic thinking competency, anticipatory competency, normative competency, strategic competency, collaboration competency, critical thinking competency, self-awareness competency, integrated problem-solving competency. These are crosscutting, multifunctional, and context-independent competencies that go beyond purely cognitive elements, to include socio-emotional and behavioral aspects (Smaniotto et al., 2022, p. 2)

This approach includes the implementation of multidisciplinary teaching projects involving different teachers and, when possible, social agencies active in the area. One of the most important actions that have been the subject of support from institutional bodies at national

level is a partnership between MIUR (Ministry of Education), the National Institute for Documentation Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE) and the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASvIS) developed in 2016 the national interactive online platform Scuola2030[4], available since 2019. This tool provides teachers with a broad range of content, resources and self-study materials, firstly for those who have voluntarily decided to dedicate time and attention to ESD, and now to support education programs which are part of citizenship education. Alongside these measures, the Ministry of Ecological Transition had developed the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, which included ESD within the framework of the "Vectors of Sustainability" (MATTM, 2017). Among these vectors, education is very important, aiming at creating a "culture of sustainability", with an educational approach involving all contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) in a lifelong learning perspective. (MATTM, 2017, p. 99).

Such an approach requires great awareness and preparation from all teachers. On the one hand, we can see that systematic teacher training measures are being implemented at national level (Pettenati & de Maurissens, 2019), facilitated by the Ministry together with ASvIS and INDIRE. On the other hand, a recent survey shows "that knowledge is generally moderate, (…) The sources of information vary for each item, but overall internet sources and newspapers/magazines/books are the most common" (Smaniotto et al., 2022, p. 2). This is also reflected in the quality of the pathways proposed in schools, since, according to a recent survey of first-year university students in Italy, 78% of them say that they have never carried out any activity related to ESD, if we exclude some specific issues related to environmental education.

> The level of knowledge found among the first-year university students seems to reflect what is currently taught in school in Italy about sustainability. In fact, the higher knowledge was related to environmental topics, such as the greenhouse effect or the ecological footprint, while the economic and social components of sustainability were mostly neglected. Interest in sustainability topics seemed to confirm the same, while lesser-known topics were associated with lower learning interest (Smaniotto et al., 2023, p. 7)

There is a risk that, without integrating educational activities into a common pedagogical framework, teachers will propose their lessons in a self-referential and fragmentary way.

Finding a Disciplinary Structure for Civic Education in Italy

To overcome these risks, it would be important to put in place a disciplinary structure for civic education, which would encompass all three of the thematic areas that characterize it.

Starting from ESD, some scholars have focused on the idea of an "ecological paradigm" (Buccolo & Ferro Allodola, 2021), which takes up some of the proposals of Luigina Mortari (2018), towards a systemic approach. The 2030 Agenda text itself provides context for the targets. The areas of intervention of the 17 Objectives can be grouped into five fundamental principles, the so-called "5P": 1) *People*—Eliminate hunger and poverty in all forms, guarantee dignity and equality for all human beings; 2) *Planet*—Protect the planet's natural resources and climate for future generations; 3) *Prosperity*—Ensure prosperous and fulfilling lives in harmony with nature; 4) *Pace*—Promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence; 5) *Partnership*—Implement the 2030 Agenda through solid partnerships. The great challenge is to translate these political principles into a pedagogical

[4] https://scuola2030.indire.it/ (accessed on 20 July 2024).

proposal designed to work in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. However, a "paideia" of sustainability requires more than knowledge and skills: it requires deep personal competences, which everyone can develop through education and practice daily in life.

> The existing literature, regulations, and observations from various fields come to similar conclusions when they assert that achieving sustainability is a long-term, multifaceted and multi-factorial process. In the complex context of our society, sustainable development can only emerge if each individual acts sustainably in his or her personal and professional life. The ultimate goal of this lifelong process would be the improvement of people's lives and health, environmental protection and prosperity for all countries and territories, and peace and partnership between peoples (Smaniotto et al., 2023, p. 13)

It may be a good starting point, but it must be borne in mind that ESD does not fully exhaust the subject identity of *Civic education*, not only because there are at least two other subjects (constitution and digital citizenship), but also for deeper educational reasons. The educational framework within which we can place ESD is Global Citizen Education (GCE) (Gaudelli, 2016), where "the main emphasis is on fostering citizens that are committed to a world culture based on human rights, pacifist values and cohesiveness, and sustainable development" (Franch, 2020, p. 147). The curricular guidelines for civic education in Italy do not seem to be directly inspired by the GCE, but in our opinion they do include it in a broader and more pedagogically sound horizon.

Aldo Moro's intervention in the Constituent Assembly, when his proposal to introduce the teaching of the Constitution at all levels of schooling was unanimously approved, is at the root of the Italian cultural tradition of civic education. We have already described the troubled path of the teaching of citizenship education and the difficulties it has had to overcome. The constant, on a cultural and pedagogical level, has always been the explicit reference to our Constitution (Corradini & Mari, 2019; Porcarelli, 2012, 2021). The latest curricular guidelines are explicit in this sense, not only dedicating to the Constitution one of the three thematic areas in which teaching is articulated, but clearly stating that the Constitution is its basis and foundation.

> The law, which places knowledge of the Italian Constitution at the basis of civic education, recognizes it not only as a fundamental norm of our legal system, but also as a criterion for identifying rights, duties, obligations, personal and institutional behavior, aimed at promoting the full development of the person and the participation of all citizens in the political, economic and social organization of the country. The Constitutional Charter is essentially a clear and organic code of cultural and pedagogical value, capable of welcoming and giving meaning and direction to the people who live in the school and to the disciplines and activities that take place there (MIUR, 2020, p. 13)

The fact that the pedagogical heart of the teaching of civic education is identified in the Constitution does not mean that this teaching - in Italy - is placed in the perspective of a nationalist particularism that is far removed from the above-mentioned GCE. On the contrary, the Constitution provides the key to reading and the privileged mental environment for thinking about human rights, multiple citizenship and the rights of future generation (Corradini & Porcarelli, 2020).

The "civic *paideia*" in the Italian Constitution

The Constitution of the Italian Republic was written in the same years in which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted, and in many of its articles it is possible to see deep similarities. For example, the second article of the Constitution states that "the Republic

recognizes and guarantees the inviolable rights of man, both as an individual and as a member of the social groups in which one's personality finds expression, and it requires the performance of imperative political, economic, and social duties" (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 2). This article of the Constitution does not only refer to human rights (which are therefore included), but it clarifies that these rights are linked to specific social duties, so that each citizen contributes to building a social community which develops and expresses the personality of each member. This passage is well clarified in the fourth article. After emphasizing that the Republic recognizes the right to work, it states that "according to capability and choice every citizen has the duty to undertake an activity or a function that will contribute to the material and moral progress of society" (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 4).

Particular attention should be paid to the educational potential of the Constitution's third article, which solemnly begins by rejecting all forms of discrimination: "all citizens possess an equal social status and are equal before the law, without distinction as to sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, and personal or social conditions" (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 3). There are clear parallels with target 16 of Agenda 2030: "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" (UN – General Assembly, 2015, p. 25). The second paragraph of the same article is considered by several pedagogues (Corradini & Mari, 2019; Porcarelli, 2021) to be the basis of the pedagogy of the school, a source of inspiration for great educators such as Don Lorenzo Milani. The text states that "it is the duty of the Republic to remove all economic and social obstacles which, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the individual and the participation of all workers in the political, economic, and social organization of the country" (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 3). The Republic is committed to the removal of all obstacles to the full participation of citizens, not only material obstacles (which are the responsibility of the welfare state), but also cultural obstacles, which are the responsibility of the school. There is a constitutional basis for the school's social mission. It is right that the circle of this mission should be completed by civic education, which makes pupils aware of the values enshrined in the Constitution.

Freedom of religion (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 8), respect for linguistic minorities (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 6) and local autonomy (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 5) are among the values we can find in the "constitutional *paideia*". Of particular interest is the ninth article, which begins with the solemn statement that "the Republic shall promote the development of culture, and scientific and technical research", making a direct reference to their connection with the protection of the landscape and the country's historical and artistic heritage. A third point was recently added[5] to this constitutional article, stating that the Republic "protects the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems, also in the interest of future generations. State law shall regulate the ways and forms of protecting animals".

This addition to Article 9 of our Constitution further illuminates how constitutional *paideia*, human rights education, ESD and GCE relate to each other. Many important elements of the ESD are contained in the text of the Constitution adopted in 1947. However, the constitutional text can be amended (by a qualified majority of Parliament) and thus enriched with new

[5] Constitutional law n. 1, 11 February 2022, available online: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/02/22/22G00019/sg (accessed on 20 July 2024).

proposals, as was the case with Article 9, amended in 2022 in the light of certain Agenda 2030 goals.

From an educational point of view, many other articles of the Italian Constitution may be of interest. Let us recall the eleventh article, which sets out the principles of Peace Education and outlines an active role in helping to build international organizations:

> Italy shall repudiate war as an instrument of offence against the liberty of other peoples and as a means for settling international disputes; it shall agree, on conditions of equality with other states, to such limitations of sovereignty as may be necessary to allow for a legal system that will ensure peace and justice between nations; it shall promote and encourage international organizations having such ends in view (Republic of Italy, 1947, art. 11)

Conclusions

Social and civic education has been the focus of philosophers, educators and pedagogists since antiquity (Porcarelli, 2021). We can find interesting suggestions in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas, but also Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Kerschensteiner, Nosengo, Agazzi, right up to the present day. These authors emphasize the need to develop not only knowledge and skills, but social and civic virtues synthesized in the virtue of justice. In other words, it is important that people internalize the consciences that animate social choices, and this is the task of education.

In the recent years we see the fragmentation of the cultural landscape, the difficulty of agreeing on a concept like "education to virtue", and the emergence of specific thematic fields as points of convergence for educational action. This applies to human rights education, ESD and GCE. However, the reference values of these fields of education must be deeply rooted and translated into coherent life choices, acquiring a inner condition like that of virtue.

Even if it is a subsidiary role that necessarily interacts with the educational work of families and other non-formal and informal educational contexts, the school has an important role to play in the social and civic education of pupils. All teachers are also witnesses of citizenship when they fulfil their role of educating through teaching. However, it's important that this educational role finds a point of convergence in a specific educational space, such as teaching citizenship, whose evolution and current configuration we have illustrated in this paper. A strong cultural identity, based on a constitutional paideia and divided into three main thematic areas, is the strength of current civic education. The fragility lies in the weak institutional position, with a schedule of 33 hours per year, distributed with occasional modes between different teachers and risking a fragmentation of the educational offer. Mandatory evaluation provides reference points and opportunities for discussion among teaching staff, but even this may become purely bureaucratic. This is why we hope that, in the future, citizenship education in Italy may find a stronger institutional footing, for example in the form of a course entrusted to a specially qualified teacher (and thus specially trained), with 33 hours of lessons and a specific assessment. As is already the case, all other teachers could contribute to specific projects on specific topics. In our hypothesis, the disciplinary teaching of civic education would act as a "control room", able to coordinate the contributions of all those involved.

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Exploring the Course of Greece in the European Community. An Applied Interdisciplinary Teaching Scenario[1]

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Abstract

Education in the European Union emphasizes the development of 21st-century skills, crucial for the personal and professional development of students. It promotes citizenship and aims for students to embrace democracy and diversity with an open mind. The creation and execution of teaching scenarios are pivotal in this educational framework. This teaching proposal presents an interdisciplinary scenario titled "Exploring the Course of Greece in the European Community". It was based on the National Curriculum of the Course "Social and Civic Education" and applied in the fifth grade of a primary school. Through collaborative strategies and ICT utilization students realized the reasons for the creation of the EU, its structure and operation, deepened the understanding of European identity, underscored the advantages of EU participation, and fostered critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as well.

Keywords: Teaching scenario, Primary school, European Union, Social and Civic Education

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a key player in promoting peace and cooperation in Europe. Its primary goal is to unite the continent and prevent conflicts by encouraging collaboration among member states. The EU focuses on addressing common challenges and fostering prosperity and solidarity among its members (European Community, 2000). Central to the EU is the promotion of the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people within its borders. This integration not only boosts economic opportunities (Council of Europe, 2016) but also facilitates the exchange of knowledge, technology, and best practices, driving innovation and societal progress (European Community, 2000).

Developing a European identity involves individuals identifying with the EU, which influences the opinions and behaviors of European citizens (Domilescu & Lungoci, 2019). The EU is dedicated to promoting justice and equality among its diverse population. Through policies that address inequalities and promote social inclusion and cohesion, the EU aims to create a fair and harmonious society for all its citizens (European Union, 2023). The EU acts as a unifying force for member states that share common values and aspirations (Lannegrand-Willems & Barbot, 2015).

Educating students about the EU in schools is crucial for fostering an appreciation of Europe's diverse cultures and traditions. This education helps instill respect for different perspectives and a sense of belonging to the broader European community. Understanding the EU is

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Manesis, N. S, & Karakasis, C. G. (2024). Exploring the Course of Greece in the European Community. An Applied Interdisciplinary Teaching Scenario. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 229-241. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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essential for nurturing a European mindset among young citizens and preparing them for active participation in societal affairs. Achieving these goals requires education systems to be genuinely equitable and inclusive, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential regardless of their circumstances, family background, cultural heritage, or socioeconomic status. However, not all young individuals in Europe currently have equal access to educational advantages (European Commission, 2024).

As European citizens, students have rights, obligations, and responsibilities toward the European Union. Education should cover European politics, history, values, and the rights and opportunities available to European citizens. Through this education, students develop an awareness of European identity and understand the importance of their involvement in European processes and decisions, as well as the benefits of participating in public affairs (European Commission, 2017).

Engaging students in interactive and collaborative learning activities enhances their communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Veldman et al., 2020). Encouraging participation in broader European initiatives fosters mutual understanding and strengthens the collective identity of European nations. In conclusion, the EU exemplifies the benefits of cooperation and unity in promoting peace, prosperity, and social justice throughout Europe. By integrating these principles into education, the EU helps cultivate informed and engaged citizens who contribute positively to their communities and beyond (European Union, 2023).

The new Social and Civic Education curriculum in Greece addresses critical societal issues like anarchic individualism, familism, and clientelism, aiming to rebuild public trust and equip students with essential 21st-century skills. It emphasizes experiential learning, practical action, and creative engagement to deepen understanding of democracy through reflection, cooperation, and interdisciplinary approaches. Digital tools are integrated to enhance learning across subjects, fostering digital literacy and preparing students for contemporary challenges. Overall, the curriculum promotes civil awareness, critical thinking, and adaptive skills crucial for navigating a complex global society (I.E.P., 2022). In the Greek curriculum for fifth and sixth grade, civil and social citizenship cover a variety of general and specific objectives. Generally, these objectives include: (a) providing students with education in political and social knowledge to promote political and social literacy; (b) developing knowledge and skills that encourage active participation as modern citizens within Greek, European, and global communities; and (c) promoting values such as equality, diversity, acceptance, respect, tolerance, human dignity, solidarity, and justice. These values aim to cultivate active citizens who are well-informed, critical thinkers, and proactive in their engagement and actions. Specifically, the curriculum aims for students to: (a) understand the importance of cultural heritage for both individuals and society; (b) engage critically with contemporary issues, analyzing their diverse dimensions; (c) recognize the significance of all cultures and their interconnectedness; (d) strengthen their national identity through appreciation of national and European cultural heritage, avoiding ethnocentric or racist perspectives; and (e) appreciate how their involvement in international organizations contributes to the safeguarding of national heritage. These objectives form the core framework upon which the current educational approach is built (Manesis & Negka, 2024).

Constructivism is based on four key elements: collaboration, dialogue, context, and meaning construction, which aim to foster students' enthusiasm for learning with the support of teachers. Students can develop meanings through educators' guidance or the excitement

generated by their environment (Orak & Al-khresheh, 2021). According to Vygotsky, learning is foundational for development and working with individuals with higher cognitive abilities can help one reach a more advanced cognitive level. Tasks that a child can do with assistance today, they can accomplish independently in the future (Vygotsky, 1978). Language plays a crucial role in structuring children's thoughts and actions, aiding in managing their thinking through self-talk (Dilshad, 2017). Vygotsky focuses on understanding the process and organization of thinking rather than categorizing different types of thinking (Smagorinsky, 2007). Social and cultural influences shape children's mental representations of the external world, fostering metacognitive abilities for a holistic understanding of their surroundings (Manesis et al., 2022; Rodriguez, 2018). Learning is essential for advancing individuals' abilities and knowledge (Huang, 2021). Vygotsky emphasizes that learning is influenced by social interactions and the use of symbols and tools, suggesting that collaboration and engagement with surroundings enhance learning (Abtahi, 2017). The Zone of Proximal Development examines children's developmental potential and emphasizes interaction and collaboration with peers in the learning process (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). Scaffolding, introduced by Vygotsky, provides support to students during the educational process, gradually reducing assistance and increasing demands to promote autonomy in learning (Manesis et al., 2022). Scaffolding in education aims to help students access zones of proximal development, the next milestones or learning areas to be achieved before internalizing knowledge (Del Rio & Alvarez, 2007).

Cooperative learning is a highly beneficial model for students, widely recognized as an effective educational theory (Johnson et al., 2000). Based on constructivism (Kalaian & Kasim, 2014), this method has been shown to enhance students' collaboration, communication, and idea exchange skills, as well as deepen their understanding of the subject matter. These competencies are essential in the 21st century (Veldman et al., 2020). Cooperative learning allows students to work together towards common goals by sharing knowledge and collaborating. Despite its effectiveness, there are challenges that can impede its success (Gillies, 2004; Veldman et al., 2020). This approach emphasizes group work (Chandra, 2015; Laal & Ghodsi, 2011; Petrescu et al., 2017; Sampsel, 2013; Sumtsova et al., 2018) to achieve educational objectives collectively (Kalaian et al., 2018; Laal & Ghodsi, 2011; Ruys et al., 2012; Sumtsova et al., 2018). It involves jointly comprehending study material (Chandra, 2015; Sampsel, 2013), applying appropriate problem-solving techniques, completing assignments, or creating projects (Chandra, 2015; Laal & Ghodsi, 2011; Sumtsova et al., 2018). Consequently, students take charge of their learning process (Petrescu et al., 2017), leading to a more self-directed learning experience (Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010; Sumtsova et al., 2018) and reducing reliance on memorization of information provided by the teacher (Sumtsova et al., 2018).

The "Think-Pair-Share" technique, created by Frank Lyman and colleagues in 1981 (Kaddoura, 2013), is grounded in various learning theories (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021). It is a collaborative strategy that encourages group interaction (Usman, 2015) and fosters active student involvement in problem-solving or answering questions (Haug & Ødegaard, 2014; Kaddoura, 2013). The advantages of this approach (Haug & Ødegaard, 2014; Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021; Sampsel, 2013; Usman, 2015) include maintaining focus and re-engaging students in the learning process; generating new ideas without distractions and assessing their knowledge and learning needs; promoting peer interaction and enhancing individual accountability; improving language skills through communication; and boosting the

confidence of quieter and more reserved students. To ensure the effectiveness of the technique, students should be proficient in analyzing and decoding complex information and possess collaboration and communication skills (Kaddoura, 2013).

The "Jigsaw" teaching method, developed by Elliot Aronson in the 1970s, encourages full interdependence among students. It entails breaking down a topic into subtopics, assigning each student different material to study, and then having them share and discuss their findings with peers from other groups. This approach promotes autonomy in learning (Adams, 2013) while the teacher acts as a guide (Nurbianta & Dahlia, 2018). Studies indicate that "Jigsaw" is effective in enhancing writing and reading skills (Khadem et al.; Nurbianta & Dahlia, 2018) and improving social and interpersonal skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Adams, 2013). It also reinforces individual accountability and self-assurance (Bafadal & Rafika, 2015) and instills values such as respect, honesty, trust, tolerance, and discipline, thereby enhancing students' self-esteem (Azmin, 2016).

The "Roundtable" technique is a collaborative strategy commonly used for idea generation and skill practice (Arif & Mekki, 2021; Sinaga, 2017; Stenlev & Siemund, 2011). It has been found to be significant and beneficial for students as it fosters collaboration in problem-solving and facilitates the exchange of ideas (Arif & Mekki, 2021). During this technique, students share their views, discuss, and explore a topic, promoting the development of critical thinking and social interaction (Stenlev & Siemund, 2011). As a cooperative strategy, the "Roundtable" enhances student interactivity and active participation in learning.

The focused listing strategy enables teachers to evaluate students' foundational knowledge and offer feedback on their efforts (Henricks-Lepp, 2015; Millis, 2016). It is essential for collaborative learning (Hartle et al., 2012) and beneficial for brainstorming, descriptions, and defining concepts (Wadawi, 2013).

In interactive classrooms, students write down a main concept and quickly list related words to define terms and gain initial comprehension (Henricks-Lepp, 2015). This process enhances self-awareness in recalling terms and correcting misunderstandings (Hartle et al., 2012; Henricks-Lepp, 2015; Millis, 2016). The strategy involves feedback discussions and comparing lists (Hartle et al., 2012). Methods for eliciting prior knowledge include concept mapping, interviews, dialogue, quizzes, problems, surveys, and focused listing (Hartle et al., 2012; Henricks-Lepp, 2015). These lists can stimulate group or class discussions (Wadawi, 2013), create cognitive dissonance in collaborative learning (Hartle et al., 2012), or aid in critically analyzing a topic with consensus (Wadawi, 2013).

Advancements in science and technology have transformed daily life, influencing consumer behavior, entertainment, communication, and work practices. Education systems globally are integrating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to prepare students with essential skills for contemporary society (Das, 2019). Nations are prioritizing the incorporation of ICT in education to align with economic contexts and promote innovation and critical thinking among students (Laureti et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital skills in education and the need for educators to incorporate digital literacy into their teaching (Aidoo et al., 2022). The practical application of technology is crucial for effective knowledge acquisition (Yunus & Suliman, 2014), supporting continuous learning, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. Integrating ICT enhances the quality of education and the competitiveness of students in the global arena (Fu, 2013). ICT in education boosts student motivation, skills, and educators' technological proficiency (Fu, 2013),

transitioning to student-centered learning (Das, 2019) and promoting engagement through games, apps, and collaborative tools (Henderson, 2020). It improves knowledge retention, cognitive skills, and self-efficacy (Azmin, 2016), fosters personalized learning (Das, 2019), and nurtures problem-solving and creativity skills (Henderson, 2020). Educators can interact effectively, refine teaching with feedback (Bhattacharjee & Deb, 2016), and address diverse student needs, including those with disabilities. Students can explore new learning methods and acquire skills such as creating presentations, conducting online research, practicing digital etiquette, and writing emails (Henderson, 2020). Modern education emphasizes collaboration, problem-solving, and real-world skills (Das, 2019). ICT enhances teaching, encourages innovative methods, improves classroom efficiency, and offers flexible resource distribution and effective technology management (Foutsitzi & Caridakis, 2019).

The Didactic Proposal

The interdisciplinary teaching scenario "Exploring the World of the European Union" is intended for 5th-grade students and can be completed in 5 teaching hours. It aligns with the National Curriculum and incorporates Social and Civic Education, History, and Geography. Students collaborate and use ICT tools. The scenario aims to familiarize students with the European Union's organization, institutions, creation, structure, function, and Greece's role within the EU. Understanding these aspects is crucial for students as future European citizens. Upon completion, students should be able to: (a) identify EU member states, (b) comprehend the reasons for the EU's establishment and key milestones, (c) recognize the importance of common elements uniting European citizens, (d) learn about Greece's journey to the EU and its current position, and (e) reflect on the benefits of EU membership for Greece and its contributions to the Union[4].

All ethical guidelines and research ethics protocols were strictly adhered to. Initially, approval was obtained from the Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work at the University of Patras. Additionally, parents of the students provided written consent for their children to participate in the study. The consent form outlined the study's purpose, assured anonymity and confidentiality of personal information and responses, and emphasized that participation was voluntary with no negative repercussions for declining or withdrawing from the study at any time. The researchers affirmed that the data collected would be used solely for research purposes, with no personal or financial gain involved (Cohen et al., 2007).

Introduction – Preparation

To start the lesson, the teacher plays the European Union anthem and displays the EU flag to introduce the topic. The teacher then prompts the students with questions like, "What comes to mind when you think of the European Union? What do you already know about it?" By using a brainstorming approach, the teacher gathers all the students' responses and records them on the board.

(Activity 1, L.O. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Duration 10΄)

[4] The worksheets and the material produced by the students can be found at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GXAz9ZX2Q0c5IlBuLUAnI144hDta0PxA?usp=sharing

Following that, the teacher instructs the students to complete Worksheet 1. In the initial task, students are required to shade the countries they think belong to the European Union on a map of Europe. For the subsequent two tasks, students are to respond individually to the questions "What factors do you believe led to the establishment of the European Union?" and "Can you name any EU member states?" using the "Focused Listing" method. They will then share and discuss their responses in small groups and as a whole class.

(Activity 2, L.O. 1, 2, Worksheet 1, Duration 15΄)

Exposure to New Data - Processing

After that, the teacher uses a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the reasons behind the establishment of the European Union and its historical progression. The students are split into four groups: Groups A and B tackle Worksheet 2a, while Groups C and D focus on Worksheet 2b. They employ the collaborative approach of "Focused Listing" for the second task and the "Round Table" method for the third task.

(Activity 3, L.O. 1, 2, Worksheets 2a, 2b, Duration 45΄)

Students proceed to study the content in Worksheet 3, focusing on the EU's institutional bodies. The objective is to grasp the responsibilities and functions of each institution in order to develop a thorough comprehension of the European Union's organization and functioning. Following their study, they solve the crossword puzzle provided in Worksheet 3.

(Activity 4, L.O. ,1, 3, Worksheets 3, Duration 20΄)

Afterwards, students engage in the two activities in Worksheet 4 using the "Think-Pair-Share" method. They record the locations of each institutional body, the different functions they serve, and match each function to the corresponding institutional body with the assistance of Worksheet 3. This is then followed by a group discussion in class.

(Activity 5, L.O. 1, 3, Worksheets 4, Duration 20΄)

Applying New Knowledge

The teacher distributes Worksheets 5a, 5b, 5c, and 5d, which focus on the accomplishments and obstacles faced by the European Union. Through the Jigsaw strategy, students delve into the material assigned to each member of their group, gaining a comprehensive understanding. They tackle activity 2 from Worksheets 5a, 5b, 5c, and 5d, exploring the achievements, challenges, and benefits of the European Union across various sectors like education, sports, and the environment. Each student delves into a specific topic, takes notes within their group, and then collaborates with a team of experts on that topic. Following their discussion, they report back to their original group to share insights before engaging in a whole-class conversation.

(Activity 6, L.O. 3, Worksheets 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, Duration 30΄)

Following this, students engage in a paired electronic quiz to further explore the EU's activities using the Wordwall Quiz (https://wordwall.net/el/resource/37916563). This is succeeded by a classroom conversation regarding the accomplishments and obstacles faced by the EU.

(Activity 7, L.O. 3, Duration 10΄)

Moreover, the instructor delivers a PowerPoint presentation detailing Greece's progression within the European Union and the advantages of its membership. Subsequent to the presentation discussion, students are encouraged to participate in the paired electronic game "Open the Box" using the Open the Box Game (https://wordwall.net/resource/38237176). The objective of the game is to sequentially open the boxes and respond to the questions, reinforcing the key points from the presentation.

(Activity 8, L.O. 4, 5, Duration 30΄)

Summation

Furthermore, students engage in a card game that requires them to match images with the corresponding EU values. This activity is followed by a conversation about the significance of these values. Subsequently, students use the "Focused Listing" technique to fill out Worksheet 6 by providing examples of how the European Union upholds these values. Groups A and B work on the first task, while Groups C and D tackle the second task on the worksheet.

(Activity 9, L.O. 3, 4, 5, Worksheet 6, Duration 25΄)

Prior to filling out the individual evaluation worksheet, students engage in a final Evaluation Quiz with a classmate using the Kahoot Quiz platform. The quiz includes questions that address the main topics covered in the lesson. Participants must finish the quiz within a specified time frame, and the final rankings are revealed at the conclusion. The goal for students is to respond promptly and correctly to improve their position in the rankings.

(Activity 10, L.O. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Duration 10 minutes)

Assessment

During the final evaluation, students will fill out an Evaluation Worksheet on their own, responding to three questions: "What was the most important or useful thing you learned today?", "What questions do you still have?", and "What more would you like to learn about this topic?" The teacher will share some of the responses with the class for further discussion.

(Activity 11, LA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Duration 10΄)

Discussion

Educating students about community participation is a key focus throughout their education. It is crucial for students to receive a comprehensive education to meet the demands of the 21st century (Das, 2019), as education is expected to promote social inclusion and cohesion for all citizens (European Union, 2023).

Through the implementation of the teaching scenario, students were placed at the center of the learning process (Nurilhaq & Tabroni, 2022; Saptarini et al., 2022), actively participated (Cahyani & Yulindaria, 2018), and developed their cognitive and critical thinking skills (Blyznyuk & Kachak, 2024), which are considered essential for future citizens (Veldman et al., 2020), utilizing their participation in the group (Vygotsky 1978).

Students gained an understanding of community institutions, the bodies, and the functioning of the European Union. They embraced the European identity and recognized the importance of their involvement in European processes and decisions, as well as the benefits of engaging in public affairs. They also developed a sense of belonging to the broader European community (Domilescu & Lungoci, 2019; European Commission, 2017).

Conclusion

The teaching scenario, based on the National Curriculum for the course "Social and Civic Education," was implemented in a fifth-grade primary school class. The focus was on Greece's role in the European Community. The goal of the educational process was to educate students about European politics, history, values, rights, and opportunities available to European citizens, as well as their responsibilities as members of the European Union.

By engaging students in interactive and collaborative learning activities, their communication skills, cognitive abilities, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills were enhanced, preparing them for active participation in their communities as future European citizens.

Through the implementation of the scenario, students gained insight into the organization and functioning of the European Union, its institutions, and the reasons behind its establishment. They also learned about Greece's journey within the EU, its contributions to the EU's formation, and its role in the broader European context. Moreover, they developed an understanding of the common values that unite European citizens, fostering acceptance of diversity and promoting social cohesion as future active members of the European community.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the fifth-grade students and their teachers at Kotronis Schools, Mr. Th. Mizithras and Mrs. A. Kostara, for their willingness to carry out the scenario and provide us with their insights. Additionally, we would like to thank Mrs. Ellie Negka, a post-graduate student at the University of Utrecht, for her editorial assistance.

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Global Classrooms: Bridging Cultures and Advocating for a Sustainable Future[1]

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Abstract

The Young Activists project aimed to enhance global citizenship education by uniting students from Spain and Nigeria in a three-month telecollaborative initiative. Focusing on United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 6, the learning project involved 52 Spanish and 7 Nigerian students in activities centering on the importance of water conservation. Utilizing project-based learning (PBL) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), key activities included a Mystery Classroom game for cultural exchange, and the creation of water conservation slogans, logos, and anthems. The project culminated in an awareness campaign, aimed at the students' respective communities, resulting in the production of various advocacy materials.

Educational outcomes included significant improvements in English proficiency, cultural sensitivity, and global awareness. Despite technological and logistical challenges, the project effectively bridged educational practices between the Global North and South. Moreover, the initiative demonstrated that integrating AI with language education and real-world problem-solving can profoundly enhance student engagement and advocacy skills for a sustainable future.

Keywords: AI; Language learning; PBL; GCE; telecollaboration

Project overview

In an increasingly interconnected world, the importance of global citizenship education cannot be overstated. Projects such as the one featured here, The Young Activists, not only enhance students' academic skills but also foster a sense of global responsibility and cultural understanding, which are essential in addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century.

The Young Activists' project brought together students from Spain (ages 9-10) and Nigeria (ages 10-14) in a three-month telecollaborative project. (The term 'telecollaboration' and 'Virtual Exchange (VE) are often used interchangeably; see Dooly and Vinagre, 2021). We have opted for telecollaboration). Telecollaboration refers to the process of communication and collaboration between two or more partner classes for mutual learning goals. This telecollaborative initiative aimed to tackle the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) – ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (UN, 2015). A total of 52 Spanish students and 7 Nigerian students engaged in this project, which was based on a Project-Based Learning (PBL; see BIE, 2024) approach that incorporated the use of Artificial Intelligence to enhance the students educational experience while also promoting an understanding and awareness of digital competences related to the use of AI.

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Mont, M. & Dooly, M. (2024). Global Classrooms: Bridging Cultures and Advocating for a Sustainable Future. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 242-246. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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In summary, the project's primary objective was to blend English language learning with environmental advocacy, through the use of AI-enhanced telecollaboration, thereby providing a comprehensive educational experience. By engaging students from different cultural backgrounds in a common goal, the project also aimed to foster cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, essential components of global citizenship.

Key Activities and Timeline

The project was structured around several interactive and collaborative activities and tasks:

- **Mystery classroom game:**
  As an introduction to both the project and their partners, students played this game in that included 2 synchronous videocalls and several pre and post sessions with very specific tasks to be carried out. Ostensibly, the game was to guess the locations of their peers (which was kept a secret by the 2 partner teachers). This fostered cultural exchange and curiosity. The activity was particularly effective in challenging stereotypes and promoting a deeper understanding of different cultures. In pre-videoconference activities, students used AI to create 20 yes-no questions designed to help them guess each other's locations using AI (e.g. Does your country have an ocean border?). During the first videoconference, students introduced themselves and answered their partners' questions. This initial interaction aimed to break the ice and establish a foundation for subsequent activities. After the videoconference, the students again used AI to analyze the answers they had received in order to propose (in groups) the name of their peers' mystery country. This activity helped students learn to appreciate the diversity and similarities in their experiences while discovering how to write good prompts in the AI platform (specifically designed to be child safe). In the second videoconference, the students (correctly) guessed their partner countries and also presented brief cultural activities (dances and songs) to each other.

- **Creation of Slogan, Logo, and Anthem:**
  In their separate countries, utilizing AI, the students created promotional materials for their advocacy campaign about the good use of water in the world. This activity not only enhanced their creativity and technological skills but also allowed them to express their understanding of the global water crisis in their own manner. The proposals were presented between the countries and submitted to votes to decide the final slogan and logo. The anthem was co-created between the two classes.

- **Awareness Campaign:**
  In groups, students created campaigns addressing global water issues, culminating in a final dissemination event on June 19, 2024. This phase of the project allowed students to apply their learning in a practical context, creating various outputs such as comic stories, theatre plays, posters, digital presentations, and musical videos always with the support of AI and their teachers. The final presentation was held via videoconference, with parents, school staff and invited honorees

(municipal authorities) in attendance. It was also covered by a local news station in Spain.

Educational Impact

The project's educational impact was multifaceted, significantly enhancing students' academic and social skills:

- **Language Skills:**
  Students significantly improved their English proficiency through interactive activities and AI-assisted tasks. The project provided a real-world context for language use (e.g., communicating with their peers; writing prompts and reading answers in the AI platform) thereby making learning more meaningful and engaging.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:**
  The project promoted cultural awareness and sensitivity, helping students confront and dismantle stereotypes. Through their interactions, students learned to appreciate cultural diversity and understand the importance of empathy and respect in global communication.

- **Global Awareness:**
  Participants developed a deeper understanding of global issues and the importance of their own agency in addressing these challenges. The focus on SDG 6 helped students recognize the interconnectedness of global problems and the need for collective action.

Key Insights and Preliminary Findings

Initial data analysis revealed several key insights:

- **Language Proficiency:**
  The telecollaborative activities enhanced students' language skills by providing a practical, engaging context for English use. The use of AI in creating slogans, logos, and other materials also introduced students to new vocabulary and concepts, further enhancing their language proficiency. These findings support studies that show AI can enhance language learning by providing interactive and immersive learning experiences (Chen et al., 2020).

- **Cultural Sensibility:**
  Students displayed emerging cultural awareness, often navigating and challenging preconceived notions about their peers from different backgrounds. The Mystery Classroom game, in particular, was effective in promoting cultural exchange and understanding (see similar results with secondary students in Bruun, 2018). This supports other findings that show that telecollaboration can promote young learners' social awareness (Dooly et al., 2021).

- **Global Awareness:**
  The project fostered a growing awareness of global issues, particularly water scarcity, and the importance of sustainable practices. By engaging in hands-on activities, students learned about the causes and consequences of water scarcity and the importance of conservation efforts (Bruun, 2018).

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The project highlighted the importance of addressing technological and logistical challenges to ensure equitable participation. Despite these hurdles, the initiative successfully bridged educational practices between the Global North and Global South, emphasizing the role of technology in creating more inclusive learning environments.

- **Technological Challenges:**
  Ensuring that all students had access to the necessary technology was a significant challenge. The project team worked to provide solutions, such as supplying devices and ensuring stable internet connections, to facilitate participation.

- **Logistical Challenges:**
  Coordinating activities across different time zones and educational systems required careful planning and flexibility. The project team developed a schedule that accommodated the needs of both Spanish and Nigerian students, ensuring that all participants could fully engage in the activities.

Conclusion

The Young Activists project exemplifies how integrating project-based, telecollaborative language education with AI-driven exploration of real-world issues can significantly enhance student engagement and understanding. By connecting theoretical learning with practical, hands-on activities, the project not only educated students about global challenges but also empowered them to be proactive advocates for a sustainable future. Through collective efforts and enthusiastic participation, even the youngest learners demonstrated their potential to effect profound social change.

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The Impact of Debate Clubs in Forming Citizenship in Generation Z[1]

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Abstract

Generation Z, widely known as people born from late 1990s to 2000 is an age group which is not politically involved. Debate clubs, which Gen Zs often select as an extracurricular activity, are considered as a habit of discussing topics of utmost importance. Various concerns are scrutinized by young people that form two separate teams, one that argues standing up for a specific position, such as the necessity of military service and the other that expresses the opposite opinion. Debates are developed by having a speaker of each group alternately to the podium which allows each speaker to point out the mistakes or deficient arguments that his competitor has presented before him. That occurs on purpose in the beginning of his speech, to exercise pressure on his 'opponent'. In this context, serious topics that occupy the political stage are discussed, such as the refugee and migratory issue, the measures that should be imposed to countries which do not conform to human rights legislation, the conditions under which asylum should be granted or current affairs, concerning energy crisis, mandatory vaccination and even the changes that modern universities should apply. During each speech, the members of the opposing team are encouraged to pose questions, questioning intentionally the validity of the contention that has been presented. This intellectual process forces younger people to keep up with political developments in their country or worldwide, to empathize more and offer practical solutions for society's well-being which is necessary in comprehending citizenship. By searching for a specific topic, they become more aware and prepared, to deal with a social problem and constructively criticize governmental strategies about it. This procedure allows them to express their view on social problems, which actively enhances citizenship.

Keywords: Debates; Generation Z; current affairs

Argumentative Practices and Citizenship

Citizenship is a complex concept. Most of the national curricula pay emphasis on local issues than in global skills but it is important for democratic education to give attention on skills and competences for active citizens. Some of them are dialogue and argumentation who can be used as basis to develop values important for citizenship (Fortes et al., 2022; Rapanta et al., 2021). These examples give a concept to develop a sense of belonging in the community, understanding and respecting the other. Relevant studies have stated that dialogical and argumentative practices help students to build such skills of citizen.

It is important for students to understand complex issues and develop their position towards them, to support their views and to exchange some of them with people of different cultures. Such an approach could give them a way to collaborate and to negotiate. Through citizenship education students can engage themselves in active participation in society, learn to express their opinions, make decisions, develop social responsibility and be able to protest against injustice (Liu et al., 2021). Citizenship includes, in any case, moral development. That can help

[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Tsioumi, C. & Tsioumis, K. (2024). The Impact of Debate Clubs in Forming Citizenship in Generation Z. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 247-256. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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young people to improve their social behavior, reducing violence and create a sense of discipline (Evagorou et al., 2023).

It is important to underline that the current sense of citizenship is interested to build well informed citizens who can take part in the social dialogue and work for the common good. It's crucial that citizens work on values of democracy, tolerance and empathy. Engaging on dialogue and argumentation young people can prepare themselves to participate in public dialogue and take decisions (Rapanta et al., 2022). They can give their own contributions, challenge different points of views and evaluate positions of others. Students, who take part in debate groups learn to evaluate objectively the views of others and to give evidence to support their stance. Althop and Berkowitz (2006; as cited in Evagorou et al., 2023) support that students need social and participatory skills.

Through debate groups young students learn arguing on different socially and politically constituted positions over a disputed issue like slavery or colonialism. That means not necessarily resolve a particular dispute but provide context and connections. People taking part can work on skills of written and oral argumentation (Fortes et al., 2022). Arguing contains communication skills important to express and challenge conflicting arguments needed to be resolved and considering different points of views. During this procedure teams must decide for the best argument on particularly criteria and exercise rhetorical and dialectical argumentation (Law Rhetoric Club of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (THARSYN), 2024). People must be open to different points of view, listen to the other, being critical to their own point of view, considering different sources of information and questioning others as themselves. It's important to build a climate of equal participation (Liu et al., 2021). An approach, who supports dialogue is one where students have opportunities to engage in productive discussions, posing questions and identifying with several ideas (Rapanta et al., 2022).

Function and Rules of Debate Clubs

Schools and universities worldwide offer a variety of extracurricular activities, such as debate clubs, where people born in late 1990s or 2000s acquire chances to enhance their public relationships' abilities and express their opinion in an informal environment. This environment includes specifically people of approximately the same age and judges who criticize each speech based on widely known criteria, such as vocabulary, speech structure, arguments' validity and speakers' style, for example if they rely too much on their notes or they pursue eye contact with the judges or other participants. Debate clubs aim also at the participation in debate tournaments, in which there are teams from all over the world. The most common debate model among these tournaments is British Parliamentary Style (Academy, 2025, March 13). When this style is utilized, there are two 'benches' of each subject which is called 'motion', one that is fond of it and is called "Government" and another that is against it and is called "Opposition". Every bench is supported by four speakers. Therefore, there are eight participants that are alternately called to the podium to present arguments in six minutes, which will persuade judges and, hence, will lead them to the victory of the specific debate. Taking in consideration that people who belong to Gen Z are not usually sensitized to social problems or current affairs, debate clubs encourage them to research the root of the pre-mentioned subjects and, thus, maintain political and social knowledge which is interrelated to citizenship.

Each debate starts with the first participant of the 'Government" which is responsible for clarifying the meaning of each word utilized in the subject that was selected for the debate, in order to set the boundaries of the debate. The debaters of the opponent team should also pose questions called 'points of information" during each speech but not during the first or last minute. Additionally, apart from the first speaker, the following participants must begin their speech by criticizing the validity of the arguments that the previous speaker has pointed out, in order to leave the impression that their own team has stronger argumentation. This process is called 'refutation' and lasts approximately one minute.

The intellectual activity of searching invalid points and pointing them out requires paying attention to the opponent during their speech but it also enhances citizenship, because it creates active citizens who are able to take part in a political dialogue.

Behind each debate club there is an organizing committee which is in charge of selecting the 'motion' of the debate. The 'motions' are often inspired by current affairs. This strategy encourages Generation Z debaters to keep up with social and political happenings which are in the limelight at the moment.

Subjects Discussed in Debate Clubs

The 'motions' that are chosen are frequently inspired by current affairs, which aroused public opinion. Public concerns are often caused by new or changed legislation, which affects a certain group of people. Recently, Greek government has decided to change the institution of marriage by modifying the relevant article. Another serious decision was also the promotion of private education, which previously had a lesser role in Greece or the idea of downgrading theatre studies. These governmental strategies caused reactions among citizens, especially the Generation Z ones, because they were the main target group. As the people which were more affected, they gained the chance to take part in fruitful debates and express their thoughts on the changes.

An example of a timely debate is same-sex marriage, a recent change in Greek family law which cause a massive reaction among lawyers. During this debate, it was really interesting to observe the way that law students or students of completely different schools dealt with argumentation. For example, the "Government" stated that same-sex couples should have the same rights with other couples, because both types of couples are loved and capable of raising children. Apart from that, the team pointed out the importance of modernizing legislation, so that society and law will evolve at the same pace. Of course, the participants made clear that same-sex couples will acquire the chance to adopt a child under several circumstances. A serious condition that shows if people of the same sex are suitable for adopting a kid is a psychological test. This will prove if the environment is safe for nurturing a human being or not. It is much more crucial to grow up with peace and love than to have a stereotypical family. On the other hand, the group that had to persuade judges that the pre-mentioned change of the legislation was not necessarily utilized arguments concerning the importance of role models inside a family and the inspiration that both sexes have to a child that forms their personality. Apart from that, they claimed that nature's laws cannot be changed. The division among teams showed also the division among lawyers. Hence, debaters realized the difficulties that are caused even when the society changes for the better. Another crucial subject was death sentence's abolition, a penalty which was abolished in Greece in 1993, but still exists in other countries worldwide. During this debate, "Opposition" clearly

had a hard time finding strong arguments that proved the necessity of death sentence. The debaters that supported the abolition emphasized on the right to live as the right of the utmost importance and they clarified that this right should not be taken by anyone under any circumstances. They proposed instead other forms of punishments that can also benefit society, such as community service combined with imprisonment. In this context, death sentence was associated with backward-looking societies and not with the modern ones. Additionally, a solid argument that was heard was the fact that killing someone for punishment encourages violence, instead of law and order. Among other functions, each penalty functions as a means of exemplification, so the rival team could emphasize on the role of death penalty as a discouragement for would-be criminals. Furthermore, the fact that victim's family feels catharsis when the perpetrator is killed was easily refuted, because the emotional pain should not indicate killing another human-being. The group called "Opposition" had to point out that especially when a murder occurs, perpetrator should be punished the same way. In addition, they presented death penalty as the most efficient penalty, because the perpetrator does not have the chance to repeat a crime, but this mindset is clearly problematic. It may be not a fair game, but the second team deserved a lot of respect, because they were called to persuade judges to a 'motion' that was possibly against their beliefs and public opinion. Current affairs also brought abortion in the limelight, which was also a subject that was discussed in the context of debate clubs, taking in consideration the modification of the relevant law in Poland. The changes that were voted encouraged abortions, an idea that a Greek political party called 'Niki' condemned. Abortion has sensitized more young females, but also males were called to express arguments to the podium. The debaters that had to prove abortion wrong compared it with murder, in order to invoke judges' humanity. They also stated that not even a pregnant woman cannot decide about the life inside her. That can be justified only if there are serious health issues that make sure that the life of the infant or the pregnant woman will be in hazard. It was another unfair game, but that is how social or political problems tend to be, so one side had to fight harder than the other. The participants of the debate that supported abortion claimed that every woman should be able to decide for her body, without the need of health issues as a justification. It is necessary to take in consideration numerous events where women are raped and the infant is a child of a violent crime. Clearly, these unfortunate females usually abstain from raising the child of the rapist and they leave them to orphanages. Hence, a vicious circle is made. It is important to consider abortion as a possible choice and not condemn a woman's life because of a mistake or a criminal event.

Apart from extreme subjects, debate clubs also discuss about global or even national issues. In 2023, a presidential decree was introduced in Greek government concerning the business rights of theatre school graduates and their equalization with the rights of a high school graduate (Hellenic Democracy, 2022). It is common sense that theatre schools are considered as important as other schools. However, one of the debate teams had the role of supporting the idea of downgrading them. It may seem outrageous, but it was part of the game. Thus, this group claimed that theatre studies tend to have shorter duration than law or medicine school, hence the degradation was inevitable. From the other side, the debate group that defied degradation stated that all university studies should be considered equal and theatre studies that are connected to arts do not deserve less. Another subject that worried students of Greek universities last winter was the initiative for Constitution's modification about public education and the equalization of it with private universities. This situation caused massive reactions and public universities were occupied by students for months. At this moment,

debate clubs that managed to function under these circumstances scrutinized the validity of such an equalization. For example, people that were against it pointed out that public universities will have a lesser role when private universities will be established. This degradation will not benefit most students, because it will create an unfair separation, in which students with competence will have more chances than others inside the same educational system. Apart from that, public universities face various problems which will not be solved by the establishment of new ones. In this context, debaters criticized even governmental strategies that have an impact on them like active citizens are supposed to. The 'agenda' of debate 'motions' also included discussing about mandatory vaccination during Covid-19 crisis. During this debate, both teams enriched their argumentation with their own experience, which made arguments more persuading, and debaters felt more connected to debate's theme. For instance, the 'Government' which supported mandatory vaccination stated that the most important aspect during Covid-19 crisis was 'herd immunity' and forcing people to get vaccinated was the only way to achieve it (World Health Organization, 2020). Furthermore, they clarified that vaccines are a tested technology that people are used to and Covid-19 vaccines are not an exception. They also understood what "Opposition" stated which was the fact that everyone has the right to decide for their own body, but they paid attention on the fact that the whole world faced a severe pandemic. Consequently, "Opposition" emphasized on the rapidity of vaccines' production, which made their efficiency questionable compared to other diseases' vaccines. Additionally, debaters of this group pointed out that vaccines of the specific pandemic have not be tested for a long time and it is quite possible that side effects will be found. During this debate, Generation Z participants faced the difficulties in their argumentation that scientific community dealt with in a chaotic time and had to overcome immediately. Thus, they were able to comprehend the steps needed for decision-making during a crisis and constructively criticize governmental measures. Debate clubs often collaborate with specialized students' club and Covid-19 subjects was ideal for a collaboration with medical school students. During this collaboration, there were also 'motions' about non-vaccinated Covid-19 patients and the fact that they should pay medical expenses on their own or the 'motion' about medical confidentiality, in which medical school students were encouraged to participate on the debate and share their specialized knowledge.

The variety of the 'motions' never ends and even more general subjects were discussed during debates. Another interesting debate was if restraints in comments on social media should be imposed or these restraints undermine democracy. The 'Government' stated that any form of limits would be equivalent to censorship, which is alarming for modern democracies. Apart from that, there are not widely accepted criteria, with which people will unanimously agree to limit their freedom of expression, which is a constitutional right. On the other hand, "Opposition" pointed out that hate speech must be restricted, and no one should tolerate offensive comments. Furthermore, they emphasized on the fact that a big percentage of social media users are underage, and this age group is more sensitive to criticism. Hence, they should be protected at all costs. Debates were also organized about religious subjects, such as if satire about religion should be accepted. In this context, the team that was pleading for satire clarified that it is a way of expression and there are difficulties in limiting a constitutional right, as it has been mentioned before. On the other hand, debaters that were against satire claimed that no one has the right to make fun of someone else's beliefs and freedom of speech ends when respect is lost. A relevant debate was also the 'motion' about abolishing religious education at school. The 'Government' claimed that teaching methods

about religions are not modern, and teachers tend to focus more on the predominant religion than informing young people about different beliefs that exist worldwide. Moreover, religion is a private process, and anyone should think on their own about their personal beliefs. Another interesting discussion was the need to express an opinion in a more gender-neutral way. The team that supported this idea emphasized on the fact that finding sexual orientation is also a private process, so opinions concerning this subject should be neutral. On the other hand, debaters who were against gender-neutralized language expressed the fact that two sexes are found in nature and nature's laws cannot be questioned. In this context, debate clubs focused a lot on political correctness. A relevant 'motion' was if artists should consider creating 'politically correct' art. The argumentation supporting this kind of art was weak, but debaters presented art as a way of propaganda, which can be confirmed in history. On the other hand, "Opposition" insisted on letting artists freely create art, because it is a form of expression which cannot be constitutionally limited, and censorship remains a serious hazard for modern democracies. Apart from political correctness, private life of politicians has been discussed in the context of debates. More specifically, a debate was organized concerning the need of showing private moments of public figures on social media. The debaters who supported this idea claimed that people who are in the spotlight and are members of the Government should not hide any aspect of their life, because voters need to know about their representatives. On the other hand, "Opposition" focused on the discrimination between public appearance and private life that should be made. That occurs because business life must be separated from private life, even when kids are involved. Independent of their job, everyone should have their personal space. Taking in consideration the frequent phenomenon of violence, debate clubs could not omit talking about crimes against physical integrity. The exact formulation was if incidents of violence should be unveiled and how this will lead to their mitigation. The debate group that promoted the unveiling stated that victims should be encouraged to open up about their tragic experience, so that the perpetrator will be found and so they will overcome the fear that he or she has passed to the victim. Continuously, a safer environment will be developed, because other victims will understand that they will not be easily judged by the society and that the popular opinion is against the perpetrator. On the other hand, "Opposition" characterized their rival group as 'romantic', because they presented an ideal situation and not the reality. Instead, they pointed out that a victim of every form of violence, especially psychological or sexual, faces a lot of difficulties in modern judgmental societies. In addition, it is possible that victims will feel shame with the publicity of their personal experience and that may harm them even more. Last but not least, even artificial intelligence was discussed in debate club's context. Both teams were in charge of finding arguments concerning the question if artificial intelligence is a threat for the human race. The debate group which claimed that AI threatens human emphasized on the fact that technology may overcome humans' abilities and supposedly conquer the world. This may seem outrageous, but artificial intelligence will surely create people who rely on machines' abilities rather than their own. From the other side, the rival team presented the role of AI as human's assistant and, hence, they focused on the lesser but helpful role that it will have on people's life.

Connection between Debate Clubs and Citizenship

As it can be understood by the variety of problems that debate clubs scrutinize, Generation Z participants are taking part in finding arguments and solution about political, social or even

moral dilemmas. This is a cognitive activity that is only beneficial for people who are born in late 1990s or in early 2000s, because this age group tend to abstain and does not get informed about current affairs. A serious cause of this phenomenon is that they usually grow up with self-sufficiency and comfort. Hence, they forget that they are part of the system, and every problem affects also them in the long run. As a generation, they do not even have strong political or social concerns like older people used to have. Frequently, they face difficulties even expressing their opinion verbally, because they have grown up with electronic devices and social media. Debate clubs play a vital role in helping Generation Z participants improve their oral abilities, because they express their argumentation to judges, which offers them long-term more confidence to present their opinion to the public. Debate clubs have specific criteria, but they do not constitute a judgmental environment. They encourage instead more and more young people to exercise their public relationships' skills and improve them. Apart from that, the pre-mentioned clubs take on teaching Generation Z debaters to have a dignified public appearance which should be part of universities' program, especially for political or law studies. However, they also learn to be good listeners, a skill that not all politicians acquire. That occurs, because part of debaters' speech is the process called 'refutation', in which speakers should criticize the points that was mentioned before from the opponent that was to the podium. For exerting successful criticism, debaters should pay attention to what the rival group is presenting and, hence, they obtain the motivation to become better listeners.

Acquiring general knowledge, keeping up with current affairs and having the ability to present arguments to an audience are skills that are directly connected to citizenship. More specifically, citizens who can take part in political dialogue, ask questions and think of solutions to political or social problems are the ones who benefit the regime. Moreover, citizenship requires being informed about timely events and expressing an opinion on them, otherwise people become what Ancient Greeks called 'idiots', meaning people who are indifferent to society's problem.

Sensitization of Generation Z about Social and Political Problems Through Debate Clubs

The enhancement of citizenship is proved by the fact that Generation Z participants of debate clubs later became members of other groups that have a more immediate connection with political affairs, such as youth councils or clubs that aim to inform about social problems like injustice between sexes or the alarming abstention from decision-making and voting, which are groups that Generation Z debaters discover through the collaborations that debate clubs organized or through the research that they make, in order to prepare themselves for the debate. Even if they do not sign up to any other clubs, Generation Z people who are members of debate clubs tend to express their opinion more eloquently than before and they gain more courage to speak out, as mature citizens are supposed to. It is also important that debates teach people of this age group to pay attention to both sides of the same problem and not be stubborn, a characteristic which stems from their young age.

Apart from the oral and public relations' skills, Generation Z participants become more aware about current affairs, taking in consideration that they must get prepared for debate clubs' weekly meeting, which is often based on news. From their own research, younger people recognize social or political problems and the motivation of winning a debate also leads them to devise solutions. This intellectual process is necessary for citizens who desire to actively participate in public life. By scrutinizing current events in the context of debates, they are

being also encouraged to engage in social action, in order to reduce society's malaise. This mentality is being proven by the fact that debaters who have discussed the 'motion' about private education spoke out more than others during students' General Assemblies. Furthermore, they took part in protest marches concerning private universities, showing their strong disapproval. In general, Generation Z debaters attend political or social events or talks more often than before joining debate clubs. That occurs, because through these clubs, this age group comprehended the power of dialogue and the intellectual benefit of get in touch with different people and ideas. The debate club of Law School AUTh specifically participated in a forum hosted by the Centre for European Legal Culture (*Centre for European Legal Culture – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*, 2018) and the club itself has hosted various legal events or cooperative ones with co-hosting members of Inefan (2017). A serious percentage of debaters also began to write articles, cultivating also their writing skills in perplexed subjects, such as politics or social injustice. Hence, debate clubs shape citizens who have the knowledge and the communication skills to constructively judge governmental choices and suggest changes.

Taking in consideration the benefits of debating among young people, schools and universities should emphasize more on promoting debate clubs. This activity aids the development of integrated citizens and it functions with the most democratic way possible, the dialogue.

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Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching in Current Multicultural Classes in Greece[1]

Theodora Alexa[2]

Abstract

The increase in immigration, wars and invasion has led to an ever-changing number of migrants and refugees. Multicultural and intercultural education is considered a pillar of empowerment of students from various cultural backgrounds. In Greek society, the role of teachers in this direction is decisive. Teachers' self-efficacy affects their teaching strategies and attitudes. The need for multicultural self-efficacy is a special field of teachers' self-efficacy regarding their ability to adjust in different needs of students that originate from different linguistic and cultural environments.

The purpose of our research was to investigate the multicultural self-efficacy of primary education teachers in the prefectures of Aitoloakarnania and Achaia that belong to the periphery of Western Greece. The research tool used in this study was a questionnaire, delivered electronically. We used Multicultural Efficacy Scale (Guyton & Wesche, 2005) in conjunction with other questions as our research tool. The findings of this study identified multiple factors that may affect multicultural efficiency. Past experiences with diversity, attitude and general information about diversity and its impact on education, have a significant impact on multicultural self-efficacy.

Keywords: multicultural self-efficacy, experiences with diversity, multicultural education

Introduction

In the context of the population and cultural changes that exist in Greek society, school is a pillar of empowerment and empowerment of students from various migrant backgrounds. Globalization, with the enormous increase in immigration, wars and invasions, has led to an ever-changing number of migrants and refugees. We understand that the need for multicultural education and intercultural education that respects the diversity of the Greek population through solidarity and respect is a given and sought after. The role of teachers in this direction is decisive. These changes have a huge and multiple impact on classrooms. In order for teachers to function on the basis of multicultural education, they must feel that they have the appropriate qualifications and competences to utilize in the educational process what a multiculturally oriented education requires. Our research which investigates the multicultural self-efficacy of teachers, hopes to develop a crucial element that affects the role of teachers in order to improve both multicultural and intercultural education that respects diversity.

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Alexa, T. (2024). Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching in Current Multicultural Classes in Greece. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 256-268. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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Theoretical Background

Multiculturalism

The global direction of multicultural education is one of the recent goals as multiple surveys have evolved from national studies, to multinational education and from multicultural education to multicultural education of global content (Banks, 2013). Teachers involved in multicultural education build on cultural knowledge to teach academics, use students' past experiences, integrate students' reference frameworks into materials and contents, encourage and evaluate students' strengths to develop new ones, and recognize multiple intelligences in order to push students into new activities (Green, S., 2009; Gay, 2002; Banks, 2008).Gay (2002) defines culturally responsible pedagogy in a way that leverages students' past experiences, cultural knowledge, and different behaviors to enhance learning. Nieto (2017) describes multicultural education as a process that will lead the individual to different perspectives, with knowledge from all scientific fields, making use of communication skills through bilingualism or even multilingualism. Banks (1996) viewed multicultural education as a transformative process. May (2003) and Sleeter (1995) refer to the formation of a critical multicultural education that links power with culture and multiculturalism with the fight against racism.

Self-efficacy

The term "self-efficacy" is part of Albert Bandura's socio-cognitive theory (1971, 1977, 1997) which concerns the way individuals have the ability to self-determine. The individual is active and through self-control and self-determination can regulate his behavior (Klassen & Usher, 2010). Self-efficacy is one of the variables that determine the causes of behavior along with expectations for outcome and personal goals (Bandura, 1977). The individual thinks and acts through a dynamic combination of personal and environmental factors (Bandura, 1997; Pajares & Usher, 2008). Personal factors, through the influence of environmental factors, are redefined and shape the future behavior of the individual (Bandura, 2008). Self-efficacy varies from project to project and shows a person's certainty to succeed based on the goals they have set (Bandura, 1997). Bandura separates expectations for success into two genres: outcome expectations and efficiency expectations. A person may know that certain behaviors will lead to a certain outcome but may not believe that they can achieve it. In order for a person to choose an activity, set a goal and stick to it, expectations of effectiveness are the strongest parameter (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000).

Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as perceptions of one's ability to organize and carry out the actions required to produce given achievements distinguishes four sources of information on perceptions of effectiveness. Personal factors through the influence of environmental factors are redefined and shape the future behavior of the individual, the degree to which a person is confident in his abilities shows us the degree of self-efficacy. Potential that he believes exists for positive results because of this pedagogical direction and his ability to work with diverse student populations It is argued that in the same way that teacher self-efficacy is a dominant characteristic of the teacher, teachers need the same belief that thy are effective in the context of multicultural education (Guyton & Wesche, 2005).Perceptions of the individual's ability to manage situations arising from teaching with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Nadelson et al., 2012). It is the ability to apply the framework of multicultural education when teaching to linguistically and culturally diverse populations (Guyton & Wesche, 2005).

Multicultural efficacy

Derived from Bandura's (1982) term, teacher self-efficacy refers to whether a teacher perceives his or her ability to achieve a certain level of student learning. A teacher with a high level of self-efficacy tends to provide the most constructive learning environment for their students (Yost, 2002). At the same time, self-efficacy is a personal judgement of the teacher to have the expected results from the educational process even when students are unmotivated or struggling (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The effectiveness of the teacher is determined by his perceptions of educational effectiveness and his attitude towards educational effectiveness (Pajares, 1992). Between knowledge and action, there is the perception of the individual to put his abilities to use (Bandura, 1986). Personal educational effectiveness we could say that

It has been found in multiple studies that the level at which an educator feels effective affects their teaching (Klassen, & Chiu, 2010). The teacher's self-efficacy is his personal perception of his ability to teach. In order for teachers to function on the basis of multicultural education, which is a difficult learning process, they must feel that they are effective, that they have the appropriate qualifications and competences to utilize in the educational process what a multiculturally oriented education requires (Nadelson et al., 2012). Self-efficacy is a determining factor in the management of knowledge and skills, it concerns the individual's beliefs about whether he can use his abilities correctly and effectively and strive for his success (Pajares, 1992; Bandura, 1997).

The need for multicultural effectiveness is a particular area of teacher self-efficacy related to their ability to adapt to different needs of students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Silverman, 2010). The curricula of the pedagogical departments now contain many subjects related to interculturality, multiculturalism and generally address the issue of diversity. One of the questions that arises is whether the goals set for the competences and knowledge that students wish to achieve can predict future teaching behavior in the classroom (Siwatu, 2011).

Research Questions

This study examines investigate the multicultural self-efficacy of primary education teachers. The innovative element of our research is that it attempts to explore the factors that may affect multicultural efficacy. Specifically, we attempt to answer the following questions:

- How multiculturally self-effective do teachers feel?
- What factors influence teachers' multicultural self-efficacy?
- Do teachers who have been taught subjects about diversity during their university education feel more self-efficacious?

Data Measures

The directors of primary education in the prefectures of Aitoloakarnania and Achaia, the school principals of the prefecture of Aitoloakarnania and 40% of the prefecture of Achaia were initially informed about the conduct of the survey. We sent the electronic questionnaire to the e-mail addresses of all schools in the two prefectures. In order to investigate our

questions and achieve our goal, we used the research tool of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was short and an effort was made to make the questions clear and structured in four sections in order to facilitate the subjects in answering them. The questionnaire was mixed-choice with open-ended and closed-ended questions with predetermined answers, dichotomous questions, and grading scales (Cohen et al., 2002). The first part contains questions about the demographics of the subjects: gender, years of educational service, employment law, parental education, educational level, religious affiliation.

The first part contains questions about the demographics of the subjects: gender, years of educational service, employment law, parental education, educational level, religion, nationality, annual family income and mother tongue. At the same time, the subjects were asked about their knowledge of foreign languages, the existence of foreign students in their school and the teaching experience with foreign students. It was then asked to identify the information they have on diversity through questions about their degree of knowledge, university courses related to intercultural education, their sources of information and the importance of knowledge of foreign languages. The main part of the questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions, where they are asked to answer from a series of defined answers in order to make the questions easier and shorter (Cohen et al., 2002). We used the questionnaire of Guyton and Wesche (2005) which has been translated and weighted in previous research in Greek (Spinthourakis et al., 2010). The Multicultural Efficacy Scale (MES) was created based on the four dimensions of multicultural education (Bennett, Niggle & Stage, 1990), which include knowledge, understanding, perception and skill. The scale includes intercultural experiences, knowledge about people from different cultural backgrounds, attitudes about diversity, and knowledge of the skills needed for a multicultural education. In summary, in addition to self-efficacy, the scale measures the subjects' experiences with their otherness and attitudes.

This part of the questionnaire consists of four (4) axes in the form of statements as described below:

- Multicultural experiences: 7 statements. Multiculturalism experiences are measured using the Likert scale, which has a five-point gradation and is in the form of 'Never', 'Rarely', 'Occasionally', 'Often', 'Always'.
- The measurement of perceptions of multicultural education is done through a Likert scale which has a four-step gradation of the form "Strongly agree", "Partially agree", "Partially disagree", "Strongly disagree".
- The measurement of multicultural self-efficacy is done with a four-step gradation as follows: "I couldn't do it very well.", "I could do it with difficulty if I had to", "I would do it relatively well if I had the time to prepare.", I could do it easily.", If every person learned to accept and cooperate with any other person, then there would be no intercultural problems between people from other cultures, and so forth.
- Although the Multicultural Self-Efficacy scale divides the scores of the measures for attitudes and self-efficacy differently, we decided in the configuration of the grouped variables to divide the scores equally.

Data Analysis and Results

To investigate the multicultural self-efficacy of primary school teachers, our sample was comprised of 104 PE70 teachers who filled out the questionnaire electronically.

Research tool:

- online questionnaire via the Google Drive app
- Mixed-type questions
- Multicultural Efficacy Scale (Guyton & Wesche, 2005)

Data collection period: April-June, 2018

- Aspects of multicultural education that teachers don't feel they can do well: the production of material suitable for multicultural class, identification of prejudices, recognition of how different groups contribute to the pluralism of society; teaching history from different perspectives and teaching methods to eliminate prejudices.
    - Past experiences, perceptions and the general degree of awareness about diversity and its impact on education have a significant impact on multicultural self-efficacy.
    - Teachers are quite modest as to how the learning process should follow specific practices and methods to represent all the social and cultural differences of the students in a class.
    - When describing the overall purpose of multicultural education, the majority of participants express a view of tolerance of diverse groups.
    - Teachers feel quite multiculturally self-efficacious.

Factors that affect multicultural self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is statistically significant:

- with the factor "experiences of diversity" that teachers have (Pearson's r =352, p=.00)
- with perceptions of diversity (Pearson's =.296, p-=.002)
- the general level of awareness on issues related to diversity and their impact on education (Pearson's r=.286, p=003).
- Specifically, 56.1% of people who stated that they have high self-efficacy claim that the dominant goal of multicultural education is tolerance
    - Teachers with 11-20 years of school experience feel more hesitant (57.1%) while teachers with many years of service, over 20, are confident (61.5%) in their self-efficacy.
    - The teachers of the prefecture of Aitoloakarnania described by 59.4% that they have a high degree of self-efficacy, while the teachers of the prefecture of Achaia by 52.5% that they have a medium grade.
    - Women feel more multiculturally self-effective (56.9%) than men (50%).

Discussion

Our research is the first, as far as we know, to determine the level of multicultural perceptions and self-efficacy in active teachers in Greece.

Initially, we examined whether the schools where the participants of our study worked had students from migrant backgrounds and whether they themselves had experience with foreign students, in order to get a first picture of the sample's familiarity with multicultural education. The percentages reported showed us that teachers had contact with students

from diverse backgrounds, so we assumed that they had engaged with the ways and methods of teaching in a multicultural classroom.

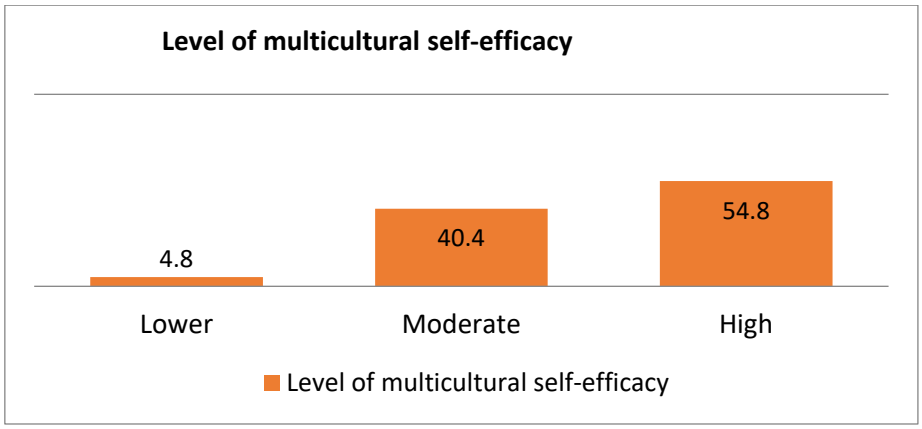
Our sample consisted mainly of women (70.2%) while regarding the years of service the sample was distributed almost equally, with most having taught from 21 years of age or older. The prefectures were selected in relation to the percentages of foreign pupils accommodated in schools. The ethnicity and religion of the participants did not show differentiation in our subjects, which as other studies have shown may have differentiated the results regarding multicultural education (e.g., Sleeter, 2001).

Then, through several questions, we tried to investigate the degree and sources of information about diversity and its effects on education. Most teachers said they were quite informed. Identifying the sources of information, we observed that 63.5% have attended university courses with content related to intercultural education, while they choose to be informed through self-education, seminars and university studies and less so than the media. Their general degree of information is moderate, which coincides with their initial assessment of their level of information. As our analyses of the level of education, teaching experience with foreign students and attending university courses on intercultural education play an important role in the level of information and in the search for sources of information for teachers.

In addition, we tried to distinguish whether teachers had previous experiences related to diverse populations. The statements included past events in a way that was unrelated to their capacity as teachers. Their answers seem to show that most, despite different age groups, lived as children in homogeneous population environments and did not have much contact with people from different cultures through books or television. At the same time, we examined teachers' perceptions of multiculturalism. From the results of the responses, it appears that teachers are quite moderate in the way the learning process should follow specific practices and methods to represent all the social and cultural differences of the students in a class.

Our first research question was the extent to which teachers feel multiculturally self-efficacy. Our sample shows that it can teach based on the principles of multicultural education. Most have a high and medium sense of self-efficacy of 54.8% and 40.4% respectively. Of course, this happens by dividing the answers evenly, because if we were to give the separation of the tool, the teachers seem to feel moderately self-efficacy. The statements concerned both teaching methods and educational materials, the integration of content, the process of building knowledge, the reduction of prejudices, the pedagogy of justice and the change in school culture and social structure. They believe that if they had the time, they could very easily teach multiculturally. The question that arises, of course, is whether there is such a great lack of time in order to integrate multiculturalism into the teaching process, when the books themselves now contain clear activities and learning objectives related to multicultural education. The most important thing that emerges, however, is that they see it as an additive content in education, rather than as a structural change in content and process (Nieto, 2017; Banks, 2013).

Figure 1: Level of multicultural self-efficacy



Our second research question tried to distinguish whether there are factors that affect multicultural self-efficacy and if so, which factors are decisive. Although the sample was age-differentiated, it did not show any difference in multicultural self-efficacy and age, which has been shown in previous research (Dee & Henkin, 2002; Jacobs, 2015). Although we expected gender to play a role in issues of diversity, it did not appear to have a significant impact on multicultural self-efficacy (Turner, 2007). At the same time, the influence of the mother tongue or foreign languages did not appear to be significant, as in previous research by Kyles & Olafson, 2008).

The model is statistically significant and explains about 23% of the variation in self-efficacy (R2=.226, p=.00).

There are three factors that seem to affect self-efficacy, as it emerged from our own sample:

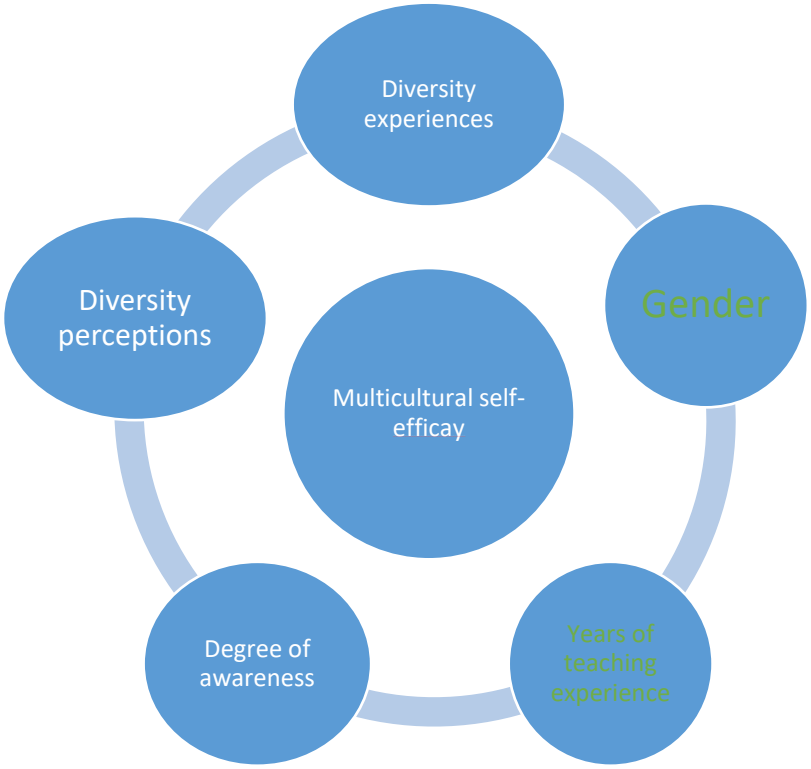
- Experiences related to diversity
- Perceptions of multicultural education and diversity
- The general degree of information on issues of diversity and their impact on education.

The importance of direct or indirect experiences with people from different cultural and social backgrounds is in line with Groulx and Silva's (2010) research on multicultural self-efficacy. Perceptions of multicultural education have proven to be important, which is in line with the research of Jacobs (2015) and Atiles, Douglas, and Allexsaht-Snider (2017) but not the research of Nadelson et al. (2012).

As the relationships were found to be statistically significant, we developed a model that may explain the factors that influence self-efficacy, namely experiences, information and perceptions, which was statistically significant. Our third research question concerned the correlation between university courses and self-efficacy. The relationship we found was not statistically significant. Our research agrees with the research of Nadelson et al. (2012) and Zaier (2011) which did not show differences in self-efficacy and academic coursework, but only in the number of courses a teacher attends. However, it has been observed that teachers' engagement with courses on culturally responsible pedagogy increases levels of self-efficacy (Fitchett, Starker, & Salyers, 2012). We must therefore address the ways in which teachers need to equip themselves with the competences and knowledge to understand both their

identity and the identity of their students in order to create effective teaching and learning processes through academic education (Spinthourakis, 2007).

Figure 2: Factors of multicultural self-efficacy



Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate the issue of multicultural self-efficacy. An issue that, according to Greek research data, is still in its early stages, according to published papers and articles. The way we dealt with self-efficacy took into account the theoretical framework of the concept of self-efficacy of the teacher, through specialization in the specific field of multiculturalism. Self-efficacy is based on the theoretical framework of Bandura's (1997) cognitive theory, which influences the goals and behaviors of the individual through personal action and environmental conditions. Perceptions of self-efficacy determine how challenges and obstacles affect the choice of specific activities and effort and perseverance. The self-efficacy of the teacher shows us the teachers' perceptions of planning, organizing and conducting.

University courses with intercultural content do not seem to have an effect on multicultural self-efficacy. In closing, we would say that in trying to investigate the issue of multicultural self-efficacy, we have seen that the Multicultural Efficacy Scale (Guyton & Wesche, 2005), as translated and used in recent research in Greece (Spinthourakis et al., 2010), can have significant utility in the study of multicultural education and in the way that academic curricula can provide the possibilities for creation more effective teachers in a way that can manage cultural diversity and include targeted methods and practices for multicultural education.

Also, through the research, important aspects of multicultural education that teachers do not feel they can achieve. The following topics could be of particular concern both at the academic level and at the level of educational policy, they are those in which teachers feel that they cannot do well. In particular, such important issues are the production of material suitable for a multicultural classroom,0 the identification of prejudices and the creation of appropriate teaching material, the recognition of the way in which different groups contribute to the pluralism of society, the teaching of history from different perspectives and teaching methods for the elimination of prejudices.

Limitations

In the present research it has not been possible to find how university courses, although they affect the degree of information and information which in turn affect self-efficacy, affect multicultural self-efficacy. In future research, the role of intercultural education courses could be further explored. Also, although we looked at self-efficacy, we could not see whether this is reflected in their actions in the classroom. A mixed-type survey with interviews or observation combined with the scale we used may provide more detailed data on the multicultural practices that follow. Finally, it would be useful to correlate the role of teachers' intercultural competence and readiness with multicultural self-efficacy.

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Empowering Free Doubters: Fostering Critical Thinking in Today's Schools[1]

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the growing disconnect between the declared aim of fostering critical thinking in schools and the standardized, conformity-driven practices that dominate today's education systems. Drawing on theorists such as Althusser, Biesta, Freire and Borghi, the paper explores how schools often function as ideological state apparatuses, reinforcing dominant ideologies rather than encouraging independent inquiry. The 'learnification' of education has led to a focus on measurable outcomes, sidelining the holistic development of students as subjects capable of doubt, dissent, and ethical action. These tensions are illustrated with contemporary cases (e.g., the ethics surrounding AI and the hidden labor that sustains it) to argue that critical awareness must be cultivated across all subjects and routines of everyday school life. Reframing education towards "subjectification" requires time, the possibility to fail and try again, and teachers who interrogate the social power relations and tacit ideologies informing their own practice. The paper calls for schools as communities of free doubters – that is, responsible, caring, critically thinking individuals prepared to contest injustice in school and society. The closing challenge is provocative: Do we dare?

Keywords: free doubters, critical thinking, schools, teachers, activism

Introduction

The minds that will build the society of tomorrow are being moulded in the schools of today. However, this development is taking place in the context of today's society. But what defines this society? Is it still a postmodern one, characterised by relativism, uncertainty and scepticism, as Lyotard (1984) suggested in the early 1980s? Or is it a 'risk society', as Beck (1992) defined it just a few years later? In many respects, it is both. While individuals in most democratic Western societies have the freedom to make choices about almost every aspect of their lives—most notably regarding personal identity, a hard-won achievement—this abundance of options can often lead to feelings of powerlessness, instability and confusion. The more choices we have, the more we seem to crave new grand narratives that tell us what to believe and strive for.

Accordingly, people of all ages, including young people, often experience a profound sense of meaninglessness or destabilisation in their lives (Küng, 2010). Yet as humans, we are driven by a fundamental need for meaning and purpose (Frankl, 1985). However, rather than actively constructing meaning as Frankl (1985) advocated, today we tend to passively receive it from external sources such as social media, consumer culture, societal expectations and ideologies. But this tendency can ultimately lead us to disconnect from our true selves (cf. Frankl, 1985).

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Mlinar, K. (2024). Empowering Free Doubters: Fostering Critical Thinking in Today's Schools. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 271-277. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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In many ways, we have transferred the habit of 'zapping' between TV channels or endlessly 'scrolling' on our phones into our daily lives—we crave quick solutions and instant answers, even when it comes to life's most profound questions. We want to be told what the purpose of life is or should be, rather than discovering it for ourselves. In other words, we cling to ideologies, even fundamentalisms, that seem to offer easy, ready-made and quick answers (Kovač, 2001).

This might explain why we so readily trust and rely on machine learning. It seems that machine learning knows no doubt and therefore provides a sense of certainty that allows us to avoid (critical) thinking. Nevertheless, we discuss ethical concerns related to machine learning, but these discussions are often too superficial in my view. Teachers, for example, discuss how to prevent students from using ChatGPT to cheat. Others are concerned about authorship issues. While these are valid points that need to be addressed, we often overlook — or avoid thinking critically about— deeper issues. For example, how are machine learning models trained? Who is involved in this process, and at what cost? Workers who train machine learning and moderate content for companies such as Meta and OpenAI have recently highlighted the inhumane conditions they face. These include working long hours reviewing violent content such as murder, rape and child abuse for a wage of less than $2 per hour, often resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder (Haskins, 2024). These ethical dilemmas should be a priority, especially when thinking about the youth who are and will remain the primary users of machine learning. Yet it seems that we are prioritising convenience over critical and ethical thinking.

What, then, is the true cost of all this? And how should schools deal with the tension between providing certainty and fostering critical thinking in an increasingly complex world?

Do Schools Shape or Control Minds

The development of students' thoughts, beliefs, values, ideas and behaviour is at the core of educational goals in schools. Yet, the latter also have the power to influence and control minds, often preventing the emergence of revolutionary ideas or the questioning of established power dynamics. In this way, schools can function as 'ideological state apparatuses', that is as tools for reproducing the dominant ideologies and legitimising existing inequalities, in which there is room mainly for uniformity and standardisation (Althusser, 2014).

But does this mean that schools are complicit in preparing children for a life of exploitation? Let us look at the teaching of Mathematics, a subject often perceived as neutral and objective, as an example. In many classrooms, students are taught that there is only one right way to solve a problem — a way that is usually dictated by the teacher. This approach discourages independent thinking and inquiry, as students are taught to take a passive role: they follow the instructions, memorise the methods and produce the expected results without questioning the underlying principles. In such an environment, students may come to see conformity as the ultimate goal and internalise the idea that success lies in obedience to authority figures who are seen as the ultimate arbiters of truth (cf. Althusser, 2014).

Despite many positive changes in the educational systems of Western societies, in many, if not most cases, it still resembles what Freire (2014) refers to as the 'banking model', where knowledge is deposited into passive students who are then assessed on how well they can replicate the information rather than critically engage with it.

Where is, then, the room for critical thinking, which is supposedly a fundamental goal of education? One of the biggest problems lies in the contradiction between the declared aims of education — such as fostering creativity, independence and critical thinking — and the actual practises in classrooms, which often prioritise conformity and obedience. It is therefore crucial that teachers themselves embody critical thinking, not only by reflecting on their teaching methods, but also by questioning the knowledge and pedagogy they have inherited.

The transition to truly critical education requires more than just rhetorical changes. It requires a shift in the way students are encouraged to think, question and scrutinise the world around them. In other words, education must move beyond a narrow focus on skills and outcomes—what Biesta (2010, 2016) refers to as the 'learnification' of education—and instead focus on empowering students to take their own unique place in the world—what Biesta (2010, 2016) refers to as 'subjectification' of education.

The Different Facets of Education

In today's 'knowledge society', knowledge is increasingly a key source of economic success, growth and competitiveness. This has led to a greater focus on the measurability of results and performance. The same mechanisms have also found their way into schools, where in many cases there is less and less room for the critique of social reality and the associated development of critical thinking, as these are qualities that cannot be measured objectively with grades and points. Therefore, the quantification of knowledge and the emphasis on measurability have become the gold standard for evaluating student success (Biesta, 2020; Burcar, 2012; Sjöberg, 2019). Grades, standardised tests and performance metrics often dominate both the curriculum and the student experience, resulting in students being more concerned with their grades than with a critical engagement with what they are being taught (cf. Biesta, 2010).

The words of a young girl from Belgium, which can be read in the companion report to The State of the World's Children 2021 (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and United Nations Children's Fund, 2022, p. 32), are very revealing:

The school gives so much homework and things to do...When you don't feel good, they don't care, but when afterward your grades are not good, then they start saying, ,Oh, but what's the matter? Your grades are not good, you don't feel good? That's all that matters.

Clearly, the emphasis on grades creates an environment in which students are alienated from their own learning processes, leaving critical thinking and the full development of their personalities by the wayside. To live up to societal norms, students are taught very early on that they need good grades. They feel that their personal worth is measured by their grades. Although parents and teachers mostly do not agree with such a system, we adapt to it and therefore reproduce it (see also Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and United Nations Children's Fund, 2022).

This problem is directly related to the above mentioned 'learnification' of education, where learning is reduced to measurable outcomes and the broader goals of education take a back seat. In contrast, teachers should advocate for a model of education based on 'subjectification', which aims to empower students to become subjects of their own lives. In other words, teachers should foster students' desire, their 'appetite' to engage critically and responsibly with the world and help them shape their own identities rather than just fitting

into predefined roles (Biesta, 2010, 2016). Teachers should help them develop a critical consciousness to enable them to question and reflect on the world around them and to recognise and challenge oppressive social structures (Freire, 2014). After all, what is a society without 'free doubters' (Borghi, 1953)?

Educating free Doubters

Borghi (1953) argued that education should not be about moulding compliant citizens, but rather about nurturing individuals who are capable of doubting, questioning authority and engaging in free enquiry. Similar to Freire (2014), he argued that true learning emerges from the intellectual and moral liberation of students.

In a society where the pressures of conformity often stifle critical thinking, it is vital that schools and teachers specifically encourage students to embrace doubt and free thinking as productive forces. This is the foundation on which a future society of critical thinkers, motivated to effect positive change, can be built. For this to be possible, schools must prioritise enquiry over indoctrination and critical participation over passive acceptance. Students should be equipped with the tools to challenge not only the ideas presented to them, but also the systems in which they live.

This means allowing students to question the very framework of their education, the social structures and the roles they are expected to play. But for that, teachers and students need time. Yet, as Biesta (2020) warns, it seems that we have forgotten where the idea of school came from. *Scholé* (Gr.), meaning leisure, allowed people in ancient Greece to spend time reflecting and pursuing knowledge; later, *Scholé* came to be understood as the place where this was possible, a place of learning (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In today's schools, however, both teachers and students often feel pressured to rush through the curriculum, reducing learning to the mere acquisition of knowledge, rather than cultivating the critical thinking necessary to understand and question the assumptions and beliefs that underline that knowledge.

As Dewey (1933) argued, true education begins with a state of doubt, of perplexity, which stimulates learners' reflective thinking and compels them to actively investigate further. This means that schools should give students the "possibility for slowing down, for trying, failing, trying again, and failing better, as Samuel Beckett has formulated it so nicely" (Biesta, 2020, p. 98). However, the focus on standardised tests and measurable outcomes discourages students from reflecting on their experiences and learning from mistakes. Additionally, adults, whether parents or teachers, are often afraid to let children fail. This reluctance is rooted in a desire to protect children from disappointment, yet it inadvertently communicates a lack of trust in their ability to persevere, reflect and grow. Without the experience of failure, children cannot develop perseverance, curiosity, yearning and passion (Crepet, 2006, 2015; Festa Scienza Filosofia, 2018). As Crepet (2018) meaningfully states:

Without passion, there is no real life nor a vision of the future, primarily of one's own, the only way not to surrender to this loss is to invoke it, to provoke it, to pursue it, to tell it.

By prioritising performance and competition over critical thinking, we condition students to see learning merely as a means to an end — a stepping stone to better job prospects and economic success. As they transition into adulthood with this mindset, many will continue to

perform in accordance with societal expectations and strive to be more competitive and flexible, but often at the cost of becoming more passive and compliant.

This paradigm needs to be changed so that the society of the future can be built by responsible, caring and critically thinking generations who dare to express doubt and dissent. And above all, who develop a critical awareness of what is happening in society and who are willing to take action against injustice and oppression (Derman-Sparks et al., 2020).

However, it would be wrong to believe that the development of critical thinking can be confined to a single subject or course. The education of critical thinkers must permeate all aspects of education and be an integral part of everyday school life, present in every subject and interaction. Teachers must give students the opportunity to doubt, analyse, reflect and question the knowledge they are taught. Enquiry and debate should be valued as much as answers and solutions (cf. Dewey, 1933).

A fundamental shift is needed in the way we conceptualise education. This shift should be towards reflective thinking, embracing failure as a learning opportunity and cultivating a passion for enquiry. And above all, towards empowering students not only to question the world as it is, but also to imagine and work towards a world as it could and should be.

Final Thoughts

In the light of the above discussion, a critical question arises: are teachers — whom we expect to educate free doubters and critical thinkers—capable of being free doubters and critical thinkers themselves? This question needs to be addressed in initial teacher education. However, higher educational institutions, increasingly driven by market forces, often conform to the logic of competitiveness and the quantification of knowledge. As universities often prioritise economic outcomes and the generation of profits, the development of socially relevant knowledge and critical thinking is often neglected. As a result, the very mission of education—fostering critical reflection, intellectual freedom and challenging established norms—may be undermined by the commercialisation of higher education, forcing teachers and students to conform rather than question, to comply rather than engage (see also Biesta, 2020; Burcar, 2012; Lorenz, 2006; Sjöberg, 2019).

If this trend continues, we may find ourselves with schools that only mirror the very social forces we seek to combat. It is therefore our responsibility and duty as teacher educators not to allow ourselves to be dominated by this pattern. We must prepare future teachers to be free doubters who in turn will empower their students to also become free doubters and help shape schools as 'communities of free doubters' (Borghi, 1953). But the ultimate question is: do we dare?

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Bridging Trust Gaps in Schools[1]

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Abstract

It is common assumption in international studies that school culture and trust within a school are linked. Concurrently, the crisis of trust overshadows both the institution of education and, in many cases, schools, through broken trust relationships between teachers and the principals. The culture of trust seems to be particularly important for both teacher and principal. The prevailing organizational culture of the school is firmly based on approaches and behaviors of teachers, but also of the principal, that highlight and stimulate trust. By adopting a sociological lens, we aim to analyze the intricate interplay of various factors influencing trust dynamics in schools. This study will explore the impact of school management and communication as primary catalysts for the lack of trust between teachers and school principals. Starting from the pathway mentioned, we seek to identify actionable strategies for rebuilding trust within schools.

Keywords: trust; crisis; strategies.

Introduction

Trust is a fundamental aspect of social existence and an essential prerequisite for collaboration within organizations. Trust is not just a trait of individuals in schools; it is also a shared resource that affects the culture of the school, relationships between professionals, and the quality of the learning process. Studies from around the world have shown that schools with high levels of trust tend to have better collaboration, more dedicated teachers, and better student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). When trust is broken or weakened, however, schools often see rising tensions, professionals leaving, and increasing everyday problems.

In recent years trust has become an increasingly fragile and contested resource. Schools do not function in a social vacuum; they are very much a part of larger social, economic, and political systems. The ongoing presence of overlapping crises - economic, political, migratory, health-related, and geopolitical- has led to the emergence of the phenomenon of permacrisis, characterized by extended instability and uncertainty that significantly impacts social cohesion and institutional legitimacy (Collins Dictionary, 2022; Panagopoulos et al., 2023). Permacrisis has been characterized by substantial declines in trust in institutions, leaders, and group processes (Fukuyama, 2018; Seligman, 1997).

The broader crisis of trust will have spillover effects within schools, which can act as scale-models for society. The collapse of trust tends to be manifested through issues

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Panagopoulos, E., Adamopoulou, A. & Kamarianos, I. (2024). Bridging Trust Gaps in Schools. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 278-287. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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within the relationship between teachers and principals, via less participation in decision-making, heightened suspicion, and issues with communication. It is, moreover, reasonable to assume that the impact of such a collapse will be amplified within a more centralized educational institution, including though not limited to that of Greece, where the structure tends to prioritize compliance over conversation, which can be detrimental to the establishment of trust (Panagopoulos et al., 2024).

This paper focuses on the issue of trust gaps in schools. Trust gaps are seen as breaks or breaks in relational trust that make it harder for people to work together and hurt the school culture. This study approaches trust not as an abstract or static notion, but through a sociological lens that views trust as a relational, dynamic, and socially constructed phenomenon. Trust gaps are, thus, not coincidental. They are generated and perpetuated through quotidian practices of leadership, communication, and organizational culture. Utilizing empirical findings from qualitative research in Greek primary schools, the paper analyzes the emergence of trust gaps, the experiences of teachers and principals, and potential solutions through intentional trust-building strategies.

Trust, School Culture and the Condition of Permacrisis

Trust has long been acknowledged as a fundamental concept in sociological theory. Simmel (1950) posits that trust is essential for social interaction; its absence renders social life unfeasible. Trust enables individuals to act amid uncertainty, facilitating cooperation in contexts where comprehensive information is lacking. Trust is a means of retaining stability in organizations, simplifying situations and facilitating cooperation (Seligman, 1997). Trust is a big part of school culture in schools. The shared values, norms, expectations, and practices that shape daily life in a school make up the school's culture. Trust serves as the "social glue" that unites these components, shaping teacher collaboration, leadership practices, and conflict resolution. Studies indicate that relational trust within educational institutions is based on perceptions of competence, benevolence, integrity, and reliability among members of the school community (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

An abundance of trust makes people more open at work, more likely to take the lead, and better at working together to solve problems. Teachers who work in environments where they feel safe are more likely to share their ideas, voice their worries, and have reflective conversations without worrying about being judged or punished. Diminished trust typically engenders defensive behaviors, social withdrawal, and informal group formations that exacerbate the fragmentation of school culture (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). Contemporary trust in schools, however, is increasingly affected by the larger state of permacrisis. In Greece, the roots of permacrisis can be traced to the 2010 economic crisis, which was followed by a series of social, political, migratory, and health crises that still impact institutional life (Panagopoulos et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence indicates that such conditions significantly affect trust in institutions. Research shows that people in Europe are losing faith in their governments, public institutions, and leaders (Eurofound, 2018; European Policy Centre, 2024). As public institutions, schools are not exempt from these dynamics.

Teachers and principals frequently contend with heightened accountability demand, administrative burdens, and unclear policy directives, which amplify feelings of insecurity and distrust. Permacrisis shows up in schools in small but important ways: increased sensitivity to decisions made by leaders, skepticism of changes, and decreased tolerance of uncertainty. In such situations, trust is both weaker and more important. Trust is crucial for managing uncertainty but the conditions of permacrisis erode the social and organizational foundations that support trust (Fukuyama, 2018).

The Trust Crisis in Schools

The trust crisis in schools cannot occur within a vacuum or solely due to personal issues. A trust crisis in a school can be understood as a breakdown that takes place within the normal functioning of a professional relationship, particularly within the two groups of professionals: teachers and principals. One possible key symptom that a trust crisis has erupted within a school setting may be the collapse of relational trust within/between those particular groups of professionals. As a form of trust that does not exist on the grounds of any personal liking, relational trusts are founded on professional interactions characterized by a sense of fairness, professionalism, and mutual respect between those whose relationship involves these particular types of trusts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

In centralized educational systems, bureaucratic governance structures often exacerbate trust crises. Administrative rationality frequently places adherence to rules and formal procedures ahead of communicative rationality and discourse (Habermas, 1971). Consequently, school leadership may be perceived as synonymous with control rather than support, thereby perpetuating hierarchical distance and mistrust. Studies in the Greek educational setting have demonstrated that insufficient trust between teachers and principals correlates with diminished collaboration, decreased initiative, and professional disengagement (Panagopoulos et al., 2024).

Teachers may not share their worries or new ideas due to fear that they may be misunderstood or face negative consequences. Principals may rely on formal authority instead of relational influence, further enlarging trust gaps. Trust issues can be particularly obvious following a change or a new principal within the school. Change within a school that results from a new principal, in particular, can disrupt the established patterns, leaving issues surrounding relationships could be unaddressed, and resulting in a power vacuum that has to be renegotiated. A lack of shared communication patterns (a potential solution to the such matters) could further exacerbate issues that could be detrimental to a trusting environment within a school. A trust crisis within a school could result from of a lack of internal communication, particularly if internal communities are not close-knit. Community members could employ the forming of “cliques” as a method of handling stress, which could also act as a means for people within that particular community to come together. A clique could be a method whereby a community establishes a level of trust within a particular small-group setting, although within that clique, the community's strength could be diminished.

Communication and Leadership as Sources of Trust Gaps

School principals are very important in shaping how trust works in schools. Leadership practices affect how organizations are set up, but also how people interact with each other every day, as well as how people think about authority and making decisions. Leadership is even more important in permacrisis, as uncertainty increases people's desire (if not outright need) for clarity, fairness, and comfort. Communication is a key way that leadership affects trust. Fair, consistent, and bidirectional communication are core components of convincing people that they are being treated in an equitable manner. People in situations where communication is unclear or unidirectional are most apt to develop distrust of one another. In situations where those in education are left out in decision-making and left with only general information about leadership reasoning, it is very plausible that distrust is developed. A distinction between instrumental and communicative rationality by Habermas (1971) in his work provides an appropriate framework to examine such situations. The aim in instrumentally rational situations is to speed up action, have control, and reach an objective. The goal in communicatively rational situations is reaching consensus between people. In most educational organizations, particularly those with higher demands pertaining to accountability, leadership practices are biased toward the former.

Research indicates that teachers' trust in school leadership is significantly associated with perceptions of procedural justice, professional acknowledgment, and ethical coherence (Tschannen-Moran, 2015). When people think that leaders' actions don't match up with the values they share, trust gaps expand. Leadership practices based on discourse and shared responsibility, however, can increase interpersonal trust. Historical factors often make communication problems worse: prior conflicts, unresolved tensions, or adverse leadership experiences influence the interpretation of current practices. Trust builds over time and depends on the path taken in that time. Past experiences shape what we expect and how we react in the present (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). Closing trust gaps requires us to make technical changes while retaining awareness of the relationships that exist between schools.

The ongoing presence of trust gaps in schools poses an essential inquiry: how can educational institutions transcend the identification of a trust crisis to implement enduring strategies for the restoration and enhancement of trust? To answer this question, we need to change our focus from finding problems to creating the right conditions for trust to grow again. In this context, trust is not restored through isolated interventions but through coordinated practices that transform communication, expectations, and professional interactions. In a permacrisis, these kinds of plans need to be long-term, adaptable, and a part of everyday school life. Short-term managerial fixes or changes made to follow the rules are not enough to fix the relational aspects of trust erosion. Instead, strategies for building trust need to work at the level of school culture, changing how leadership works and how communication is set up.

Methodological Approach

This study used a qualitative research design to look into how people deal with trust gaps. Qualitative methods presented certain advantages with regard to insight into people's thoughts, feelings, and conceptualizations of trust, leadership, and

communication. Data collection was done using focus groups. This method is helpful to enable collective cognition as well as articulation of shared understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2024). A total of twelve teachers and two principals from two primary schools of the area of Patras took part in the study. The focus groups were voluntary; every school participated in three focus groups, each lasting approximately two hours. These were mostly concerned with the impact of school management and communication as major drivers of the lack of trust between teachers and school principals, what they thought they could do differently regarding their professional relationship, problems they have faced, as well as potential opportunities that could emerge.

Thematic analysis was conducted in accordance with established qualitative research methodologies. The coding process identified recurring patterns in areas such as rebuilding trust, relationship dynamics, leadership styles, and communication methods. Peer debriefing was employed to enhance credibility, by allowing researchers to compare their interpretations and refine thematic categories.

Findings: Trust Gaps as a Structural Condition and the Emergence of Trust-Building Strategies

Our focus groups underscore the complex process of trust in educational institutions as a situation that can be constantly felt, as opposed to a resource already in existence. This was rendered by the respondents' views that highlighted inconsistency surrounding the issue of trust as a possible reality that may not exist, especially within the context of transformation, as brought about by the perpetual state of uncertainty within the setting. This phenomenon becomes most evident during transitional periods, such as changes in school leadership. Teachers identified these instances as marked by nervousness and reluctance, observing that the lack of common norms exacerbated confusion in professional discourse. One participant stated, *"with the change in school leadership, trust was evidently absent; we were uncertain about the operational dynamics"* (T1, School A). In these situations, daily interactions were frequently influenced by caution instead of transparency, as teachers indicated a hesitance to articulate concerns or thoughts openly: *"you hesitate to speak when you don't know how things will be interpreted"* (T2, School A).

The lack of trust was interpreted as a "background tension" that made school management problematic. Ambiguity within communications and the tendency to attribute hidden intentions for the usual decisions created what one of the principals described as *"noise,"* qualifying it as a situation, *"in which people continually interpreted intentions into issues"* (H1). This evidence shows the existence of gaps of trust not only as disturbances in the processes of the organization, but as a feature of the organization itself.

Professional connections inside educational institutions further illustrated this environment of divided trust. Participants frequently highlighted that enduring interpersonal networks mostly remained intact, with trust functioning selectively within small, established groups rather than across the broader school community. A teacher remarked, *"I communicate with a small group"* (T1, School B). Trust deficiencies were particularly pronounced in the interactions between teachers and administration. Participants often differentiated between trust in particular

individuals and trust in the institution overall, highlighting the vulnerability of institutional trust within hierarchical institutions. As one teacher articulated, *"you may have trust in the individual, but that does not imply trust in the system"* (T4, School A). Principals recognized that despite enhancements in communication, fundamental suspicion frequently remained, observing that *"improved communication does not inherently eliminate mistrust"* (H1). In this context, professional collaboration seems to be based on pragmatic agreements rather than mutual trust.

The conditionality of trust was also apparent in how participants described school activities as a trust relationship. There was an appreciation that trust was substantially contingent on being consistent and confidential and on personal leadership practices. The participants emphasized how even the smallest mistakes (e.g., the spread of in-house school decisions beyond the school) would fatally undermine school trust levels in no time at all. One teacher commented, *"if decisions from meetings are spread beyond the school, trust levels degrade again"* (T1, School B). It was evident that leadership was an important trust-restoring factor in the study, and even this trust was personalized, being non-institutional trust in the principal.

Participants characterized instances of collaborative problem-solving and joint crisis management as transient measures rather than reflections of a robust trust culture. One teacher articulated this vulnerability by noting that *"we occasionally navigate crises collectively, but I am uncertain about the true stability of this situation"* (T5, School A). Such reflections indicate a school climate where trust functions as a situational resource rather than as an ingrained organizational capability. Participants clearly identified the issues that persistently hinder the establishment of trust. Protracted confrontations, informal coalitions, and unsolved histories were consistently identified as enduring obstacles. According to one teacher *"cliques and longstanding tensions do not dissipate readily"* (T1, School B). Age and professional socialization were regarded as factors that reinforced resistance to change, with older colleagues characterized by more rigid perspectives in contrast to younger personnel, who seemed more malleable. Ideological opposition to innovation surfaced as a persistent limitation, with certain members of the school community characterized as fundamentally resisting change. Principals affirmed that these obstacles are entrenched in school culture, highlighting that *"the school carries its past with it; culture doesn't change overnight"* (H2).

These narratives revealed a common acknowledgment of the lack of established frameworks for trust deficit resolution. Teachers' reliance on informal methods and individual goodwill was broadly regarded as inadequate for addressing ongoing skepticism. The empirical data do not indicate successful resolution of trust gaps, but their systematic mapping. In this context, trust-building frameworks -such as trust protocols- are not proven solutions but rather a prospective opportunity -a conceptual horizon for reimagining communication, expectations, and professional relationships within educational institutions.

Beyond Conclusions: A Fragile Trust in a Fragile Educational Institution

Our findings call into question the conceptual and administrative work of trust within educational institutions. Contrary to initial assumptions, our findings highlight the

structural, relational, and institutionalized nature of trust, rather than treating it as a resource or exception to be administered. They provide critical insight regarding how trust remains selective and conditional within educational institutions. Participants performances tend to distinguish between personal knowledge and institutional trust, indicating a situation characterized by collaboration and practical agreements, as opposed to collective belief in the institutional entity. the fragility and failure of institutionalized structures is particularly indicated through the personal nature of institutionalized trust and its association with particular administrators. This is especially true for those associated with hierarchical forms of management, and their failure to support institutional continuity through strong communication structures.

Our study also shows how deeply the trust gap is affected by the history of educational institutions. Conflict, networks, and a legacy of disillusionment and disqualification continue to condition contemporary relations. This reinforces the notion that the contingency of trust depends on past experience: attempting to engender cooperation cannot help but be bound up with the past history of the school itself. Neglecting this institutional quality risks continuation of a legacy of distrust, in the form of institutional neutrality or transformation. We also find evidence that the trust gap is neither only a matter of individual-level relationship nor one unconnected to communication strategy and institutional governance. Group unwillingness to open communication, fear of misunderstanding, and necessity of network alliances reflect the need for protective communicative contexts in educational institutions. In this context, communication itself has an operative, strategic (rather than dialogical) character, foregrounding the politics of risk and self-protection. It dovetails with the classic sociological critiques of the rationality of bureaucracy, where adherence and control take precedence over understanding and community-based meaning-making.

This study does not record the establishment of formal trust-building processes. It does, however, clarify the circumstances that render trust-building conceivable. Participants consistently acknowledge that informal goodwill and individual efforts are inadequate to bridge enduring trust deficits. This acknowledgment does not yield instant remedies. On the contrary, it indicates a developing inclination towards the necessity for collaborative frameworks that may anchor expectations, safeguard communicative practices, and diminish ambiguity. In this light, trust-building tactics emerge not as pre-existing instruments but as prospective opportunities, rooted in the experiential reality of distrust.

Sociologically speaking, this approach allows us to argue that the issue of trust-enhancing within educational institutions must be considered as a cultural and institutional issue -and not necessarily a technical one. Our findings suggest several implications for analysis: the need to move from personalized to institutional trust, the importance of the creation of communicative environments safeguarded by trust, the recognition of partial and provisional trust as a realistic situation, and the central role of leadership as a factor that facilitates, but does not produce, trust. The aforementioned implications frame, rather than instruct, the boundaries within which important trust-building activities may be established.

This study identifies trust gaps as a crucial framework for analyzing modern school organizations functioning in a state of permacrisis. By emphasizing insecurity, fragmentation, and conditional cooperation, the research challenges myths of rapid

restoration or managerial optimism. It underscores that trust is delicate, inconsistent, and perpetually negotiated. It is, however, specifically through the meticulous identification of these gaps that we establish the foundation for subsequent exploration of trust-building frameworks. Viewed in this context, the current study does not conclude the discourse on trust inside educational institutions. Instead, it initiates discourse by highlighting why trust cannot be presupposed and why efforts to address trust deficits must commence with a comprehensive understanding of the factors that generate them.

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Embedding Risk and Resilient Practices in Permacrisis: The Case of Greek University Students[1]

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of risk and resilience practices within educational contexts during the current era of permacrisis. More concretely, we explore how the crises continuum -debt, refugee crisis, pandemic, and energy/war- have fundamentally affect identity formation processes among young people. The research conceptualizes the notion of resilience, both at the individual level and beyond it, as a dynamic and socially constructed process. We propose that the connection between the familiar ("domestic") and the identities developed during the crisis ("exotic") creates the potential for the synergy of the resources of resilience, which can even reverse the effects of the crisis, such as depression, resignation, and aggressive behavior. This research contributes to the exploration of the ways in which educational settings can promote the culture of democracy and social cohesion in the midst of the crisis.

Keywords: permacrisis, resilience, risk society, identity formation

Introduction

The permacrisis phenomenon has significantly impacted institutional normality, resulting in crucial changes to the everyday lives of social subjects, particularly within educational contexts. Since 2010, European societies have experienced an unprecedented succession of crises: the Debt Crisis (2011-onward), the Refugee Crisis (2015-onward), the Pandemic Crisis (2019-2021), and the ongoing Energy Crisis worsened by war (2022-onward). This continuous state of emergency has embedded uncertainty and risk into daily life, threatening the social cohesion of Western European democracies (Tooze, 2022; Papadakis & Tzagkarakis, 2025). Greece, having experienced the full force of this continuum of crises, offers a particularly instructive case for examining how permacrisis shapes identity formation among young people.

As Beck (1996) noted, risk identities are the way individuals and social groups make sense of and experience the uncertainties of life. This includes, for example, how they make sense of and negotiate the potential threats associated with certain aspects of life in the modern world. Greek youth in the 2012-2020 period demonstrated

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[1] If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:
Gouga, G., Panagopoulos, E., Katsillis, M. & Kamarianos, I. (2024). Embedding Risk and Resilient Practices in Permacrisis: The Case of Greek University Students. In Katsillis, M. J. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual CiCea International Conference 2024 Education, Citizenship and Social Change: Building Bridges*, Tuesday June 13th – Saturday, June 15th, 2024, Malmö University; Malmö, Sweden, 288-297. Malmö University and Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association. ISBN: 978-91-7877-402-9.

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unprecedented levels of distrust toward institutions (Panagopoulos et al., 2024), marking the erosion of trust relationships in educational settings. The research interests of the global scientific community are increasingly focused on exploring the resilient potentialities that may be effective in managing the consequences of permacrisis (Sakurai & Chughtai, 2020). The subject of resilience is not new, however, as sociologists, economists, political scientists, and psychologists have been interested in this subject for decades (Masten, 2014; Rutter, 1993). What is new is the sociopolitical context, as permacrisis has introduced a new perspective on the concept of resilience, as Beck and Giddens described the concept of the "Risk Society".

This study conceptualizes resilience through multiple theoretical lenses. Following Métais et al. (2022), we understand resilience as a process determined by both individual and situational factors, involving the capacity to draw support from available internal and external resources when confronting adversity. Panter-Brick (2014) emphasizes resilience's cultural dimension—how access to social and cultural resources enables individuals to overcome difficulties. For Hunter and Chandler (1999), resilience exists on a continuum from "optimum resilience" (i.e., healthy behaviors, flexibility, self-esteem, sociality) to "less optimum resilience" (i.e., defense strategies, social isolation, emotional disconnection, aggression). Rutter (2006) describes resilience as relative resistance to environmental risks, emphasizing that controlled exposure to risk, rather than avoidance, may develop resistance. Given current concerns about social cohesion and democracy in contemporary European societies (Katsikas, 2025), we conceptualize resilience as possessing positive, focused, flexible, and proactive characteristics, allowing individuals to react to extremely challenging social situations. Resilience also encompasses risk awareness, risk protection, vulnerability reduction, and procedural competence that fosters identity reinvention to overcome obstacles to change and cultivate traits of a thriving democratic culture. Ultimately, we define resilience as the capacity for self-renewal over time through innovative measures (Rutter, 1993, 2006).

Theoretical Framework: Identity, Diversity, and Adaptive Resilience

The embedding of risk in one's life is a critical change in the process of identity formation. The creation of institutions that are fit for permacrisis necessitates the understanding of the interconnectedness of social, economic, and governance resilience (Lausberg, Maurice, & Rayner, 2024). Permacrisis is a reality that is perceived and felt, and this has a critical effect on one's sense of vulnerability and the tendency to view risks and threats to one's identity. Beck's (1996) concept of "risk identities" is a critical understanding of the way in which individuals navigate the risks and threats of one's life. This is a critical issue for young people, as their identities are in the process of formation. The experiences of Greek students are, for example, a critical example of the way in which the conditions of permacrisis affect one's identity. Indeed, they have been the subject of research regarding the conditions of the pandemic conditions influenced the formation of teacher identities (Zagkos et al., 2020, 2022) and how the permacrisis influenced the social exclusion (Gouga, 2022).

The "secure/certain" identity and "risk identity" pendulum now becomes an essential socio-cultural process for social cohesion. The dynamics of trust and dependency

relationships are the key to the formation of democratic participation, and the reformation of such relationships under the permacrisis scenario has critical implications for legitimacy (Budnik, 2018). In this context, the relationship with the process of identity and diversity cooperation becomes critical. Diversity and resilience are inextricably linked, with organizations and societies that value diverse perspectives developing superior resilience (Reinmoeller & van Baardwijk, 2005). Wilson's (1999) work on biological diversity, Nelson and Winter's (1982) evolutionary economics, and Silverberg, Dosi, and Orsenigo's (1988) innovation models all suggest that diversity generates resilience through multiple pathways.

For Bourdieu, cooperation outside identity boundaries generates new and synergistic resource recombinations that transform into adaptive resilience (Bourdieu & Wacquaint, 1992). In the identity-diversity relationship, the familiar becomes exotic and the exotic becomes familiar. Cooperation reduces uncertainty by distributing risk, leading organizations and societies to take responsibility for important initiatives toward new crisis-resistant democratic conceptions. Halapuu et al. (2013) offer empirical evidence that institutional trust is related to pro-immigrant attitudes, indicating that diversity is actually good for social cohesion, rather than damaging it. Hamel and Välikangas (2003) go as far as to say that the pursuit of resiliency demands a basic strategic transformation. Organizations, and by extension societies, that ride the storm of turbulence well, do so not by holding their ground, but by reinventing their business models, or in the case of societies, their identity structures. This is in line with Giddens' structuration theory, where structures are both medium and outcome of practice, recursively organized.

Research Context and Methodology

Social subjects under the consequences of the Permacrisis in Greek educational context have experienced the downgrade of Greek welfare structures (Zagkos, et all 2022). The Debt Crisis (2011-onward) produced dramatic funding reductions, family economic instability, and general questioning of meritocratic assumptions. The refugee crisis brought unprecedented diversity to classrooms and challenged national narratives. The pandemic forced rapid digitalization and revealed deep inequalities in educational access. The Energy/War crisis has renewed economic pressures and introduced geopolitical uncertainty into everyday consciousness (Panagopoulos, 2023). This is particularly salient as teacher resilience is a multidimensional, socially constructed concept involving interaction between personal experiences, professional tasks and values, professional relationships, and organizational norms (Gu & Day, 2007, 2013). Teacher resilience concerns capacity to maintain balance, work engagement, agency, and moral purpose in daily teaching reality, rather than focusing on recovery from trauma. Pre-service teachers may therefore offer insight into how resilience develops before full professional socialization.

We employed semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from just such individuals. Convenience sampling was employed, with observations selected from pre-service teacher students studying at the University of Patras. This group was chosen because they will pass on their resilience capacities, or lack thereof, to future generations, making their identity development socially impactful. Data collection

took place in spring 2024, after the end of official pandemic measures but amidst ongoing economic and geopolitical instability. Interviews explored participants' crisis experiences, identity perceptions, institutional trust, and orientations toward diversity. Analysis followed thematic procedures, identifying patterns related to risk perception, resilience strategies, and diversity cooperation.

Findings: Risk Embedded in Identity Formation

Thematic analysis of our data revealed significant characteristics of risk-taking and questioning of democratic institutions among participants. Students described their identity formation as occurring within "permanent temporary" conditions -never knowing which institutional framework would apply from one semester to the next. One participant noted:

"*We plan our lives like everything is normal, but we know it's not. We're just waiting for the next thing to happen.*" (S1/22 years old).

This orientation corresponds to what Giddens described as ontological insecurity - fundamental uncertainty about the continuity of self-identity and the constancy of social environments. Students expressed difficulty imagining futures, professional trajectories, or family formations with any confidence.

The future appeared not as a horizon of possibility but rather as a terrain of threat.

"I don't trust any institution. Government, university, media—they've all failed. The only trust I have left is in people who have survived different crises than me. With them, I feel we can build something truly resilient." (S5/21 years old).

Risk perception extended beyond personal concerns to institutional evaluation. Democratic institutions (e.g., parliaments, political parties, media) were viewed with suspicion -not as temporary disappointment but as permanent condition.

As another student pointed out:

"It's not that they failed us this time. It's that they can't fail us. The system itself produces crisis." (S2/23 years old).

This orientation echoes Suslovic and Lett's (2023) critical discussion of resilience theory, which argues that resilience discourse can inadvertently normalize adverse conditions.

"At first I was afraid of 'others' -refugees, immigrants, those who came from elsewhere. Then I understood: we Greeks lived through the debt crisis, they experienced war, others experienced the pandemic differently. When we share our stories, each of us becomes more resilient. Survival isn't an individual matter, it's collective". (S4/22 years old).

When resilience becomes the expected response to systemic failure, attention diverts from addressing root causes. Students' questioning of democratic institutions may not be representative of pathology but rather the accurate perception of institutional incapacity.

Students exhibited responses across the resilience continuum, consistent with Hunter and Chandler's (1999) framework. At the "optimum resilience" pole, some

demonstrated flexibility, adaptive distancing, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sociality. These students actively sought resources, maintained supportive relationships, and approached challenges as manageable. A concerning number of respondents, however, exhibited "less optimum resilience" characteristics (e.g., social isolation, emotional disconnection, denial, aggression, or violence). One student described:

"*…I don't trust anyone. Not friends, not family, not teachers. Everyone is just trying to survive…*" (S7/21 years old).

This survival orientation, while arguably adaptive in immediate crisis, may prove maladaptive over time, potentially leading to mental disorders and adaptability problems later in adulthood (Hunter & Chandler, 1999). Between these poles, most students occupied ambiguous territory, oscillating between resilience strategies depending on context. This finding supports Luthar's (2006) observation that resilience may apply to one life domain but not another. A student might demonstrate academic resilience while suffering psychological distress -what Fleming and Ledogar (2008) describe as resilience's domain-specific character. The most promising finding, however, concerns students' positive orientation toward cooperation with diversity.

"Greek students my age, we all have the same story. Same crisis, same fears, same limited imagination for solutions. But when I talk to someone from Syria, or even from another European country, they see things differently. They've survived things I can't imagine, so they know possibilities I can't see." (S6/22 years old).

Despite generalized institutional distrust, students expressed openness to engaging with "exotic" identities -those whose crisis experiences differed from their own. Refugee students, international students, and those from different regional or socioeconomic backgrounds were viewed as potential resources rather than threats.

This orientation supports Bourdieu's insight that cooperation outside identity boundaries generates new and synergistic resource recombinations. Students described how engagement with diverse perspectives revealed alternative coping strategies, different risk calculations, and unexpected sources of meaning. The "exotic" became familiar through sustained interaction, while previously "domestic" assumptions appeared newly exotic when viewed through others' eyes (Bourdieu & Wacquaint, 1992; Kurasawa, 2004).

Crucially, students reported that diversity cooperation reduced uncertainty by distributing risk. As one student noted:

" … I only rely on people like me, ... if crisis hits us all the same way, we all fall together. But when (my network) … includes people affected differently, someone always has something left … to help … to share." (S7/22 years old).

This resonates with Gartland et al.'s (2019) systematic review, which explored factors related to resilient outcomes for children exposed to social adversity. Supportive relationships, community connections, and opportunities for meaningful participation have been shown to predict resilience. Bridging practices for university students establish exactly that.

This pragmatic orientation, toward diversity as a resilience resource rather than a moral imperative, may prove more sustainable than idealistic multiculturalism.

Discussion: Toward Adaptive Resilience in Educational Contexts

Our findings contest the prevailing individualistic notions of resilience that dominate educational discourse. Psychological techniques focus on individual attributes and coping mechanisms, but students' experiences reveal that resilience is inherently communal in nature. Resilience arises not from personal strength but from network structures, resource availability, and the quality of relationships. This corresponds with Anderson's (2015) identification of resilience's ambiguous political nature - encompassing both individual adaptation and systemic capacity. Corry (2014) delineates the transference of resilience language from ecology to security studies and education, encompassing assumptions of system persistence that may be unsuitable for human social circumstances. Foucault's (1988, 2008) examinations of governmentality and biopolitics indicate that resilience discourse may serve as a neoliberal strategy, shifting accountability from institutions to individuals. Educational institutions must consequently refrain from limiting resilience to an individual psychological endeavor. They should acknowledge resilience as an institutional obligation - establishing settings that enable diverse students to access resources, cultivate supportive relationships, and collectively develop adaptive capacities.

If diversity fosters resilience, then deliberately facilitating opportunities for significant cross-identity interaction serves as a resilience-building endeavor. This necessitates transcending superficial ethnic festivities in favor of enduring engagement with authentic diversity. Identity can be perceived not as a static entity but as an ongoing process of becoming (Deleuze, 1995). The fatigued individual of late capitalism- drained by the incessant demands of permacrisis- necessitates enhanced opportunities for self-reinvention, not more rigid boundaries. Educational institutions can promote this by introducing pupils to diverse individuals whose varied crisis experiences indicate alternative futures. This necessitates meticulous consideration of power dynamics. Cultural environment can either enhance resilience or confine individuals in a state of powerlessness (Panter-Brick, 2014). The findings hold significant importance for prospective educators. Frameworks for conceptualizing teacher resilience have markedly developed, acknowledging the contextual and dynamic nature of resilience (Zhang and Luo, 2023). Future educators who cultivate adaptive resilience through collaborative diversity are likely to establish classroom environments that promote comparable abilities in their pupils. Conversely, pre-service teachers demonstrating “suboptimal resilience” strategies (e.g., isolation, denial, and aggression) may replicate these behaviors in their professional practice. Teacher resilience, however, is a simultaneous capacity, process, and outcome (Mansfield et al., 2016a, 2016b).

This study contends that youthful (risk) identities are undergoing an am bidirectional transition from viewing themselves as domestic identities to embracing an exotic and diverse perspective influenced by the implications of Risk Society and Liquid Modernity. The transition from “domestic” to the “exotic” in this pendulum represents a socio-cultural dimension of Risk Society amid the daily experiences of liquid modernity. The transition from domestic to exotic and vice versa mitigates uncertainty by diversifying risk, fostering social networks among individuals and organizations (both state and non-state) that can assume accountability for significant

initiatives aimed at developing new crisis-resistant paradigms and behaviors. Integrating personal experiences, intellectual frameworks, and practices can facilitate the redefining of social constructs and foster resilience during crises. Educational institutions can enhance human resilience and rejuvenate democracy by promoting bridge practices and facilitating cooperation across home and foreign identities.

Ultimately, however, in embedding risk and resilient practices within the framework of permacrisis, it is essential to recognize that resilience signifies not a return to pre-crisis normalcy, but rather the ability for continuous self-renewal through innovation, including the innovation of engaging with others.

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