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Language Education for Refugees and Migrants

Master's Thesis

**Inclusive Education and Migrant Students' Sense of Belonging:
Challenges and Teaching Practices in the Greek School
Environment**

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Patras, Greece, January 2025

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Abstract

Since 2015, increased immigration flows have made Greek classrooms more diverse. However, many researchers argue that the Greek educational system remains ethnocentric, inflexible, and bureaucratic, failing to promote intercultural dialogue, cooperation, and students' sense of belonging. The lack of intercultural communication hinders feelings of acceptance and inclusion among students from diverse backgrounds, while monolingual and monocultural environments increase the risk of academic failure and social exclusion. On the other hand, inclusive practices can enhance L2 students' engagement, sense of belonging, and learning outcomes. This study explores issues related to inclusive education in Greece, focusing on challenges in intercultural education, factors influencing inclusion, and teaching practices that promote belonging. A qualitative research approach was designed to investigate those issues. Eight semi-structured interviews with primary and secondary school educators were conducted and analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings suggest that teachers have positive attitudes toward immigrant and refugee students but recognize language barriers and emotional needs as key challenges, though they do not report incidents of exclusion. Socioeconomic background, intercultural awareness, and teacher-student relationships emerged as key factors influencing inclusion. Effective practices identified include differentiated instruction, self-expression opportunities, intercultural activities and family collaboration.

Keywords: L2, teachers, sense of belonging, inclusion, teaching practices

Περίληψη

Από το 2015, η αύξηση των μεταναστευτικών ροών έχει καταστήσει τις ελληνικές σχολικές τάξεις πιο πολυπολιτισμικές. Ωστόσο, πολλοί ερευνητές υποστηρίζουν ότι το ελληνικό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα παραμένει εθνοκεντρικό, άκαμπτο και γραφειοκρατικό, αποτυγχάνοντας να προωθήσει τον διαπολιτισμικό διάλογο, τη συνεργασία και το αίσθημα του ανήκειν των μαθητών. Η έλλειψη διαπολιτισμικής επικοινωνίας υπονομεύει τα αισθήματα αποδοχής και ένταξης των μαθητών από διαφορετικά πολιτισμικά υπόβαθρα, ενώ τα μονόγλωσσα και μονοπολιτισμικά περιβάλλοντα αυξάνουν τον κίνδυνο σχολικής αποτυχίας και κοινωνικού αποκλεισμού. Αντίθετα, οι συμπεριληπτικές πρακτικές μπορούν να ενισχύσουν τη συμμετοχή των μαθητών δεύτερης γλώσσας (Γ2), το αίσθημα του ανήκειν και τα μαθησιακά τους αποτελέσματα. Η παρούσα έρευνα εξετάζει ζητήματα που σχετίζονται με τη συμπεριληπτική εκπαίδευση στην Ελλάδα, εστιάζοντας στις προκλήσεις της διαπολιτισμικής εκπαίδευσης, στους παράγοντες που επηρεάζουν την ένταξη και στις διδακτικές πρακτικές που προάγουν το αίσθημα του ανήκειν. Σχεδιάστηκε μια ποιοτική ερευνητική προσέγγιση για τη διερεύνηση αυτών των ζητημάτων. Διεξήχθησαν οκτώ ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις με εκπαιδευτικούς πρωτοβάθμιας και δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης, οι οποίες αναλύθηκαν μέσω θεματικής ανάλυσης. Τα ευρήματα δείχνουν ότι οι εκπαιδευτικοί έχουν θετικές στάσεις απέναντι στους μετανάστες και πρόσφυγες μαθητές, αναγνωρίζοντας ωστόσο τα γλωσσικά εμπόδια και τις συναισθηματικές ανάγκες ως βασικές προκλήσεις, αν και δεν αναφέρουν περιστατικά αποκλεισμού. Η κοινωνικοοικονομική κατάσταση των μαθητών, η διαπολιτισμική επίγνωση των εκπαιδευτικών και οι σχέσεις μαθητή-εκπαιδευτικού αναδείχθηκαν ως βασικοί παράγοντες που επηρεάζουν την ένταξη. Τέλος, οι αποτελεσματικές πρακτικές που εντοπίστηκαν περιλαμβάνουν τη διαφοροποιημένη διδασκαλία, τις ευκαιρίες για αυτοέκφραση, τις διαπολιτισμικές δραστηριότητες και τη συνεργασία με την οικογένεια.

Λέξεις - Κλειδιά: Γ2, εκπαιδευτικοί, αίσθηση του ανήκειν, ένταξη, διδακτικές πρακτικές

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1. Introduction

Refugees and immigrants face multiple challenges that affect all aspects of their lives, personal, economic, professional, social, legal, educational, and psychological, and all of these challenges are multifaceted and interconnected, determining overall well-being. There are over 120 million people around the world who have lived the migration experience. According to the common categorization to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, a refugee is someone who has been forced to leave his/her/its home mainly because of war, violence, and danger of life, being unable to return until they can be safe. An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking international protection but has not been legally recognized as a refugee. Finally, immigrants are those who make a conscious decision to move to a foreign country without the danger of life and dignity in the country of origin (Amnesty International, 2024).

In literature, the term 'migrants' is usually used to cover all individuals who moved abroad temporarily or permanently, even though there are major differences between them, in opportunities in education, social inclusion, and the labor market. In many cases, refugees and unskilled economic immigrants face social exclusion and multiple challenges in residency, workplace, and language learning (McGaham, 2020).

At the end of 2024, there were 122.6 million people who were displaced due to war, violence and violation of human rights. Those who are under recognized refugee status are 43.7 million people. The number of children and youths who have been displaced or migrated is approximately 47 million. The total number of international migrants is estimated at 281 million people, of which 41 million are under the age of 20, and 21% live in Europe. In 2023, around 55.700 children moved to southern European countries, such as Greece and Italy (UNHCR, 2024).

In Greece, in 2020 the total number of children with refugee and immigrant backgrounds was estimated at around 44.000, but only 13.000 children of school age were enrolled in formal education. There is also a rapid decline in school enrollments, from 12.867 in 2019 to 8.637 in 2021. Finally, in March of 2023, there were 2.374 unaccompanied minors in Greece, living in reception centers, settlers, and semi-independent apartments (Karavas, 2024). According to Hunt (2021), unaccompanied minors in Greece in many cases do not attend school, due to administrative barriers and the living conditions of the minors in closed centers and refugee facilities (Khalifa Aleghfeli & Nag 2024).

The increased migration flows of the last years at the global level, due to economic, social and political factors, have gained increased research and academic attention. Migration studies have a dynamic development, while depending on the time period, the scientific research focuses on different aspects of migration. According to the literature review by Pisarevskaya et al. (2024), in the 1990s the most frequent in publications were the characteristics of migration flows and migration populations, followed by research on socio-economic status of migrants in resettlement countries and work-related issues. During the period 1998-2007, topics related to immigration from Africa and Asia and religious diversity were of increased interest.

From 2008 until today, according to the researchers, the trends show a high interest in topics related to the subjective experience of immigration, personal narratives and mental health. The research topics related to forced migration, immigration policies and the social

integration of refugees and immigrants in host countries, and related subsections such as access to health and education structures (Nishimura & Czaika, 2024) have also a significant place. According to Coco and Kim (2023), although there is an interest in current research on the educational conditions and rights of refugees and immigrants in host countries, as well as their social inclusion and mental health, topics related to education and inclusion require more attention for many reasons.

Education is considered a crucial tool for people who have faced previous negative experiences to be able to gain supplies necessary for their social inclusion and general well-being, however, a large amount of research shows that in many cases refugee and immigrant students attend schools that are unprepared to meet their educational and linguistic needs, and do not allow students to fully develop their skills or to gain the maximum learning experience. Also, according to Cun (2020), further research is needed about teaching practices and alternative school methods towards second language acquisition (SLA) and school inclusion, as in many cases, teachers seem to be ill-prepared to work with students who do not know the language or have adjustment difficulties due to lack or limited previous school experience.

The present study aims to explore issues related to inclusive education, focusing on teachers' practices towards refugee and immigrant students' sense of belonging and challenges in second language (L2) students' inclusion in the Greek school. Dryden - Peterson (2023), highlights the importance of further research about practices on enhancing refugee and immigrant students' sense of belonging in school environments, because, although many educators are more informed in our days than in previous years about inclusive techniques, they are not always easily applicable in practice.

Additionally, Bennouna et al. (2021) point out that further research on inclusion is needed, as academic literature on school inclusion and the sense of belonging of refugee and immigrant students ignore or under-examine processes of cultural exchanges in school classrooms and the necessity of deep intercultural understanding from teachers. For students from different cultural backgrounds, their resettlement can be stressful, especially when they face isolation and their cultural identity is disregarded and not concluded in the learning process.

In summary, this paper clarifies the theoretical framework related to refugee and immigrant students' school inclusion and teaching practices that foster the development of a sense of belonging in the school community of second language learners. In the research part, a qualitative research method will be used to collect, analyze, and interpret data from teachers' interviews about their practices and the challenges they face during the learning process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intercultural education

In education, since the late 1990s, the interest in intercultural approaches has increased due to the high number of second language students in schools. As cultural diversity continues to increase, schools worldwide experience the complex challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity as there are still questions about whether schools promote intercultural dialogue to meet the emotional, social, and educational needs of all diverse students.

Intercultural education has its roots in the USA since 1960, as a new approach in education targeting to address language difficulties and overall school performance of immigrant students, and is connected to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, African Americans demanded social justice and equality, and their histories and contributions to be reflected and recognized in the school curriculum. During the next years, other minorities, such as Mexican Americans and Native Americans, also demanded their history, experiences, and hopes to be included in education curriculums. In 1968, after students' protests, Chicago introduced one of the first educational programs to include in the curriculum, Afro-American history. In 1974, the US Supreme Court ruled that students with immigrant backgrounds whose mother tongue was not English had the right to equal access to school and learning support, which contributed significantly to integrating multicultural practices in many schools (Musser, 2021).

However, according to Banks (2013), during the 1980s decade, teachers, theorists, and activists started to realize the reformation of the school curriculum to include different ethnic and racial groups was necessary but not sufficient. Articles of DeCosta (1984) and McCormick (1984) at *Theory Into Practice*, stressed that simply integrated multicultural information cannot promote equitable access to education and support for non-native English speakers if there are no efforts towards a more comprehensive school policy, which would contain community participation, counseling programs, institutional materials, and new teaching styles and strategies.

Intercultural education is a wide term that refers to the approach that identifies, accepts, and targets to the social equality for all students regardless of their race, class, gender, or disability. Intercultural education is related to educational functions of socialization at global, national, and individual levels and sets as its main target the creation of a suitable background for deep intercultural communication and equal relations (Govaris et al., 2013). The key prerequisites of intercultural education according to Hatzisotiriou and Angelidis (2016) are the cultivation of critical attitude towards social norms and roles, the development of communicative skills and the acceptance of differentiation in ethnical, cultural, linguistic identity. Therefore, intercultural education sets the basis for recognition of cultural diversity through the right for all students to create, define and express their personal identity. Elias and Mansouri (2023) emphasize that self-determination should be developed into an environment of intercultural exchanges under critical reflection instead of uncritical information sharing. In other words, the self-determination and self-expressions should be done in a context where individuals not only acquire knowledge of different cultures but also develop the ability for analysis of the multiple intercultural correlations.

In the examination of intercultural education, the concept of cultural syncretism is crucial, according to Sorkos et al. (2023), because it requires mechanisms of deep understanding and critical correlations in order students to be able to create new ideas and to recreate their cultural identity through the equal participation to the educational processes.

According to Catarci (2021), Intercultural education should be examined in the light of an international policy about an educational project and a political perspective. An educational project refers to specific actions that target negotiation in relationships between people in all dimensions of their lives: cultural, economic, social, and political. It is a matter of creating an education system that establishes the conditions for equal opportunities in education, work, and sociopolitical rights. In intercultural education, the term access contains school enrollment as well as equal opportunities for positive learning outcomes and participation in the school community, through the response to language barriers, cultural differences, and inclusive curricula that reflect and respect students' identities. Thus, access to education in this context supports academic achievement, social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and mutual respect among students regardless of their backgrounds (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2023).

A political perspective is related to the connection between school access and the future of our societies under the principles of democracy, pluralism, and social justice. Education becomes a collective effort toward the future society we want to create, and the intercultural perspective of education leads to social communication and rethinking the existing social norms and practices, as the presence of people from different sociocultural backgrounds reveals structural issues. This approach leads to further and essential questions about the values and functions of our societies.

United Nations report (2015) points out the matter of sustainability, which has become a crucial part of intercultural education during the last few years. Seventeen goals towards sustainability have been proposed, with several proposals about issues related to intercultural education. According to the report, vulnerable people, including those with disabilities, all children, the elderly, immigrants and refugees, Indigenous people, and those who live with HIV/AIDS, must be empowered. There is a commitment to inclusive and qualitative education at all levels, from early childhood up to vocational training and lifelong learning, for all people regardless of their gender, age, race or ethnicity, language, and disability to have opportunities to acquire necessary supplies for social participation and access to work and rights.

Education is recognized as a fundamental factor for a safe, sustainable, and interdependent world. The content of education must be appropriate to this direction, meaning it should provide all students with knowledge about sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, intercultural communication, and an appreciation of cultural diversity. However, a newer report from 2020 (UN, 2020) points out that after the Covid-19 pandemic education functions have been worsened, and existing educational inequalities have been widened. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the percentage of children and adolescents who would not attend school decreased from 26% in 2000 to 17% in 2018. In 2018 almost 258 millions of children and young were excluded from education. In 2020, more than 190 countries around the world proceeded to close schools, offering, in many cases,

distance lessons, but at least 500 million children and young could not have access to this method. Those populations lost not only the learning opportunities, but the access to a safe environment far from violence and the access to school meals and health services.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015; UN 2020) analyses the role of intercultural education in the scenario outlined for sustainability until 2030. An important point is that intercultural education does not refer to an education for a few newcomers or second language (L2) learners, but is an education for all students, including those with immigrant and refugee backgrounds. A second fundamental element is that intercultural education should focus on the creation of foundations for the development of equal, open, and dynamic relationships and interactions, as well as the cultivation of critical thinking, as the necessary prerequisite for those interactions.

Also, during the learning process, it is crucial to take into account that intercultural interactions take place between a majority and a minority. That is, there is always a communication context of power relations that are not distributed equally among groups. According to the UN's report, intercultural education should be examined through the prism of the interdependence of the two groups, where participants are in a constant dialectic relationship and issues related to immigrants become common to everyone. For this reason, policies should be addressed to everyone taking into account the multiple differentiations. As a consequence, the emphasis on qualitative education for minorities leads to better educational results for the total educational population and the general population.

2.1 Intercultural Education in Greece

In Europe, Intercultural education varies significantly between European countries, both in terms of policy frameworks and teaching practices and school realities. These variations often reflect differentiations in historical, political, and social backgrounds that shape each country's approach to intercultural education and inclusion of students with refugee and immigrant backgrounds. Some countries, such as Belgium, Britain, the Netherlands, France, and Portugal have a rich tradition of integrating diverse cultures due to their colonial pasts, while other countries have a strong dependence on foreign workers. For example, Germany, after World War 2, hosted millions of foreign workers mainly from Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia, and many of them settled permanently, which affected German society and culture. Scandinavian countries in the past were more homogeneous, but now they could be characterized as culturally diverse societies.

In terms of educational programs, the first examples of intercultural education in Europe can be detected in Sweden around the 1970s, with the term internationalization, which meant the interest in the so-called Third world, human rights, and the unfair distribution of global resources. Only after the middle of 1980s the term intercultural education started to gain importance and have wider use during the increased number of immigrants. In other countries, such as Finland the term internationalization preceded the terms multiculturalism and interculturalism. In Finland, education focused on human relationships and intercultural dialogue after the 1990s decade. The term intercultural education in Germany appeared in 1990 decades, five decades after the massive immigration flows in the country. Before 1990,

Germany followed an assimilative policy for students with immigrant backgrounds (Holm & Zilliacus, 2009).

In Greece, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the term multicultural education began to gain prominence due to significant demographic changes, including an influx of immigrants and refugees and Greek returnees from the former Soviet Union and a smaller number from Europe and the USA. Multicultural education was more commonly used before the broader concept of intercultural education became prominent. The introduction of Law 2413/1996 highlighted the need for an educational system that promoted social inclusion and equality.

The shift from multicultural to intercultural reflects a broader understanding of the importance of a deeper dialogue between cultures and aligns with global trends in education, where the focus has moved towards intercultural understanding and cooperation and the inclusion of all diverse students (Halari & Georges, 2016). According to Sotiropoulou (2020), before the increased immigration flows in Greece during the 1990 decade, Greece was considered falsely a culturally homogeneous society, despite the historical presence of the Muslim minority of western Thrace and the country's Roma population.

The first state arrangement relevant to the attendance of immigrants in public schools was Decision 1105/1980, which established the function of reception classes within public schools and was addressed to Roma students and returnees. There were changes about reception classes and re-regulations with Law 930, issue B/14-12-1994, and Law 1789, issue B/28-09-1999, where those classes could have further support. Law 2413/1996 recognized the multiculturalism as basic characteristic of the Greek society, and Decision 1789/1999 regulates the teaching of Greek language as a second language and the necessity of language learning for all students. The law emphasized the importance of teaching the Greek language to all students, as a crucial tool for their social inclusion. Also, the law highlighted the need for a specific curriculum, teaching materials and teachers' training to address the challenges of intercultural education.

The latest legislative amendment about reception classes was made with Law 3879/2010, which renamed and expanded the scope of activities in these support departments. Through this law, the institution of Educational Priority Zones (ZEP) was introduced, having as a purpose, according to IEP (2014) the equal participation and inclusion of all students, through supportive actions for improving L2 students' academic performance.

Since 2015, with the increased immigration flows to Greece, the school population has become more diverse, and reception classes and the function of priorities zones could not meet the educational needs of L2 students. Law 4415/2015 tried to introduce new details about the function of the school, pointing out that intercultural education is relevant to the cooperation and interactions between different cultural groups, targeting in a democratic function of the school, equality and social inclusion. Also, the Ministerial Decision 131024/D1/2016 established the Dual Language Education Programs (DYEP), for the support immigrant students in their language development and academic progress.

However, according to Giavrimis and Dimitriadou (2023), the Greek educational system is an inflexible, bureaucratic system, that follows a monocultural approach, does not promote intercultural dialogue and cooperation, and students' sense of belonging. Greek school reality is based on monolingual and monocultural approach, away from the principles

of inclusive education and cultural diversity. The lack of intercultural communication cannot lead to feelings of acceptance and belonging among students from diverse backgrounds. Also, according to Karananou et al. (2022), students in a monolingual and monocultural environment are at a greater risk of academic failure and social exclusion. On the other hand, inclusive practices can improve L2 students' engagement, sense of belonging and learning outcomes.

According to Triantafyllidou (2011), the Greek educational system is characterized by ethnocentricity and difficulty in recognizing and promoting values of interculturalism, affecting the school and social inclusion of students with different cultural backgrounds. The Greek school is focused on creating an environment that maintains and reproduces the national identity through history, language, and major ethnicity, leaving no space for cultural experiences and histories of different ethnicities. L2 students rarely have the opportunity to participate in intercultural activities and express their own identities. The Greek school, following in many cases the assimilation model, faces the differences in language, religion, and culture as a problem of minority students, who are expected to leave behind their linguistic and cultural background and adopt the Greek identity.

The assimilation model is the oldest model of managing diversity, according to which students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are an educational problem to be solved. Linguistic diversity is considered a barrier that can exclude students from the teaching procedures, and students, to have equal participation to local peers, must ignore the cultural characteristics that lead to diversity. Assimilation is achieved through intense and absolute L2 learning for diversity to be eliminated. Also, in the assimilation model, the responsibility for learning outcomes is on migrant students, not the school and the broader educational system. School curricula remain the same, without any adaptation, which would promote intercultural dialogue and respond to the needs of all diverse students. This way, students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds can be accepted by their peers and be equal parts of the school community only if they exclude those characteristics that categorize them as diverse, such as language, religion, and customs (Sapountzis, 2013).

On the contrary, according to the principles of intercultural education, the educational system and teachers are responsible for adopting the teaching materials, practices, and goals according to the needs of all diverse students. Teachers are called to plan a learning condition where all students' characteristics will be present and visible, such as language and culture, and to promote intercultural dialogue and equal participation during school processes, to support L2 students' social inclusion, personal empowerment, and well-being (Valianti et al., 2020).

According to Androulakis et al. (2018), despite the legislative changes, the Greek educational system seems unprepared to include students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds and ensure a positive learning outcome. Many migrant students cannot attend any kind of formal education due to the determination of a minimum number of students in Reception Classes for Refugee Education (DYEP), the lack of language support, the delayed or insufficient staffing with specialized teachers, protests from the locals and general bureaucratic problems and delays. Those who attend public school are often excluded from access to important parts of the cognitive capital because the Greek school is organized based on a monocultural approach. L2 students have as the only option to internalize the dominant

cultural element of the Greek school, as the Greek system does not recognize the necessity of teaching alternative languages, histories, and cultures. The educational policy, therefore, follows a monolingual and monocultural approach, unable to include different languages and promote the dialogue between all students' cultures.

Through monolingual and monocultural practices, the Greek school seems to underestimate the importance of students' home languages in their cognitive, social, and academic development. This weakens students' identities and leads to unequal participation during the learning and social processes in the school context. L2 students are forced to use the target language exclusively, depriving them of the right to express themselves and participate in their linguistic and cultural capital. Migrant students are exposed only to the Greek language and to learning material and activities that have been designed for students whose first language is Greek, causing, in many cases, low academic performance, high percentages of school dropouts, and socially excluded (Maligkoudi et al., 2018).

According to Kesidou (2004), a basic reason for the difficulty of the Greek educational system in managing diversity is the perceived homogeneity of Greek society. The perception of uniformity affects educational policies toward practices that promote ethnocentrism, exclusion of diversity over the promotion of the dominant language, traditions, and practices, restriction of language rights, and pressure for all minorities to adopt the dominant culture, rather than the mutual respect, dialogue, and coordination.

Evidence data from the Greek area show that teachers in primary and secondary education have positive attitudes toward intercultural education and the importance of the emotional and cognitive engagement of L2 students during the learning process. However, regarding the attitudes toward the use of migrant students' prior knowledge and cultural and linguistic background in school, it seems that Greek teachers believe that the presence of migrant students should only be accompanied by the learning of the Greek language as the necessary prerequisite for social and learning inclusion (Sgoura et al., 2018).

Agelopoulou and Manesis (2017) found that primary teachers in Greece face as an obstacle the previous linguistic and cultural experiences of their migrant students and the behavior of their parents, as it is shaped based on their different backgrounds. Regarding the practices teachers use to include students with refugee and immigrant backgrounds, they focus on emotional support to students and practical directions to parents rather than intercultural practices during the teaching process, such as less homework for L2 students and differentiated teaching. Also, teachers do not recognize their role in addressing students' needs and challenges in a multicultural environment. Factors that affect teachers' attitudes and practices are gender, age, studies, years of experience, and training relevant to second language learning. According to researchers, women teachers under the age of 40 with a master's or doctoral degree seem more positive regarding using alternative methods to respond to the needs of all diverse students in class.

According to Nomikou (2023), the national educational policy for immigrant and refugee students has many weaknesses and inadequacies, which are a consequence of the limitation of funds for education, the restriction of material resources available for schools, the centrally organized educational policy, and the working conditions of teachers. After the economic crisis in 2009, Greek educational policies were determined based on austerity

measures and economic reforms imposed by the European Union, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Despite the positive legislation shifts, intercultural education in Greece has faced many obstacles, such as reductions in material support, resources, and staffing of educational structures. The national budget for education was reduced by 35,6% between 2009 and 2015, resulting in severe shortages in schools for teachers or teachers who work as substitute and hourly-paid employees.

2.3 Inclusive Education

Inclusion is a multidimensional term referring to many areas of social life, such as education, policies, and employment. In the field of education, inclusion is mainly used to indicate a school that is accessible for students with disabilities. Still, in recent years, it has expanded to include all students who are at risk of exclusion and discrimination, including immigrant and refugee students, religious minorities, and other conditions of vulnerability such as poverty, gender, and sexuality. For those students, school inclusion does not only mean access to school but also the requirement that schools meet their social and academic needs (Bhatia & Singh, 2021).

Education must prioritize an alternative approach to ensure that all students, regardless of their linguistic, social, and cultural background, abilities, and needs, have the same opportunities at academic and social levels. This approach targets a constant reform of educational practices and, as a result, the transformation of society. Historically, the notion of the right to education was first adopted in 1948 in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to education. Article 28 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of the United Nations of 1966 recognizes the universal right to education for all children without exception. In Greece, children's rights to education are governed by national policies and international conventions. The Greek educational system includes compulsory education for all children aged 4 to 15, regardless of socioeconomic background, gender, nationality, or other conditions (Naskou-Perraki, 2012).

The notion of a school for everyone or school without exclusions started to be used in 1990 during the International Conference of Unesco in Thailand in 1990 and was established during the Salamanca Declaration in 1994. Inclusive education was considered a necessary process for all students to have equal access to education regardless of their differences, targeting to meet students' educational and social needs and supporting them to develop learning and social skills. For that purpose, schools must be flexible and adapt according to the needs of students, allowing differentiated teaching practices and support at all levels, emotional, learning, and social (UNESCO, 1994).

According to Angelides (2019), for a successful inclusive education, teachers and educational systems must focus on adapting curricula and being flexible instead of focusing on students' difficulties and deficiencies. Also, for every child should be recognized the intrinsic right to education and should be given the support to succeed a sufficient level of education proficiency. Every student has a unique personality, characteristics, tendencies, capabilities, experiences, and educational needs, which should be recognized and respected to support their equal participation in school.

School inclusion refers to the institutional management of learners, their place in a specific social context, and the completion of the individual in relation to society as a whole. Therefore, the attitude of other social group members in which the individual participates is decisive in shaping the inclusion conditions. Also, the way a person will be included in a new environment, and the procedures for completing inclusion are related to how they will approach this new environment, how they are related to new cultural elements, and the process through which they internalize values, attitudes, and ideologies. Inclusion is a multidimensional process having as its essential elements the socialization, which is related mainly to familiarization with social norms, values, and behaviors as well as the creation of social relations, the recognition of their cultural inheritance along with the new culture, the active participation, the emotional acceptance and access to rights and opportunities (Giavridis, 2022).

Individuals shape their social and personal identity through negotiation strategies, which include integration, where persons accept dominant norms and adjust to the new environment passively and without having equal opportunities to express themselves or without a sense of belonging, and the newer approach of managing differentiation according to which inclusion is based on the acceptance and respect of others the cultural capital. Migrants' inclusion is a two-way route of mutual adjustment; the host country respects migrants' background, including language and religion, and provides them equal rights to other citizens, and migrants respect society's rules.

According to Pugh (2018), immigrants whose characteristics visibly differentiate them from the dominant group are more likely to face social exclusion. Immigrants who face discrimination relevant to their sociocultural background are likely to hide or change some of their identity differences, or they minimize their participation in aspects of social life, such as friendship or school. Studies relevant to migrants' social exclusion show that their resettlement has many adversities, mainly discrimination, restrictions on housing and employment, poor relations with locals, and lack of interpersonal support. According to Gu and Ho (2024), Africans in Hong Kong are represented in the media as criminals, inferiors, and carriers of disease, which reinforces social exclusion and discrimination. Researchers point out that the matter of language has not been sufficiently investigated in its role in social exclusion processes, even though it seems that language functions as a connecting link between individuals and society, and migrants with poor L2 skills are more likely to be excluded than those with advanced linguistic skills.

School inclusion refers to adapting the educational process according to the principles of equality and justice in accessibility and resources. Inclusive education focuses on educational practices that target the recognition of diversity, elimination of prejudices and stereotypes, and equal opportunities for school participation regardless of students' characteristics and sociocultural background. However, students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds are at higher risk of exclusion in school, at social and educational levels, affecting their socioemotional well-being. Peer relationships have a crucial role in children's and adolescents' social and emotional skills development, representing one of the most important reference groups. Peer acceptance in school may refer to occasional social interactions or deeper emotional relations with frequent contact and participation in common activities in the classroom and outside the school (Cavicchiolo et al., 2023).

For immigrant and refugee students and their families, resettlement experiences are connected to school enrollment and educational processes, which are crucial for the feeling of stability, security, and overall well-being. When diversity is part of an educational system deliberately, methodically, respectfully, and with management strategies, all students acquire better social, collaborative, and creative skills. On the other hand, in educational systems that do not follow practices of promoting intercultural collaboration and communication, students' ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences may lead to racism, exclusion, violence, and poor academic performance. In school environments where educational policies and practices give different opportunities to all students, newcomers are excluded from social interactions, have fewer learning opportunities, and face discrimination in and outside schools.

Justice in education is connected to a friendly and welcoming school with clearly stated goals toward all students' protection, equal opportunities and well-organized practices against marginalization. For immigrant and refugee students and their families, resettlement experiences are connected to school enrollment and educational processes, which are crucial for the feeling of stability, security, and overall well-being. When diversity is part of an educational system deliberately, methodically, respectfully, and with management strategies, all students acquire better social, collaborative, and creative skills. On the other hand, in educational systems that do not follow practices of promoting intercultural collaboration and communication, students' ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences may lead to racism, exclusion, violence, and poor academic performance. In school environments where educational policies and practices do not give the same opportunities to all students, newcomers are excluded from social interactions, have fewer learning opportunities, and face discrimination in and outside schools.

Justice issues related to inclusive education could be categorized as distributional and relational. Distributional justice refers to access to education with equal opportunities, resources, curricula, and teaching practices designed according to the learning needs of newcomers. Relational justice refers to broader power structures that promote inequality and support the culture of oppression and exclusion. Educational systems that promote inclusion create the necessary conditions for empowering vulnerable students, socially and academically, and through educational policies and programs, prevent discrimination and create the necessary conditions to eliminate racism and promote participation and a sense of belonging (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2021).

Children with immigrant and refugee backgrounds are a vulnerable group of students due to the difficulties of migration itself, along with the vulnerability of the young age and the psychological unpreparedness to face the multiple challenges before, during, and after the journey of resettlement. A large number of immigrant families face poverty, a condition that is associated with school problems, such as higher rates of dropout, emotional vulnerability, and poor peer relationships. School dropout, even though it increases during adolescence, is the result of a non-inclusive school environment starting from students' first school experiences, and research shows that the thought and tendency to leave school may be present since elementary school. Frequent predictors of school dropout are poor learning outcomes, socioeconomic background, peer relationships, and sense of belonging to school.

Low family income and poverty affect students' school inclusion and may lead to school dropout due to stressors such as family conflicts, poor quality of life, moving house, and low self-esteem. For immigrant students who face poverty, the positive school climate and support from teachers may work as protective factors against dropout and absences from school. Also, although research has not adequately studied peer relationships as a protective factor against school dropout for local students, for migrant students, it seems that it is of high importance and may affect or prevent school dropout. Migrant students who attend a school with strong relationships with their peers and participate in group activities tend to feel welcomed and have higher self-esteem. On the contrary, migrant students who attend schools that do not promote inclusion and intercultural participation have lower rates of school engagement, lower academic achievements, negative self-esteem, and higher rates of school dropout (Bianchi et al., 2021).

Approaches to inclusion focus on students' deficits with any form of diversity instead of an approach based on the actual needs of all students. A deficit-based approach usually means that students are expected to change in contrast to the socioecological approach, which focuses on the interactions between students' characteristics and school requirements. Educational systems must adapt to interactions in and outside the classroom to meet all students' learning, social, and emotional needs, including school, extracurricular, and community activities (Amor et al., 2018).

Although there have been changes in education policies toward intercultural education in European countries, teaching practices in the classroom do not always promote equal participation for L2 students who face multiple social and learning challenges, including acculturation stress, which refers to the stressful feeling during the adaptation to a new culture (Fandrem et al., 2021). Studies support that people tend to feel more stressed when there are many differences between their cultural characteristics and the host country's culture. However, students show lower levels of acculturation stress when they have social support and participate in inclusive school environments that foster motivation and support second language development (Rania et al., 2014).

School Inclusion usually refers to access to formal education for all students, regardless of their cultural and learning background; however, in recent years, the concept of inclusion has been broadened, as it has become clear that the co-existence of all students in the same school is not enough without the social orientation of education. Loremen (2009) considers the participation of all students in school activities and being equally successful socially as their peers as a prerequisite for inclusion. Access to education for minority students without social support maintains social exclusion and broadens differences in the quality of learning experiences. The relationships, experiences, and dynamics developed during the learning processes are crucial factors for students' inclusion, including relationships with peers, teachers, and all involved.

Interactions and climate between students and teachers are fundamental elements for learning, emotional and social support, affecting learning outcomes, second language acquisition, self-esteem, behavior, commitment to school, and peer relationships. Studies have shown that teachers tend to react to students according to their migrant background, having fewer interactions with migrant students than the locals, and they tend to be more critical, correct them more often, and change attitudes depending on students' ethnicity. Even

though teachers accept multiculturalism in classrooms, they seem to give fewer opportunities to ethnic minority students during the learning process, and they do not build interpersonal relationships with them (Ortega et al., 2020).

Teachers have lower expectations of immigrant students and do not use motivational practices, reinforcing the sense of exclusion. Teachers expect that students with immigrant backgrounds will have lower learning performance than the majority, making judgments based on stereotypes of society for specific ethnic groups. Four dimensions have been proposed for teachers' attitudes toward ethnic minority students. According to the first dimension, the stereotypical expectations, teachers who have low expectations for students with different ethnic backgrounds do not encourage minority students to participate in activities that they consider to be more difficult and believe that they will not succeed. The second dimension is related to teachers' multicultural beliefs and their awareness of the use of multicultural differences in the classroom. Teachers who are multiculturally aware are interested in meeting their students' differences, allowing all students to express their multicultural identity, and supporting their social and learning development through cooperation and intercultural dialogue. These teachers organize educational activities based on the needs of students, being less or not at all influenced by stereotypes.

The third dimension refers to willingness and enthusiasm regarding the coexisting presence of students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Teachers with the elements of willingness and enthusiasm increase student motivation and are more likely to create a positive classroom climate where all students are equal group members and have equal opportunities to achieve positive learning outcomes. The third dimension relates to teachers' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the belief that teachers can recognize cultural differences in their classroom and use them to support learning and reduce differences due to social inequalities and different social backgrounds. Self-efficacy also relates to teachers' belief that they can manage multiple classroom challenges. It has been shown that teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy follow a more student-centered teaching model, supporting student inclusion and autonomy. In contrast, those with a lower sense of self-efficacy have less strong relationships with students and follow a teacher-centered approach that does not provide opportunities for autonomy and collaboration (Glock, 2016).

School is a place with intense and complicated dynamics, and teachers are called upon to face many challenges arising from the increased needs of immigrant students, who must learn the new language, follow the curriculum and adapt to new social conditions, and manage conflicts between students. These challenges are made even more difficult to manage due to the lack of resources and willingness by the educational systems. An important factor that can significantly determine the outcome and conditions of foreign language students' attendance at school is the attitude of teachers toward cultural diversity. Teachers who are influenced by ethnic prejudice may follow non-inclusive practices, imposing specific behaviors on immigrant students, separating them from the rest of the class, and marginalizing them. Ethnic prejudices are associated with lowered expectations for certain ethnic groups and define relevant behaviors by dominant group members.

Teachers who are sensitive to multicultural differences have more positive attitudes toward immigrant students and are more likely to use alternative teaching methods to include all diverse students in the classroom and to improve their learning and social skills.

Intercultural understanding, which is related to approaching diversity and interacting effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, is a supply for teachers to include immigrant students inventing ways to approach diversity, examining their resilience, and adapting their teaching to the needs of students rather than requiring students to adapt to new conditions (Zappulla et al., 2024).

2.4 Challenges in Intercultural Education

Every year, many children worldwide move to foreign countries and attend schools with different linguistic and social requirements than their countries of origin. Interaction with peers is not always sufficient to create friendly relationships, and immigrant students are likely to face challenges in learning as well. Basic obstacles that appear in intercultural classrooms are the language barrier, cultural distance, and the lack of motivation on the part of members of the dominant group to develop relationships with members of minority groups. For locals, differences with their immigrant classmates reduce the degree of comfort in communication due to the perceived lack of common ground, while for members of immigrant groups, differences create uncertainty and intercultural anxiety (God & Zhang, 2019).

Promoting school inclusion for students with refugee and migrant backgrounds poses many challenges for teachers and schools. Teachers are called upon to manage diversity and promote collaboration and intercultural dialogue, which is not always possible due to how education systems are organized in many countries worldwide. According to Juvonen et al. (2019), teachers often show discrimination against ethnic minorities in issues related to school rules, such as violence and delinquency, and lack flexibility regarding the teaching practices they need to follow to include migrant students. In addition to migrant students, sexual minority girls and students with disabilities and special educational needs are more likely to receive more punishments and criticism for behavioral issues, thus reinforcing negative stereotypes about these groups of students.

One of the most important challenges that can arise in multicultural classrooms is the lack of intercultural understanding and awareness among teachers, which can lead to reproduction of negative stereotypes about certain ethnic groups. Teachers unfamiliar with students' cultural backgrounds may have lower expectations and provide them with fewer opportunities to participate in the learning process, impeding their learning, personal and social development. Working in class with students from different linguistic, learning, and cultural backgrounds can be particularly challenging for teachers, because multicultural environments require alternative teaching practices often unsupported by curricula and educational policymakers (Naz et al., 2023).

Teachers in a multicultural classroom are called upon to enhance immigrant students' motivation and bridge the differences in behavioral and learning levels among all students using different approaches and alternative materials. In order to respond to the complex needs of their students, teachers must be appropriately trained, have a good knowledge of the student's proficiency level and interests, and dedicate more time to organize teaching plans. Consequently, teachers are called upon to accept and respond effectively to multiple roles, which can lead to increased professional stress and tension in teaching students from diverse backgrounds (Moses & Mohamad, 2019).

2.5 Sense of School Belonging

According to self-determination theory, which is a theory of human motivation, all students, regardless of gender, age, socioeconomic and ethnic background, have as their inherent characteristics the motivation and the internal need for social relationships and inclusion in the school environment. In contrast to other motivation theories, which focus on students' personal goals, expectations, or beliefs as predictors of successful or unsuccessful school inclusion, self-determination theory focuses on teaching practices and school climate as factors that activate students' intrinsic motivation, facilitating engagement and participation. Teachers can use students' intrinsic motivation to support social participation and learning progress. A key concept of self-determination theory is the sense of belonging, according to which students' intrinsic motivation for competence, commitment, autonomy, and relationship building are activated in environments characterized by safety, honesty, and equal relationships between participants (Reeve, 2012).

The sense of belonging is an innate human need for acceptance and inclusion that people strive to achieve by creating and maintaining meaningful interpersonal relationships. Belonging is defined as the feeling of acceptance, respect, and support within a specific social context, and it constitutes a symbolic space in which individuals feel familiar, comfortable, secure, and emotionally attached to other participants. Individuals who belong to at least one social network with stable foundations, such as their peer group, are very likely to have a greater sense of belonging than those without any social network. The satisfaction of the need to belong can act as a protective factor against other types of adversity, personal or social. (Antonsich, 2010).

Students spend many hours at school, and feeling a sense of belonging to the school environment is crucial for their development and emotional well-being. Sense of School belonging (SSB) refers to students' emotional connection to the school environment and the feeling that they receive acceptance, respect, and support from other members of the school community. Students with higher levels of school belonging appear to have better adjustment levels, well-being, academic achievement, lower dropout rates, fewer behavioral problems, and better mental health indicators. However, research has not shed light on whether a sense of belonging is associated with relationships with peers, teachers, or school in general. A positive school climate, perceived support from the school, good relationships with teachers, and equal practices can promote student participation, connection, and social identification (Encina & Berger, 2021).

The three main dimensions of school belonging are relationships with teachers, relationships with peers, and participation in school activities. In students who satisfy these three dimensions, the sense of belonging is stronger, enhancing the motivation of these students to participate in lessons and social interactions within the school. Research has shown that students with increased motivation have higher grades and more relationships with peers. Thus, belonging can be considered as the third factor in the relationship between motivation and achievement, as through belonging, students acquire more enhanced motivation and can achieve their learning and emotional goals (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

According to Pendergast et al. (2018), factors that can negatively affect the sense of belonging include school climate, adolescence, school culture, teaching style, disability,

learning difficulties, immigration, and low socioeconomic background. As a result, all students may feel excluded throughout their school years. For students from minority backgrounds, the risk may increase even further due to the multiple challenges they face, such as language difficulties, family difficulties, the stress often experienced by refugees and immigrants, and social issues such as socioeconomic status and racism.

An important issue affecting migrant students' sense of belonging is the perception of learning efficacy and academic achievement. Students who have active and frequent participation in the classroom and respond more efficiently to teachers' demands, such as homework, experience more positive emotions, such as happiness, calm, satisfaction, and belonging, compared to students who have less participation and fewer learning opportunities, who often experience feelings of anxiety, disappointment, disengagement, isolation, shame, and fatigue. Bad feelings can affect students' overall attitudes toward peers and school, leading them to social isolation and a sense of resignation.

2.6 Teaching Practices

The coexistence of students with a migrant background in school classrooms has traditionally been linked to the exclusive use of a second language and the total exclusion of the migrant students' mother tongue and other elements of their identity. Monolingual approaches have been dominated for years, regardless of the country and the educational system. However, in recent years, the importance of using the native languages of all students in the classroom has been increasingly recognized. By using all the linguistic resources of their students, teachers facilitate the learning of the target language while strengthening their motivation and self-confidence. Students whose mother tongue differs from the dominant language of the country of residence are more likely to have poor school performance, are at higher risk of school dropout, and have lower self-confidence than their peers whose mother tongue is the dominant language of the school. On the contrary, teachers who give space in the classroom for the use of more than one language allow students to use all of their linguistic resources to create meaning in a cognitively flexible way, allowing for the transfer of words, ideas, and meanings between languages (Krulatz & Iversen, 2019).

Some of the practices that have been proposed for multilingualism are co-language and translanguaging. Co-language refers to using multiple languages in classrooms with students of different linguistic profiles. Teachers organize activities allowing students to choose the language they want to participate in, ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students. According to translanguaging principles, all participants in a school classroom are involved in common processes that include all diverse students' languages. Through flexible activities, such as translating, comparing, and writing in one language and reading in another, students combine different languages, accept linguistic and cultural diversity, and recognize linguistic equality and all members' uniqueness (Duarte, 2020).

Teachers' practices can determine students' sense of belonging and contribute to achieving learning goals. According to Manning et al. (2022), teachers, in order to be able to organize and implement appropriate pedagogical methods, must be aware of the legislative regulations and curricula for intercultural education. They must also be able to utilize new technologies and alternative materials to respond to students' interests and enhance the

conditions for classroom participation and second language development. In multicultural classrooms, materials and teaching practices must be selected based on students' needs and specific characteristics. The diversity of students in terms of previous experiences and cultural, socioeconomic, and educational background affects how they respond to different teaching methods, their social adaptation, and their psychological well-being. Teachers who are aware of and accept the different characteristics of their students can contribute to their maximum cognitive and emotional engagement.

The use of collaborative learning is an effective inclusion practice because when students collaborate with their classmates with a common goal by offering their help and exchanging opinions, they improve their language and social skills, reduce their levels of anxiety and insecurity, and increase their participation since they do not experience uncertainty regarding the outcome. Furthermore, collaborative learning can reduce prejudices and exclusion due to cultural diversity as students working together for a common purpose gain mutual understanding, focus on common points with their peers, and develop a sense of community. Working in small groups can reduce tensions and conflicts among students who learn to appreciate the skills of others and discover new skills for themselves (Ferguson-Patrick, 2020).

According to Archambault et al. (2024), the teacher-student relationship significantly influences students' sense of belonging. Sharing positive emotions, trust, support within the school, and collaboration with parents can create a ground for social well-being and positive learning outcomes. On the contrary, teachers who do not seek meaningful communication with their students, do not discuss and are not interested in their feelings create in immigrant students a feeling of being insignificant or invisible in school.

3. Methodology

3.1 Worldview

This research focuses on teachers' experiences in Greece regarding the simultaneous presence of students with different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Having as its primary objective to investigate the challenges that educators face as well as the practices they choose to face the challenges and create a sense of belonging in students, this paper adopts the social-constructivist worldview, approaching the classroom as a dynamic field for the development and shaping of relationships and emotions between participants.

Social constructivism is a theory according to which people construct their knowledge about the world through interactions with others within different social processes. Personal perception and experience form the basis of learning, which is not perceived as something that must be discovered, but is built on existing knowledge and based on interactions and exchanges of meaning within the environment (Taylor, 2018).

Through social constructivism, influenced by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of the importance of social interactions in the development of individuals, qualitative educational research is defined and approached as a process of discovery through the active participation of the researcher and participants in constructing meaning. A social constructivist approach seeks to develop a deep understanding of the beliefs, judgments, perceptions, and goals

during the learning process. It is a holistic view according to which intersubjective practices are organized based not only on cognitive processes but also on the overall interactions within the school setting. Organizing research on issues related to education and teaching practices based on the principles of social constructivism allows the researcher to approach the way teachers construct their perceptions of students by challenging the researchers' preconceptions about what is important and selecting the questions to be investigated on issues under research. This approach to research allows for new understandings and the development of the ability to perceive and interpret ideas and interactions (kim, 2014).

Following the constructivist research paradigm, this research aims to highlight the way teachers perceive and address intercultural issues, focusing on their perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with refugee and immigrant backgrounds and the practices they follow to support their students emotionally and academically.

3.2 Research scope and research questions

The main objective of this paper is to explore issues related to the inclusion of immigrant students in Greek schools, specifically the challenges that emerge in a multicultural classroom and the practices chosen by teachers to overcome these challenges and create feelings of safety, acceptance, and equality in students.

The feeling of belonging is a basic human need that influences the actions of individuals and includes various concepts such as friendship, intimacy, trust, and acceptance. School belonging refers to the subjective feeling of students that they are equal members of the school community and that their characteristics are accepted and respected by others. For students, belonging refers beyond the simple presence at school and the perceived sympathy from members of the school community to the respect and support they can receive from classmates and teachers to develop learning, emotionally and socially. An important term is engagement, which refers to the energy children and young people devote to the school experience, for which the school's contribution is decisive. School practices can contribute to the degree of student engagement, thus influencing their performance in lessons and feelings of self-esteem and acceptance. Students with a high sense of belonging have greater interest in school activities, are more likely to have better academic performance, and report higher rates of trust and happiness (Grant, 2022).

In order to investigate the issue of belonging in the Greek educational system, the present research presents the results of eight semi-structured interviews with Greek teachers in primary and secondary education. The main research questions are:

1. What are the challenges in intercultural education?
2. What are the factors that influence students' inclusion and sense of belonging?
3. What are the teaching practices toward students' inclusion and sense of belonging?

To answer these questions, the interviews were organized to broadly address the issue of proximity within the classroom and teachers' emotional responsiveness to their students' diverse needs.

3.3 Research Approach

A qualitative approach was chosen to investigate the views and practices of teachers in Greece regarding supporting student belonging. This approach provides a direct and comprehensive description of the data, facilitating understanding the topic under investigation (O'Brien, 2019). According to Stenberg and Maaranen (2022), qualitative design is appropriate for educational research as it allows for the authentic documentation of participants' experiences and understanding of educational phenomena through teachers' insights. Qualitative techniques usually involve interviews and are very helpful in the field of education as they allow the researcher to understand the lived experiences of teachers or students in a flexible way that focuses on personal experiences and the meanings that people construct through their participation in educational processes.

Qualitative design in education is used to describe the experiences, motivations, and practices of those involved in the learning process. In the study of teaching practices, qualitative design offers an in-depth investigation of what teachers believe and why and how they choose to operate in relation to school context. Furthermore, the educational context is a space where complex issues emerge and is characterized by dynamic processes between those involved, data that can be accessed through personal reports, and the detailed and flexible exploration of subjective meanings (Delve et al., 2024).

Qualitative research is useful in studying a small and deliberately selected sample, allowing it to understand the issue under investigation in depth from the informants' perspective. In contrast to quantitative design, which emphasizes statistics and has as a starting point hypotheses that must be verified, qualitative design seeks to develop new topics for which research gaps exist. Another important difference with quantitative design is that no aspect of the design is rigidly structured, that is, the design remains open and flexible depending on the course and objectives of the research (Abbuhl & Mackey, 2008). In the case of the present research, there is a need to gain insight into how teachers perceive the challenges in multicultural classrooms and how they deal with those challenges in order to support students' sense of belonging.

3.4 Data Collection

In this study, the semi-structured interview method with open-ended questions was applied to answer the research questions with Greek teachers who have experience in intercultural issues and teaching second language learners. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a data collection tool because they offer the researcher flexibility to give participants space to freely share their experiences. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher can adapt the questions and add or remove some depending on the interview's progress, thus illuminating issues that were not initially foreseen (Creswell, 2016).

Research on teaching practices that promote students' sense of belonging in Greece is limited. For this reason, the main objective of the research was that the participating educators should not simply provide information but should be co-constructors of meanings and opinions regarding issues of interculturality and student well-being within the Greek

educational context. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to interact with the interviewees beyond simply obtaining specific information. According to the constructivist approach, research should not always be interested in an objective approach to the issues under examination but should aim at human experiences, interpretations, events, and behaviors. For the organization of the interviews in this research, the approach of Gubrium and Holstein (2012) was adopted, according to which initially, the researcher organizes an interview guide with certain questions that can be changed in the process, some can be added or removed, and the order of the questions can be changed depending on the discussion. The researcher approaches the interview process in a way that gives participants the freedom to speak freely about their opinions, concerns, and actions. The researcher has the role of discovering meanings through an active process in which participants do not simply feel obliged to answer questions deliberately but interact dynamically in a communicative process of discovery and reflection on specific issues.

The interviews with teachers were organized based on five categories of questions to investigate inclusion practices and challenges in the Greek school. The first group of questions concerns information about the teachers, such as teaching experience, training, and their students' nationalities. The second category of questions explores the challenges faced by educators. Through three initial questions, teachers were asked to express their views and feelings about the difficulties they may face in a classroom where students have ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or other differences. Six questions were organized regarding the needs teachers believe their students have and factors influencing inclusion, as complementary to the fourth and most extensive category of questions related to teaching practices. The identification or not of students' needs at the psychological, learning, and social levels was considered to be directly related to the issue of a sense of belonging as it reflects teachers' views on whether they should shape their practices based on the different needs of students. Finally, teaching practices are explored with a plan of nine initial questions regarding the practices teachers follow to enhance the participation of all students and promote belonging. 23 open-ended questions used as a guideline for the conversation (Appendix 2).

3.5 Sampling and Conducting the Interviews

This paper presents the results of eight semi-structured interviews with Greek primary and secondary school teachers. For the research aims, purposive sampling was chosen in order to collect data from educators who teach in classes attended by students with an immigrant background. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method used in qualitative research, in which the researcher selects participants based on their characteristics. The researcher selects the people who will participate in the research based on who believes will be competent and informed about the phenomenon of interest. Furthermore, the choice of purposive sampling gives the researcher the opportunity to select participants based on availability and willingness to participate to ensure that the appropriate number of participants is found (Golzar et al., 2022).

In this study, the basic criterion was finding teachers of general public education with immigrant children in their classes. Being a teacher in general classrooms is important because it illuminates the relationships between all students and the inclusive practices teachers may

use, in contrast to reception classes where students do not come in intercultural dialogue and communication with their local peers. The researcher chose schools that attend children from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. These are three primary and two secondary schools in the center of Athens and one secondary school in Chios. The first contact with these schools was made by telephone. The school principals were informed about the research, and the teachers who agreed to participate contacted the researcher to schedule telephone interviews. In two cases, the researcher directly contacted the educators he knew who had experience in multicultural classrooms and would like to participate in an interview. Six educators responded positively to the telephone communications with the schools. Eight interviews were conducted over approximately 15 days, from December 24 to January 10. The interviews were recorded lasted 25 to 50 minutes.

3.6 Participants' profiles

Of the eight participants, two are male, and six are female. All have teaching experience in classes with children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, ranging from eight to thirty years. All teach in general public school classes, three in secondary schools and five in primary schools in Athens and Chios.

Table 1 provides details about the participants in the study, including demographic information, professional profile, teaching experience, and the ethnic background of their students.

Table 1 Interviewees' profiles

	Years of Teaching experience	Education field	Specialty	Origins of Immigrant/Refugee students
P1	14	Primary	Arts	Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Syria, Afghanistan, African Countries
P2	19	Primary	English	Africa, Albania, Bulgaria, Syria, Pakistan, Moldova, Poland
P3	30	Primary	Teacher	Russia, Poland, Syria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, African Countries
P4	29	Primary	Teacher	Albania, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Indonesia, China
P5	21	Secondary	Philologist	Albania, Georgia, Bulgaria,
P6	13	Secondary	Philologist	Albania, Georgia, Rumania, Nigeria
P7	8	Secondary	Philologist	Albania, Russia, Bulgaria, Nigeria, Madagascar
P8	11	Primary	Teacher	Russia, Albania, Italy, Bulgaria

3.7 Data Analysis

According to the constructivist approach, the participants' statements reflect the way they give meaning to their experience. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interviews with the educators. It is a type of analysis and presentation of patterns extracted from the research data. In thematic analysis, the researcher identifies patterns through a detailed and deep understanding of the material. The aim is to extract meaning from the information that has been generated and to document and evaluate it (Sovacool et al., 2023).

The thematic analysis carried out in this paper followed the inductive method, based on which the findings are not predetermined, but the themes are extracted entirely from the data. After the teacher interviews were completed and transcribed, an attempt was made to understand the data in depth and to group them into possible themes, taking into account recurring patterns that allow data to be grouped. It was then examined whether the content of the themes was coherent and whether there was a clear distinction between the different themes. After the themes were defined and named, their content was detailed.

3.8 Ethical Issues

An attempt was made to address any ethical issues related to the research process. Participants were fully informed about the nature and purposes of the research and that the interviews would be recorded. All teachers' participation was voluntary, and they were informed that they had the right to stop the interview at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were also declared. Finally, consent forms were distributed to all.

4. Findings

This section presents the results of interviews with primary and secondary educators working in public schools in Greece. The findings are analyzed and categorized into five thematic units.

4.1. Challenges in the education of students with immigrant/refugee background

The teachers who participated in the research expressed a positive attitude towards immigrant students and their inclusion in Greek schools. All participants emphasized that immigrant students attending Greek schools do not face issues of prejudice and racism, unlike other categories of students, such as students with disabilities and obesity who often fall victim to school bullying, and their inclusion encounters multiple obstacles. Students with a refugee and immigrant background were generally reported to be included in the school community, and their presence in the classroom was not characterized as a barrier for any of the participants. Nevertheless, the teachers characterize the most important challenges as the language and the emotional needs of the students in combination with the curriculum, which significantly complicates the work of teachers in both primary and secondary education in Greece.

Despite the challenges reported by teachers, seven out of eight participants expressed that they do not find it difficult to work in multicultural classrooms, although it has some challenges and requires more work. One foreign language teacher reported that it is difficult for her:

P2: "Yes, very much so. Immigrant children have many difficulties at home, they are not supported. In my class, they behave badly, and their parents are not interested, they consider English to be a secondary subject".

1. Language

All teachers who participated in the survey reported that the lack of language proficiency of students is a significant obstacle to educational practice, either because it can create difficulties in communication between teachers and immigrant students and immigrant students with their classmates or because it makes the work of teachers more difficult at a learning level. Specifically, out of the eight teachers, the issue of knowledge of the Greek Language by immigrant students was mentioned as the first challenge by six teachers. According to the participants, when there are students in a class with poor knowledge of the Greek Language, issues related to the students' behavior may arise due to the difficulty in communication between the different language groups.

P1: "If students don't understand, they won't participate, they will make noise".

Language, except in the case of teachers teaching English and Art, was mentioned as a factor that makes teachers' work more difficult because it requires extra work for them to prepare the lesson in a way that is individualized and responds to the language level of all students. In fact, teachers organize some activities and exercises at different levels of language requirement.

P4: "it needs more work because I have to teach at different levels so that they can also participate... In language lessons and history, I simplify the questions so they can also answer".

P6: "When there are children who do not speak Greek well, the teacher has difficulty, many times I have to stop the lesson and explain something that for Greeks is known, this makes it difficult for me... I definitely have to work harder... I have to prepare 2 level exercises that are easier so that even the weakest students who don't speak Greek well can participate. The same goes for exams. I can't have one exam and give it to all the children because there are some who won't write anything".

A philologist (P5) who agreed that Language is the biggest challenge gave an example from a language report in which a migrant student wrote:

"You cannot communicate easily because the Greek language is difficult and makes you forget your mother tongue, which is very bad".

2. Students' emotional difficulties

The increased emotional needs of students due to the adverse living conditions and negative experiences of migrant students were mentioned by all teachers as important factors to be taken into account in education, as, according to the participants, learning outcomes are directly related to students' emotions. For teachers, it is important to recognize when students are experiencing negative emotions and traumatic events, as students' emotional difficulties often lead to behavioral problems, thus making teachers' work more difficult.

However, the students' emotional difficulties were mentioned as a significant challenge that makes educational work difficult, mainly for primary school teachers who work with younger children. Younger students who have experienced adverse situations related to migration express their feelings in the classroom with anger, aggression, and refusal to participate in the lesson.

P2: "Children who have difficulties and are emotionally pressured show aggression and cause tension and troubles".

P3: "It is important to be able to calm the children down from what they have faced and make them feel happy and lucky. They carry an enormous sadness, especially refugee children".

3. School Curriculum

All the teachers in the study, except for the art and English teachers, mentioned at many points in the interviews the difficulty they face in organizing the lesson on their own based on the needs of the students due to the large volume of material provided by the ministry. According to the participants, in a multicultural classroom, the teacher must have flexibility so that he can use alternative practices that will meet the needs of the students, promoting inclusion and positive learning outcomes through the equal participation of all students. The large volume of material that must be taught creates an additional challenge in their attempt to meet the demands of the class.

P3: "There is little time, we are overwhelmed by the curriculum. All these endless grammar exercises do not help at all".

P4: "This is very tiring. I have the curriculum chasing me".

4.2. Needs of immigrant and refugee students

The second theme that emerged from the interviews with Greek teachers is the needs of immigrant students as perceived by teachers and the means they use to identify them. All participants stated that it is important to know students' needs. Regardless of students' age, teachers believe that children's emotional needs are the most important because of their complexity and because emotional needs influence and determine social and educational needs.

Emotional needs included the need for acceptance, security, and equal treatment. Teachers believe that the emotional vulnerability of immigrant students is due to the traumatic experiences that many children have experienced but also to the adverse conditions that accompany their lives in the present. Factors causing disadvantage included the financial

difficulties of immigrant families and job instability or long working hours, resulting in parents being away from home for long hours. These situations are considered to worsen school adaptation and undermine the learning outcomes of immigrant students. The economic differences they have with Greek students increase inequalities in the classroom. Children and adolescents whose families face financial difficulties do not have the same support as native students, who, in addition to the help they have from their parents in studying, are often supported by tutors and teachers at home.

P4: "Usually, due to the fact that many migrant students are also in a difficult financial situation, parents are forced to be away from home for long hours, working or looking for work. Unstable situations at home... We have a stable home, a job, a mom and dad. For these children, home and relatives are not a given. They clearly have more needs. They don't have a mom or dad who will sit down and help with the lesson".

P6: "In many cases, parents work long hours so they may not cover their emotional needs either. I see that many times children and especially girls from other countries are more likely to approach me to talk to me, they really need contact with adults, especially with female teachers. I suppose this is due to the fact that the parents work long hours or the parents may also have to face additional difficulties".

The economic difficulties of immigrants were mentioned as a factor that affects social participation and the overall development of children, as children from families facing economic difficulties receive less support to meet the demands of school but also on an emotional level due to the complex and intricate difficulties faced by their parents. They also have fewer opportunities for entertainment, such as travel, school trips, and theatre. In many cases, school is the only place for social participation, which is why it is vital that the school is a safe and supportive environment (P1, P3, P4, P6).

Identifying students' needs: Regarding the means that teachers use to identify students' needs, observation, the relationship with students, and collaboration with parents and fellow teachers were mentioned. All teachers mentioned the teacher-student relationship, directly or indirectly, as a necessary condition for teachers to recognize students' needs and organize their lessons in a way that meets these needs. Teachers describe themselves as friendly and accessible and believe that it is important for children to feel comfortable approaching them and sharing their problems and concerns.

P3: "I am friendly and accessible, the students feel comfortable talking to me. A child from another class has come and shown me bruises, without being my student. I hope I will be the same as I grow up".

P4: "I am the main teacher of the class, I identify them (the needs) from students' behavior. From their participation or non-participation in the lesson. So, I understand what is happening and I try to help as much as I can".

P6: "The financial needs are visible. As for the emotional ones, I talk a lot with the children, I try to create a relationship with them when I find time..."

they know that anyone who wants something can contact me so it is not difficult to identify the needs. The most basic means by which you can identify their needs is the relationship with the children, relationship and observation".

In addition to observation and the teacher-student relationship, teachers use group or individual activities in which, by allowing students to express themselves creatively and freely, the teacher can identify elements of the student's personalities and identify to address the educational and emotional needs of the students. The participant who teaches Art gave very interesting examples in which the students expressed emotions and needs through art.

P1: "I asked them to do their anti-portrait, that is, instead of drawing their portrait, to do what they think is the opposite of them. He drew a relaxed guy with a straw hat playing the guitar".

4.3. Factors influencing Inclusion and sense of belonging.

The interviews' analysis revealed that teachers recognize multiple factors that influence the inclusion of immigrant students and their participation in school, strengthening or weakening their sense of belonging.

1. Cultural background

Through their interviews, teachers state that racist incidents or exclusion of students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds do not occur in their schools. Three (P5, P6, P8) teachers stated that cases of isolation and negative behaviors occur against students with disabilities and overweight students.

P5: "The children who are most in danger of exclusion are the children with disabilities... and the kids who are overweight, those are the ones who have issues now, not the foreign language ones".

P8: "The children who experience difficult situations at school, the children who are usually targeted are the disabled children mainly or the overweight ones. Immigrants are not targeted, or at least I haven't seen it".

However, two (P3,P6) of the participants report that among immigrants, those who are at greater risk of receiving negative comments are students of different color, mainly students from African countries.

P6: "...maybe some small comments could be heard about color".

P3: "...this shows the culture of their parents and is not theirs. 'You are black, I don't want to sit with black people.' ...In the 25 years I have worked in schools, there has not been a huge issue, there have been very few incidents.

P7: "The students' different ethnic backgrounds can be a reason for conflicts only when the students are of a different color. Balkan students or the students from Georgia... do not have a problem."

Furthermore, teachers clearly distinguish students from Balkan countries, whose integration does not encounter significant obstacles due to the common cultural elements of the Balkan countries with Greece, from the rest of the immigrant students. This is partly due to the fact that Balkan students are more numerous in the schools in which the research was conducted and partly to the fact that the common cultural elements that the Balkan countries have with Greece help students from these countries to be included more easily in the Greek school. The common cultural elements help students to communicate and collaborate more efficiently and can function as a support for teachers, giving them valuable tools to organize intercultural activities and enhancing participation in the classroom. Related examples are presented in the next topic of the analysis.

P1: "Balkan culture is closer to us than people from Syria, Afghanistan, or Africa".

Another element identified from the interviews is that nowadays, the inclusion and sense of belonging of immigrant students is not hindered by different cultures as much as perhaps in the past due to the weakening of the concepts of culture, religion and national identity and their replacement by a globalized culture in which students become part of society through the internet and video games, such as Minecraft and Fortnite. The teachers mentioned the participation of all students in the same elements, regardless of their country of origin, as a facilitating factor for the sense of belonging. Thus, they participate in social networks not as carriers of the language, religion, and culture of their country of origin but as carriers of a common culture that is shaped through the internet.

P1: "Children are now exposed to a lot of computer images, everything has Minecraft as a common reference. Roblox. Some cartoons. Now there is the common culture."

P8: "I do not consider the other differences that children have among themselves, such as culture, important because the students are now all engaged in the same things, and they easily find their common interests and elements."

P6: "With children who are immigrants, Greek students will find their common ground, and you now know the common ground and what interests children is Minecraft, Fortnite, and all those games they play."

2. Economic and social factors

The economic difficulties of immigrant families living in Greece, as mentioned in the section on the challenges faced by teachers, are intense, according to teachers, and affect the social inclusion of students and their academic progress. Immigrant families often face financial difficulties that disrupt family functioning due to poverty and unemployment or the long absences of parents from home, who are often forced to work long hours to meet the family's needs. This results in parents being unable to support their children educationally and emotionally. Teachers reported that social and economic inequalities are evident in schools in

various ways. Immigrant students are more likely to have not done their homework, in contrast to Greek students who, in many cases, attend tutoring centers or have a teacher at home to help them. Also, parents who are away from home for many hours find it difficult to support their children's progress at school.

P2: "Many children attend tutoring centers and are more advanced, while others, especially immigrants, have never been taught English".

P5: "Many times I am a little strict towards them (parents). In students' homework, I chase after them to take care of their children because our life is not just work".

Economic difficulties also affect other areas of children's lives, mainly social participation and entertainment, risking the overall well-being of children and adolescents. Teachers reported that many immigrant students have never been to the theatre, are more likely not to go on a school trip and have fewer experiences of activities outside the home. When teachers and students share their news and experiences after the weekend, or a holiday, such as Christmas, immigrant students are more likely not to have experiences of excursions or activities to share with their classmates.

P6: "The economic difficulties of immigrants are evident, and I think it is the most important thing. You see it in many cases: in their clothes, in the school excursions that immigrants may not participate in, and in when we say our news. What they have to share is much less compared to the Greek students... The children from Albania, Georgia, and Nigeria, what they said is that 'we did nothing,' 'I was at home watching TV,' 'I was playing with my mobile phone.'"

3. Intercultural awareness of teachers and classroom climate

Based on the analysis of the results, all teachers consider it very important to know the culture of their students and to use elements from all cultures and the characteristics of the students in their lessons so as to create a positive and supportive climate in the classroom and for all students to feel equal and visible. One teacher raises the issue of teachers' working conditions, with permanency as a necessary condition for teachers to be able to get to know all their students essentially and in-depth. Substitute teachers do not have the opportunity to get to know the students since they change schools every year and may teach in several schools during the same year. The issue of time is also raised by other teachers, who argue that getting to know the cultural background of students is an ongoing process that requires daily contact with the students and is easier to do if the teacher is the main teacher of the class, rather than a specialist teacher (e.g., Art, English).

P1: "The problem is that there are 25 students in a class, and I have five classes a day. Building relationships with them is something that is cultivated over time. It cannot be done in one year."

P4: "Yes, I think it's very important "to know students' culture for these children to feel better, more familiar, more secure in the classroom and I take the elements to show the similarities with our own culture."

P6: "Yes, I am very interested in the background of the children I work with. I am interested in learning things from their culture, I also put a lot of pressure on the parents to speak to them in their native language, because you know, many immigrant parents speak Greek to their children."

Teachers also believe that their interest in their students' cultural aspects helps to create a positive climate in the classroom. By focusing on the common elements they have with their classmates regardless of origin, students can get to know and interact with each other. Knowing the identities of all students and using these elements in the classroom creates a positive climate in which there is no discrimination and exclusion, and students feel like they are part of a group.

P7: "They have financial needs, psychological needs, and learning needs, but when they come to a school and feel visible, everything else is kind of softened, at least for school hours, they feel that the differences they may have with other children, for example, 'other children wear better clothes than me or other children were on holiday at Christmas I didn't go'. But as long as they are at school, it doesn't exist. That's all we are all the same."

P8: "I like learning about different cultures. This also helps the classroom climate, we all know each other, and we know each other's information. I also include elements of my students' culture in the lesson, and it helps a lot to organize activities based on the characteristics of the children".

P4: "Habits, behaviors, knowledge, traditions, and how immigrant children tell their stories are all huge wealth we would not have had without them."

Furthermore, teachers' interest and attitudes toward immigrant students are reported to function as role models and influence other students' attitudes toward their immigrant peers.

P7: "I care about knowing that they are all equal, I treat them as equals, and that helps. And how other students think about their classmates. The teacher is often a role model for students. So if they see that I, for example, am interested in music from Africa or music from Albania, they automatically start to be interested too. Or in any case, they don't underestimate it."

4. Teacher-student relationship

All eight teachers who participated in the research, regardless of specialty and level of education, stated that they consider it an essential part of their job to build a relationship with their students in order to promote inclusion in school and a sense of belonging. The relationship with students is easier to build with the classroom teacher and teachers working long hours with the children than with specialty teachers or substitute teachers who change schools frequently. All teachers describe themselves as approachable and believe that it is important to build relationships with students and for students to feel comfortable talking to

them about issues that concern them. Other characteristics that teachers gave themselves were friendly, accessible and available.

P1: "I believe that the relationship with children is important. Children are not able to define their interest and their goals without support. So when they feel emotionally good, it helps them to concentrate generally in the lesson."

P3: "I am friendly and approachable, the students feel comfortable talking to me. A child from another class has come and shown me bruises, without being my student. I hope I will stay as I grow up."

All participants believe that it is important for teachers to be interested in students' psychological condition and be observant so that through a good teacher-student relationship, they can recognize when a student is experiencing unpleasant emotions or a traumatic event. They also believe that by being approachable, students feel comfortable talking to them about personal issues and know that they will receive support. All participants emphasized that while the learning outcome is important, they are equally interested in their emotions, as if students do not feel comfortable in class and there are issues that upset them, they do not participate in the lesson or create problems and tensions. Often, when students feel that teachers do not respond to their emotional needs, they become aggressive and provocative towards them. The direct relationship between positive student emotions and positive learning outcomes was emphasized in many ways at various points in all interviews.

P4: "First you have to build a safe climate, for the child to have a good time, to feel good and then on this you will build knowledge. Knowledge cannot be built on an unstable psychological environment."

P5: "When some parents are violent towards their children they ask me for help. A girl had said 'I can't take it anymore, I'm going to kill myself'... The children know that I am available at any time, they come to the office and can say anything they have a problem with."

P6: "I know very well that if a student is not having a good time, he will not learn and will make life difficult for you too, they will make a fuss in the classroom, aggression, intensity... It is not difficult to understand the students if you are observant. You will understand it ... you will see that someone is not participating, you will see that someone is not talking, you will see that someone is not writing, you will see that someone is not playing during the break."

P7: "If you don't care about the psychology of the students, you don't care about the learning outcome of the students either. These two are connected."

4.4. Teaching practices that promote the sense of belonging

Through the interviews, teachers reported practices that promote participation and a sense of belonging among students with migrant backgrounds. Initially, all eight primary and

secondary school teachers believe that it is important for students to feel comfortable in the classroom and to be happy. Students' positive feelings are linked to increased participation and a sense of equality and acceptance.

P2: "They definitely have to be happy, that also helps with learning."

Teachers believe that it is important for their lesson to promote belonging and underline that it is something that requires continuous effort, but seven out of eight participants believe that through their practices, they support students' inclusion and create feelings of familiarity, stability, and equality. Only one teacher who teaches English in primary school expressed doubts about whether she promotes belonging through her lesson due to the economic inequalities that affect foreign language proficiency in Greek schools. Specifically, she stated that English is an undervalued subject in Greek education. Students learn English in tutoring centers, so economically disadvantaged students who cannot attend tutoring have lower performance, promoting and accentuating inequalities. All other teachers stated that they promote belonging or hope to promote it, although for immigrant students belonging is a continuous process and encounters more obstacles for immigrant and refugee students. As an important indicator of students' feelings, their participation and their positive or negative reactions in the classroom were mentioned.

P3: "I want to believe that they feel that we are all a small family."

P4: "Belonging is a continuous process and much more difficult."

P5: "I think every teacher wants this. I think it is possible."

P7: "...now in third grade this kid laughs. He talks louder. He's not afraid... So this difference in laughter for me is an indication about belonging."

1. Differentiated teaching

All participants mentioned the need for differentiated teaching when there are students with different social and educational needs in the classroom. Since in the multicultural classrooms in which the participants work, students have significant differences in terms of language acquisition level, background, and overall learning experience, teaching practices should be adapted and shaped based on the needs, interests, and abilities of the students. The most common practices of differentiated teaching were reported to be the formulation of exercises at multiple levels, the addition of closed-ended questions, such as multiple-choice questions, and the possibility for students to choose the number and type of exercises they want to do. Teachers also select tasks and activities based on students' interests, such as football.

Differentiated teaching through exercises containing students' interests or adapting exercises and tests at multiple levels of difficulty is considered to enhance participation, increase students' self-confidence, and prevent tensions in the classroom.

P7: "I can't have one exam and give it to all the students because there are some who won't write anything... When you let students feel like they're just spectators... in the end they find other ways to exist. They'll make a fuss, they'll bother their classmates, and they'll be defiant towards

me because they feel like I'm not doing anything to support their participation."

P8: "When you include things that interest and concern them and they can talk about them, they participate more easily."

2. Self-expression activities

Among the teaching practices mentioned as enhancing participation and a sense of acceptance and visibility in the classroom are self-expression activities, that is, activities that take place in the classroom and through which students can express elements of their personality, thoughts, feelings, preferences, and experiences. Self-expression practices cover a large part of teachers' daily practices and are applied orally and in writing. They are organized to strengthen written and oral speech and support student communication.

Regarding free oral expression in the classroom and communication between students, teachers consider it challenging, especially at younger ages. What concerns teachers is whether students will all be able to follow the topic of the discussion and how they will return to the formal lesson after a period of discussion among themselves. In order to enhance oral language and the ability to communicate with classmates or perhaps to solve issues that concern children, teachers set aside specific times during the week when dialogue can take place in the classroom. Teachers argue that they must be flexible to support students' need for communication, free expression, and interaction.

P5: "They may have seen something in the news and of course we comment on it, because how can I motivate them to become more active citizens if I don't do these things and stick to grammar?"

P7: "We have a lot of discussions about the children's interests, we have discussions about their countries of origin..."

Furthermore, it was expressed that through self-expression, immigrant students are more likely to use the L2 orally and then in writing. Teachers encourage students to talk about themselves, such as their family, interests, and favorite animal, to strengthen students' self-esteem, enrich their vocabulary, and motivate them to learn the more complex elements of the Greek language, such as grammar and syntax.

P6: "...the best practice for belonging is to let them talk about themselves, their experiences, what they would like to do, and what they believe... Of course, we want them to write, but if they talk, in the future they will write too."

Teachers mainly use written self-expression activities to support student participation, in which students are encouraged to write about themselves, their interests, and their experiences. One such example is having students talk about their stories, using a literary work as an example:

P4: "We wrote a text about Penelope Delta's Mangas, who was on a ship, and I asked them to tell me about their own experiences with ships and traveling. They have a lot of experiences."

In reading and comprehension activities, teachers, especially in older elementary and secondary school classes, ask students to express their views or share a personal experience with questions such as: "What would you do in the author's place? Have you experienced a similar incident?" (P6).

3. Cooperative learning

All participants recognized the importance of cooperative learning in participating and including migrant students, but there were varying results regarding group activities. Teachers working with younger students, from first to fifth grade, choose to use fewer group classroom activities. They believe that students have difficulty cooperating with each other and that tensions are likely to arise.

P2: "Not too much unless I see that the class can handle it. Although I recognize that group activities can be very helpful, I don't use them most of the time."

In sixth grade and secondary school, educators choose group activities more often. They even emphasize that within the group, immigrant students feel more confident and use the second language (Greek) more effectively.

P6: "It's hard for the children to cooperate, but as long as they don't fight, I do it. It helps immigrant students."

An example of cooperative learning is the speaking contests, where students are divided into groups and given a topic in the form of a statement (e.g., electronic games promote war). Half of the group members have to argue for and the other half against this statement (P5). One of the participants (P8), who teaches sixth grade, has placed the classroom desks so that four students sit together, allowing for conversation and collaboration in all subjects.

In contrast to small group activities that teachers avoid because they believe they cannot manage them, activities in which the whole class participates as a group are quite often chosen, which are organized on the occasion of an event, such as Christmas, national holidays, and Valentine's Day. Some examples of such activities are the chain of wishes, where each student makes a ring with wishes, and Valentine's activity, where each student has to say something nice about the classmate whose name was chosen in a draw.

4. Intercultural Activities and Cross-Cultural Competence

Intercultural communication and cooperation are characterized as necessary conditions in a multicultural classroom in order to ensure good relations between all students and between students and the teacher. All educators state that they are interested in knowing the cultures of the students and using these elements to make the lesson more interesting so that all students participate and are supported emotionally, educationally, and socially. In addition to supporting and giving immigrant students a sense of belonging, teachers argue that through intercultural activities, all participants benefit since they gain knowledge, become open-minded, learn to cooperate and overcome prejudices. Depending on the class and the subject taught at each time, all participants in the survey mentioned several examples of activities that include elements from different cultures, such as language, music, literature,

and folk tradition. In the youngest primary school classes, students and teachers talk about different countries, say good morning in different languages, listen to songs, and play games from the students' different countries. Teachers encourage students who were born in Greece and have no contact with their parents' country of origin to be interested in knowing and present elements of these countries to their classmates. With the various elements from the students' countries, the teachers and their students make books and hold informal intercultural celebrations with various types of music and food.

P3: "We have a book that we made with fairy tales from their countries."

Another example was given by one of the participants (P4), a fifth-grade teacher who gave the students a stuffed fox, Foxy, and they did an activity they called "Foxy's Journey". Each child takes Foxy home for a week and records what Foxy saw and did with the student, including the foods, habits, extracurricular activities, and trips. The students note what they did, take pictures, and present them to their classmates every Friday. Together, they write about Foxy's journey in a notebook. This helps the students get to know each other and learn about habits and practices from other families, as well as customs from other regions when the student and Foxy travel.

The philologists (P5, P6, P7) who teach language and literature to high school students use elements of the students' culture in their lessons to show the common elements that exist between traditions but also to enrich the knowledge of all students. The literature lesson stated that it is easier to present the traditions of other countries, asking students to bring fairy tales, poems, legends, and myths from their countries. Especially with the Balkans students, the class identifies several common elements with the Greek tradition, such as the poems Bridge of Arta and Of The Dead Brother.

P5: "They realize that we are one and we have nothing to separate us, neither as nations nor as people."

A philologist (P7) who knows how to play the guitar asks students to look for songs from their countries or their place of origin in Greece and learn to play them before presenting them to the class.

5. Translanguaging

Teachers expressed very positive views regarding the simultaneous presence of children with an immigrant background and the need for elements of the children's culture to be visible in the classroom. Although it was reported that they encourage students to know elements of their culture and disagree with immigrant parents speaking Greek at home, in the classroom, they do not allow students to speak another language than Greek with few exceptions. The general picture from the interviews is that teachers feel insecure about what students can say to each other, and they fear that the use of other languages is done so that students can speak badly about their classmates or the teacher.

However, there are some cases where the use of other languages is encouraged in the classroom, and teachers recognize that the use of students' mother tongue functions as a support for inclusion and a sense of belonging, such as some greetings in different languages. According to one participant, using students' language during the first period in Greece and not knowing any Greek helps students adapt better to school and participate in the lesson.

She gave a recent example where a student from Georgia was supported in his language in language lessons (P5).

According to other teachers, older students do not feel comfortable speaking or hearing their language in the classroom because it makes them feel different from Greek students (P6, P7, P8).

6. Project-based learning

Five of the eight teachers reported using project-based activities in school and as homework to enhance student participation, creativity, and collaboration and support L2 use through organized projects based on student interests and characteristics. Examples of project topics included music, food, and football. To implement the projects, teachers assign topics to groups of children, ensuring that the groups rotate so that students have collaborated with all their classmates by the end of the year. The projects are presented in class as a group, which is particularly helpful for students who do not have good language skills to feel confident in the group's safety.

P7: "...we have also done similar projects on music, food, the children really like these and even those who seem to get bored when I have to ask them to look up information on the internet, they all do it, there is not a single one who will come and say 'I didn't do it.'"

7. Collaboration with families

Collaboration with parents is considered necessary by all the teachers in the study. However, two of them, the teachers of specialty subjects, state that they do not collaborate closely with parents because their subjects (Art, English) are considered secondary by the students' families. The remaining teachers distinguish between Greek and immigrant parents, stating that unlike Greeks who are only interested in grades, collaboration with immigrant parents is more significant and helps both the students and their families as well as the work of the teachers. Through collaboration with the students' families, teachers learn better about their needs so that they can respond to them. When students' families collaborate closely with teachers, they feel confident and secure as they can receive important information and guidance on practical issues and issues related to children's emotional and learning development.

P5: "We are doing well. The parents love me and I feel it."

P4: "Immigrant parents are not like that, they respect, they listen. They have a greater need for meaningful communication... If parents do not understand what you want to do with their child, you cannot move forward... It is important to have this channel of communication so that we know what is happening at home and they know what is happening at school. Immigrant parents focus more on behavior, not grades."

8. Materials

To support students and make the lesson more interesting, teachers use the internet a lot in the classroom to display audiovisual material. The use of audiovisual material is used to reinforce the lesson or the intercultural activities and discussions that were previously

presented with additional information and are accompanied by music, videos and images to make them more enjoyable for students. Interactive whiteboards or projectors support the use of the internet in the classroom. On the interactive whiteboards and projectors, teachers also project the class books so that students can correct the exercises themselves by seeing them in the book projected on the board. In addition to audiovisual material, one participant uses a balance ball (Yoga ball) that students can sit on instead of a chair, as she claims it helps reduce tension and hyperactivity (P4). Finally, a teacher (P2) in act-out activities brings realia to students: “objects like hats to make the lesson more lively and engaging.”

5. Discussion

The present qualitative research aimed to examine issues related to intercultural education in Greece, focusing on the challenges that primary and secondary educators face, the factors that influence inclusion, and the teaching practices that promote a sense of belonging. To investigate these issues, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, during which teachers expressed their views on multiculturalism in Greek schools, talked about the challenges they face, and discussed the practices they follow to create a positive classroom climate and promote feelings of equality and belonging for all students.

The participants reported that working in a multicultural classroom has several difficulties and requires teachers to work harder. However, they positively approach immigrant students and characterize their work as more meaningful and engaging. They focus on the positive aspects of multiculturalism, such as intercultural exchange and cooperation, and treat all students as equals while acknowledging the challenges. The two challenges most frequently mentioned are language and the emotional difficulties that immigrant students often face due to negative experiences and adverse living conditions. These challenges are further undermined by the curriculum defined by the Ministry, which, due to its large volume and its structure in a way that does not respond to the students' needs, constitutes an obstacle for teachers in their efforts to use alternative practices that will enhance cooperation and the inclusion of all students.

The language barrier is a common challenge for teachers that affects migrant students' academic progress and social inclusion (Karanikola & Nikolopoulou, 2024). It requires teachers to follow alternative practices and develop intercultural competencies so that students with a refugee and immigrant background are not excluded educationally and socially. Teachers often cite language as a key challenge in education and consider that the presence of students in the classroom who do not know the language sufficiently is an obstacle that makes it difficult for teachers to organize effective teaching. In order to achieve the connection between students with low knowledge of the second language and the learning requirements of each class, teachers need to work more, leveraging students' knowledge, experiences, and interests. Alternative materials, such as educational games, are suggested to enhance student participation and support the use of L2. For language teaching, cooperation and social interaction between all participants within the school context are considered very important, as the emotional approach is directly linked to positive learning outcomes. Group work that encourages interaction between students seems to create

motivation in immigrant students to use the second language and is associated with easier acquisition. (Lee et al., 2021).

In this study, participants expressed positive thoughts and feelings about their experience in multicultural classrooms and reported that the different cultural backgrounds of students not only faced an obstacle for the educational work but also made their work more interesting and beneficial for all students and Greek society. No problems, conflicts, or exclusions of students due to their different cultural backgrounds were reported. Students tend to focus on the common elements they have with their classmates, mainly their interest in video games. These findings contradict other studies that support the idea that the different cultural backgrounds of students are an important factor affecting school reality. A Belgian study showed that foreign students are at higher risk of school exclusion and social isolation. Studies from schools in the United States have found increased incidents of conflict between immigrant and native students and separation of friendships, as students tend to participate in groups where all members have the same cultural background. Furthermore, teachers tend to have lower expectations of immigrant students, affecting their self-esteem and undermining their learning performance (Higgen & Mosko, 2020).

The emotional difficulties of students are reported by the teachers in this study as a challenge for educational practice. Immigrant and refugee students often have complex emotional needs, and teachers will consider it important to know them through honest relationships with them. Emotional closeness between teachers and students was central to the research and was mentioned in multiple ways by all participants. All teachers consider it important for students to feel comfortable in the classroom, to be happy and to know that they can turn to teachers for issues that concern them. In fact, teachers stated that students' emotional well-being and sense of belonging are more important issues than learning performance. According to the results of this research, there is a direct relationship between students' belonging and their participation in the classroom. Students who feel isolated and invisible and that their inclusion is not supported are more likely to show negative behaviors in the classroom, such as noise and aggression.

A large body of research agrees that the emotional needs of migrant students are a key challenge for educators as schools for vulnerable social groups, such as migrants and refugees, are not only places of learning but mainly places where students develop a sense of belonging through the creation of a school culture of respect, acceptance and cooperation. Teachers in a multicultural environment can strengthen or undermine belonging. Often, migrant students need more emotional support than their peers who have not experienced the adverse conditions accompanying migration to gain self-confidence and develop their skills, participating in school processes without the fear of failure (Kaukko et al., 2022).

Numerous studies have analyzed the factors that influence the inclusion and sense of belonging of migrant students. In this study, Greek primary and secondary school teachers reported that the sense of belonging is a continuous process influenced by many factors, such as the economic and social background of students, the teacher-student relationship, the school climate, and the intercultural awareness of teachers. The socioeconomic profile of students was highlighted as one of the most important factors that affect students emotionally and can undermine social participation and overall quality of life. According to other studies, immigrant families often face financial difficulties and social isolation, which

can even lead to bureaucratic problems such as access to education. Economic and social inequalities undermine school participation, and immigrant students are more likely to have lower self-expectations and motivation, higher school dropout rates, and a lower sense of belonging (Abdusamatov et al., 2024).

The economic difficulties of immigrant families are among the most serious risk factors for the academic and emotional development of children and adolescents. Individuals who live in adverse conditions due to their socioeconomic status are more likely to internalize social stereotypes regarding minority groups and have lower self-esteem and lower expectations (Jiang & Dong, 2020). Research shows that the economic difficulties of immigrant students affect their mental health and education. Immigrant and refugee children and adolescents have limited resources for their education, and their academic progress is not supported. They often experience anxiety and emotional insecurity that affect their social interactions and their school inclusion (Forbes & Sime, 2016).

According to this research, the school can mediate between the disadvantages children face, supporting their academic and social well-being through the teacher-student relationship and with appropriate practices that enhance participation and equality among students. Other research shows a significant correlation between school engagement and students' emotional well-being. School engagement is the positive emotions of students and the sense of belonging to the school and is shaped by the school context (Jiang & Dong, 2020).

The teacher-student relationship is mentioned in this research as an important predictor of school engagement, and positive learning outcomes can be achieved through the intercultural awareness of teachers, their attitudes towards immigrant students, and the creation of a positive climate in the classroom. A very large part of the literature also emphasizes the need for strong bonds between teachers and students. The type of relationship can be crucial for school success and belonging and, according to Creasey et al. (2009), can take four forms, Connectivity, Anxiety, Dependent/Independent and Peaceful/Conflicted. Classroom relationships characterized by independence and security, in contrast to stressful and conflictual relationships, help students overcome adversity, develop healthy relationships with their classmates, and have higher academic performance (Wang, 2025).

In order for teachers to promote a sense of belonging in their students, according to the results of this research, differentiated teaching is required that responds to the needs and abilities of all students through activities that enhance motivation and participation. Among the most frequently mentioned teaching practices are self-expression activities, intercultural activities, project-based learning, and the use of audiovisual materials. Other research on L2 student engagement also suggests that self-expression activities help students to make constructive contributions to the learning process by personalizing the conditions in which they learn (Reeve, 2013). Research on intercultural education considers L2 student motivation to be a dynamic factor influenced by the extent to which individuals believe they are actively participating in their own learning in a creative way and with an emphasis on expressing ideas and feelings. Self-expression activities and project-based learning give students the opportunity to develop their creativity and problem-solving skills and to actively interact in the classroom with their peers (Park & Hiver, 2017).

Among the practices that were characterized as more difficult to implement and not chosen to a large extent by the participants in the research are collaborative learning and translanguaging. Teachers recognize Cooperative learning as extremely important, but they argue that it is not easily implemented, especially in the lower grades of primary school. Teachers of the sixth grade of elementary school and high school classes reported some examples of cooperative learning that is implemented in the classroom despite the difficulties of students collaborating with each other. Cooperative learning, according to other research, is claimed to enhance learner participation and practice in the second language while improving students' social skills (Fakhri Alamdari & Ghani, 2022). However, according to Tamimy et al., (2023) although research recognizes the value of group cooperative learning, there is a significant gap in recording and understanding the extent to which teachers are able to apply cooperative learning techniques in their classrooms. In fact, this gap is greater in classes with students of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, for which there are only some experimental studies and no specific data from real classes.

Finally, the teachers who participated in the research described their cooperation with the families of their immigrant students as crucial and associated the cooperation with the families with positive results on social, emotional, and learning levels. The teachers expressed the view that close cooperation with immigrant parents helps the inclusion of the students since, through the cooperation of teachers with the families of the students, the teachers can better identify the needs of the students and give the appropriate directions to the parents to support their children at home. Other studies also support that cooperation between teachers and families is associated with positive student learning and behavior results and reduced school dropout rates (Soutullo et al., 2016).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper sheds light on issues related to the sense of belonging of students with a migrant background, focusing on the challenges of multiculturalism in school and teaching practices that promote inclusion and a sense of belonging. To implement the research, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with Greek primary and secondary school teachers in Athens and Chios.

According to the research results, teachers who work in multicultural classrooms encounter certain difficulties, the main ones being the linguistic competence of migrant students and the emotional difficulties that refugee and migrant students often encounter due to negative experiences and adverse living conditions. Teachers believe that the financial difficulties of immigrant families are a key factor that affects students emotionally. However, none of the students' characteristics (economic status, cultural background) lead to social isolation. Furthermore, the research highlights teachers' crucial role in promoting belonging. Through intercultural awareness, teacher-student relationships, collaboration with families, and alternative teaching practices that promote participation and intercultural communication, teachers believe that immigrant students feel equal and visible within the school context.

A basic limitation of the research is the small sample size, while further research is needed for a deeper understanding of factors that influence the inclusion of immigrant

students. A significant limitation of the Greek literature is the fragmented approach to highlighting and analyzing the challenges faced by the inclusion of immigrants and refugees in the Greek educational system. The research focuses on recording separate aspects of the difficulties associated with inclusion, such as the student's emotional needs, socioeconomic inequalities, and the language barrier, but does not examine the relationship between these dimensions and the way they interact to undermine learning outcomes.

A second limitation in the Greek literature concerns the actual implementation of teaching practices. Research on teaching practices that promote a sense of belonging for students with a migrant background in Greek schools recognizes a wide range of theories and approaches, such as collaborative learning and translanguaging, but does not provide sufficient and specific data on whether these practices are implemented in Greek schools as well as on the results they have on student sense of belonging and inclusion. Further research is needed to bridge the gap between theory and reality within Greek schools regarding teaching approaches to belonging.

7. References

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8. Appendices

8.1 Consent form



Language Education
for Refugees and Migrants
LRM64 (Dissertation)

Participant Information and Consent Form

About this study

The present research concerns educators' views about challenges and factors influencing the inclusion of students with immigrant and refugee background as well as teaching practices that promote a sense of belonging.

Where can I find additional information

If you need additional information please contact me or my supervisor, via email:

Athina Lykourinou std517682@ac.eap.gr

(Supervisor) Zoi Karanikola karanikola.zoi@ac.eap.gr

Informed consent

Please tick a box (YES or NO) next to each of the statements below:

The researcher has explained to me everything I needed to know about this study, and has answered all my questions.	<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
I understand that some of the information I give will be printed in research documents, but my name will not be used, and that the researcher will not share any information that makes me unsafe.	<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
I understand that I can stop helping with this project whenever I want, and that I don't have to explain why.	<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
I agree to take part in this study.	<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO

Date & Signatures

(research participant)

(researcher)

8.2 Questions of semi-structured Interviews

1. What is your subject area?
2. How many years have you been teaching?
3. What is your educational background?
4. What nationality are your students?
5. What do you think are the challenges in a multicultural classroom?
6. Do you have any examples of problems you faced in the classroom that you believe were caused due to students' different ethnic and cultural backgrounds?
7. Would you say that you find it difficult to work in a multicultural classroom?
8. What do you think are the needs of immigrant students?
9. What tools do you use to identify these needs?
10. Do you consider it important to know the culture of your students?
11. Do you believe that teachers should be interested in the psychology of students?
12. Can you recognize if a student is experiencing a traumatic event?
13. How would you characterize yourself as an educator? Approachable or not?
14. Do you leave space and time in the classroom for free expression?
15. Do you use special techniques to enhance participation in the classroom?
16. Are there any students who refuse to participate in activities? If so, how do you manage it?
17. Do you use group activities?
18. Do you use activities that promote self-expression?
19. Do you allow students to speak their native language?
20. What materials do you use for your lesson?
21. Do you collaborate with parents?
22. Through your lesson, do you believe that you promote a sense of belonging?
23. Is there something you would like to do regarding belonging that the context or other reasons do not help you?

8.3 Transcriptions

I = Interviewer

P = participant

Participant 1 (P1)

I: What is your subject area?

P1: Arts, in a primary school.

I: How many years have you been teaching?

P1: Since 2010.

I: What is your educational background?

P1: Only the basic degree, from the school of fine arts.

I: In which grades do you teach?

P1: In all grades of primary school.

I: What are the nationalities of your students?

P1: In addition to Greeks at school there are many Albanians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Georgians, Syrians, Afghans, and students from African countries, but I don't know their origin.

I: What challenges do you face with the presence of children with an immigrant background in the classroom? That is, how does this make it difficult for you?

P1: Speaking of difficulties, I think that the first and main one is the language. But more the language that has to do with behavior and communication in the classroom.

I: In the sense of culture, that is?

P1: It's a matter of perceiving the classroom as an organized whole that serves a purpose. I don't know if you understand what I mean.

I: Yes, I think I understand. Besides, many immigrant children have no previous school experience.

P1: We take some of them from a very young age, they come from the first grade. They certainly have difficulty integrating into the school environment, perhaps more than children more integrated into the Greek education system.

I: Do you remember a specific example of a problem that may have arisen in the classroom and you believe it is due to the different ethnic or cultural background of the students?

P1: Because of language, yes. That you will talk to a child and ask him to do something or to enter the classroom, to sit down or to pick up his things, in general. My lesson has a lot of

materials, it doesn't have a pencil and a notebook, during the lessons they have various materials. If the children are not familiar with the materials and they don't understand the course of the lesson or it is asked of them. Beyond that, however, it turns out that a child who doesn't understand what's going on around him is very easy to get upset or upset others, to not be able to concentrate on what he's doing. I think there are a number of things that someone should take into account, but if these children had a support in terms of language, they would include much better. I see, for example, the differences with the Albanian children who are fully included, who are second-generation immigrants. When I first worked at the school, there were language issues, and anyway, the Balkan culture is closer to us than people from Syria or Afghanistan or Africa. So many years later, the Albanian children are like the old Greek children. They are fully included. The economic background certainly plays a role. And how much a parent can help their child.

I: Would you say that you find it difficult to work in a multicultural classroom?

P1: No, this is not an obstacle to my specialty. Because, we are dealing with image. Sooner or later, points of communication are found, image is something universal.

I: Do you consider it important to know elements of the culture of your students?

P1: I believe that knowing a child's culture helps both in communication and in the relationship with him. The problem is that in a class there are 25 students, I have five classes a day. The relationship with them is something that is cultivated over time. It cannot be done in one year. It is something that I noticed during the years that I was in the same school, of course the first year was not the same as the last when other relationships had been created with most of the children. While in the old years when I went from school to school there was no possibility of getting to know the children.

I: Do you consider it important to know the needs of the students?

P1: Yes, I do.

I: How do you identify the needs of the students?

P1: In many ways. Maybe with the occasion of an image that the children will talk about their experiences. This will depend on the time, how a child will speak. Then during the break, on duty, in personal communication with the children. More specifically, in images, the image always gives a reason for a child to express some things. I have a student for example who, no matter what topic I put to them, would turn it into an image with violence, as if he were very exposed to war video games. A computer game can be a very powerful experience, image and sound and action. Children are now exposed to a lot of computer images, everything has Minecraft as a common reference. Roblox. Some cartoons. On this occasion, perhaps I should tell you that there you have to separate the personal culture, the tradition of a child, now there is the common culture that is games, the famous ones. These images are common to all children. The choice of the topic is not common. One child can draw you a little man like Minecraft, another can set up an entire scene. We made this particular child for Picasso's pigeon and he painted a paramilitary figure as we imagine him in Africa with dark glasses, in a uniform, and who had bird wings instead of hands. I asked the same child to make a scene with three-dimensional shapes, he made me a scene like the "First-person shooters", with soldiers shooting. His third assignment I asked them to do their anti-portrait, that is, instead

of drawing their portrait, to do what they think is the opposite of them. He drew a relaxed guy with a straw hat playing the guitar.

I: So you think that teachers should be interested in the psychology of students, right?

P1: Yes, of course.

I: Can you recognize if a student is experiencing a traumatic event?

P1: No. It's never certain. Or rather, I can recognize that something is happening, but I always discuss it with teachers, with the principal. They can ask the same thing, but they don't see me every day, it takes time for them to trust me.

I: How would you characterize yourself as a teacher, approachable or not?

P1: Yes, I think I am. I hope I am. In general, I believe that the relationship with children, of course with a limit if you cross it and are ignored, you can go the other way, but I believe that the relationship is important. Especially at these ages. Children are not able to define their interest and their goals without support. So when they feel emotionally good, it helps them to concentrate generally in the lesson.

I: That's what I intended to ask you, if students should be happy, but you answered it.

P1: Yes, of course I believe it but there is a difficulty in how to do this without going the other way. Because "I feel comfortable and I am happy" maybe means for a child "I am not participating in the lesson". So this story needs work, it doesn't happen because I agreed with the children. The child needs to see how you work as a teacher. I can't say that I have ever achieved it 100%. I have worked with classes that worked very well. We also had hours of carefree time. The important thing is how quickly the children were able to concentrate on the lesson after the carefree time and the joke. That is, how not to get carried away and how quickly you come back.

I: Do you leave space and time in the classroom for free expression? That is, students can talk comfortably about topics that may be unrelated to the lesson.

P1: I will allow it in the lesson when I am sure that the class has reached a level that can be returned to. Not to get carried away, otherwise I am strict. Until a way is found, I ask the children to be in the lesson and not to get carried away. When this can be worked on with a class, we will say something else, we will talk about something further, more personal to them, more general. When a class is unable to find the fine line, it is difficult to achieve, I automatically become stricter. I am not strict on principle, that this is how the lesson should be. When I see that in the long run the lesson itself will be confused, because I don't have much time, I have an hour with each class.

I: Do you use special practices to enhance student participation?

P1: Yes, I can put a simpler craft that I know everyone will feel good about, they will do it. Because I do a lot of theory. Many children may not want to participate because they can't. So I can put a simpler drawing or a craft project. The only thing I haven't done is that I don't adapt the entire lesson for some children specifically.

I: Other activities that promote self-expression can you remember?

P1: To copy a painting with their body. To play sword fights to work on hand movement. In higher grade levels, in the notebook they have, I ask them to do other things besides lessons, some children do this, some don't. Some don't understand it. The lesson is one that involves self-expression. Generally, when I present a painter, movement, etc., the final exercise asks for their own personal impression, their own personal transformation. In lower grade levels, this happens completely spontaneously, anyway. In higher grade classes, paradoxically, this needs support. They have learned to copy so much that they have difficulty.

I: Do you use group activities?

P1: Generally, yes, in one way or another. It is interesting, for example, with the first grade students I made the chain of wishes. One group refused to make wishes for the whole world and made them for themselves. "I want a Barbie", things like that. I was impressed by this, I had never seen it before. Usually, children are generous. In the first ones, many children refused to participate in the common chain, they wanted to make the link all their own. But there, if the child succeeds, the first and greatest joy is to show it to their family. I have not reached very high levels of cooperation. In the current school, it is too early for anyone to talk about this. At the first level, collaboration happens. In higher grade classes where children enter adolescence, they may collaborate well. The difficult thing about collaboration is that girls often take on the role of mom. They do for their peer what they should be showing him, not doing it to him.

I: Do they do this to the children who are weaker?

P1: No, to their peer.

I: How do you give feedback to the students? For example, do you give verbal rewards? Do you point out mistakes?

P1: This is done individually. In my work, it is done on a few things. If it goes off topic, if they don't understand the topic... But again, if they have drawn you very nicely, you have to tell them both, you can't just stay on the mistake. The child is making an effort.

I: So, the effort is important, regardless of the result.

P1: Of course, yes. But, for crafts you can talk about the mistake. In origami, for example, it is understood that you will say the mistake. But, my effort is for them to understand their mistake themselves. They depend a lot on the teacher, they want confirmation at every step and they prefer to ask if it is correct rather than checking it themselves. One reason I make them crafts that are specific to the boundaries of right and wrong is so they can learn to work on their own without constant confirmation.

I: Do you encourage students to present their work to their classmates?

P1: Yes, I encourage them to present it, I don't encourage them to throw it away, because that often happens, to destroy what they don't like.

I: Do children who don't speak Greek well hesitate to present something?

P1: No, this is a matter of character, a child who wants to show something will show it, they may not talk well about what they have done but they will want to show it. A child who feels insecure will hide what they have made or won't even start it. But on top of that, I want to tell

you that there are immigrant children, Georgians, Armenians, Romanians, they have a very good level of drawing and expressiveness. Syrians too. Good level of creativity and expressiveness.

I: Do you decorate the classroom with all the students' works?

P1: Of course.

I: What materials do you use for your lesson?

P1: Unfortunately, because my lesson is hourly and I don't have a workshop, we have limited. Markers, crayons, paper.

I: Audiovisual material?

P1: Yes, of course. We also have interactive boards, I use them to connect to the internet, the screens are screens. In general, there is an infrastructure problem for my lesson.

I: Are there students who completely refuse to participate in activities?

P1: Yes, often. The refusal is due to the feeling that he will be exposed, that he does not have the skills to cope. I deal with it differently every time. The main thing is what he/she will exchange it for. If he refuses to draw in order to jump around, that's where I have a problem. If he/she sits or looks at the white paper as if he is terrified, that's where I will try to help. I often ask if they need help, but children don't say it easily. Also, because there is a generally cultivated impression that painting is a talent, they refuse to learn.

I: Through your lesson, do you believe that you promote a sense of belonging? That is, do students feel that they are visible, that they are equal to others?

P1: I hope so.

I: Do you collaborate with parents?

P1: In my lesson collaboration with parents can be minimal. Or in the points where it can be done, it doesn't interest me. In other words, I am not interested in making a bargain, which is what parents want. The people who are interested in their child's progress in art are around four to five. We are talking about the whole school. So collaboration arises when behavioral issues arise. I would rather talk about whether a child will go to an art school than how to improve his behavior.

I: I have no other questions, I don't know if you have anything else to add or any examples of you being called upon to manage negative emotions of students?

P1: These arise every day. There are issues that arise from a child's insecurity or identity issues and children will always have problems because children are tough and very easily translate their own passion into something they have heard from their parents. In other words, while one moment they may be friendly with each other and the next they may be arguing, if the family maintains the enmity, a bad atmosphere is created in the classroom. But I don't manage these, they end up in the administration, because they arise at other times as well. A student has happened to leave, the mother is Italian and the father is from Madagascar. He had language, communication, etc. issues, in a very difficult class, within two years the child was

expelled, I think this was maintained by the parents. That instead of working towards unity by the parents, discord was maintained.

I: However, many teachers also promote social stereotypes in the classroom.

P1: Of course. I have seen this more with Roma students. With comments like “who does it smell?” And I have heard those comments more in the countryside. Not that they don't happen here too. But I am sure that in the classroom these can come out. Who sits with whom, small comments or fewer opportunities. Of course, I only see these indirectly.

I: Let me ask one last question. Do you have the same expectations from all students?

P1: Let me tell you how I understand my lesson. I don't paint. I am interested in them understanding that the elements that make up a picture can become their property either pictorially or meaningfully. So I don't judge the student's ability. Very often a child can have a high sense of meaning and understand the elements that make up a painting or express themselves while not being fluent with a pencil, let's say, but being much more expressive than a child who will copy a picture perfectly. Everyone has the same opportunity to understand the meaning and elements of a picture. At work you don't understand who is an immigrant.

I: Thank you very much.

P1: Thank you, too.

Participant 2 (P2)

I: What is subject area?

P2: English.

I: What is your educational background?

P2: In addition to the English language degree, I have attended a seminar in England on English literature.

I: In which grades do you teach?

P2: In all grades of primary school.

I: What is the nationality of your students?

P2: Many Africans, Balkans, Syrians, Pakistanis...

I: What challenges would you say you face with the presence of children with an immigrant background?

P2: What makes it difficult for me is not so much the language and the level of the children, but the psychological part, especially of the younger children who have negative experiences from home or from experiences in their country and this comes out in the classroom as denial and anger. Children who have difficulties and are emotionally pressured show aggression and create tensions.

I: Would you say in general that you find it difficult to work in a multicultural classroom?

P2: Yes, very much so. Immigrant children have many difficulties at home, they are not supported. In my class, they behave badly, and their parents are not interested, they consider English to be a secondary subject.

I: How important do you consider it to know the ethnic and cultural background of your students?

P2: Quite important, but I think this is an opportunity to let them express it themselves in class, if they want to talk about some aspects of their culture.

I: What do you think the needs of immigrant students are? Of course, you said before that they are mainly emotional needs.

P2: And livelihood needs, inclusion, acceptance, security.

I: In what ways do you identify these needs? For example, do you talk to the children, to the parents?

P2: Parents usually do not come to me, because they address the principal or the teachers. Also, the needs are to cover the livelihood needs, the bureaucratic needs first. Families who have lived in the country for many years, such as the Albanians, most of whom are now included in the school, come to me with anything they need and want to tell me. However, the needs of other children who come from more deprived families will either take the initiative themselves, some students will tell me something, or I may learn it from my colleagues.

I: Do you think teachers should be interested in the psychology of students?

P2: Yes, definitely.

I: Can you identify if a student is experiencing a traumatic event?

P2: Yes, most of the time. Especially in younger children who can't hide their emotions. They mostly cry or have anger outbursts when something upsets them or tend to isolate themselves.

I: How would you describe yourself as a teacher? Approachable or not?

P2: I would say approachable, not strict.

I: Do you think students should feel comfortable in class and be happy?

P2: They definitely have to be happy, that also helps with learning. If you don't like the lesson, you won't learn most of the time.

I: Do you leave space and time in the classroom for free expression? That is, students can talk about topics that may be unrelated to the main lesson.

P2: They can, but depending on the situation. Sometimes I may want to finish something specific or have an exam. I can't leave them there. But because in general the material in our lesson does not limit us, that is, we don't have specific curriculum from the ministry, it leaves

us free to use whatever material we want, so I can let them do some things or say what they want, to express themselves.

I: Do you use special practices to enhance student participation?

P2: It depends on the class, I'm a little more traditional in my methods but it depends on the messages the class gives me. Because this year we happened to have small classes and I've known most of them for years, we can do things together but there are others that can't do more free activities.

I: Do you remember any activity that strengthened participation, for example now that it was Christmas, something that made all the children participate?

P2: Yes, we had done a Valentine's activity, and the students drew from a classmate's name that we had put in a bag, and the one who drew had to say something nice about the one whose name was on the paper. We said very interesting things. For now, what they like, and I do it in whatever classes I can, we make Christmas calendars where every day they come and draw from a date; the one whose turn it draws what's inside the calendar, and everyone wonders and asks what's inside. I had put a small toy and a chocolate bar in there, which excited them.

I: Do you use group activities?

P2: Not too much unless I see that the class can handle it. Although I recognize that group activities can be very helpful, I don't use them most of the time.

I: Activities that promote self-expression? For example, I talk or write about myself, my family, something more personal.

P2: Yes, that is a lot. They often introduce themselves, stand on the board, talk about themselves, and write about themselves, their house, and their pet. Most children like it. Of course, some say, "I don't want to read it," or they tell me, "You should read it." So I do not pressure them if they do not want to.

I: Do you allow students to use their mother language in class?

P2: Generally, they don't use their mother tongue because the others do not understand it. They don't want to use it, and we don't encourage it because sometimes they have used it to swear.

I: How do you give feedback? For example, do you give verbal rewards, do you point out mistakes, let them correct themselves?

P2: What they really like in lower grade classes and when we have time and we are in class with less students, they like to exchange notebooks to correct each other, especially in spelling. I did it once and they liked it so much that they kept asking me to do it, so we did it. Of course, I had said, because in small classes I put a remark and a drawing, I told them that even if the other person makes a mistake, they will not write a bad remark under it, they should also put a smiley face on their classmate or I had given them stickers to put on. When they write a report, I usually read some parts to point out some mistakes or some positive elements. In their exams, I correct them because I have noticed that if I give them to them

and we start correcting them together, they never pay attention, they look at the grades and never pay attention to the correction.

I: Do you encourage students to present their work? You said of course that in self-expression activities they present what they wrote.

P2: Yes, they ask for it themselves. Most of them want to do it. We also put them up on the wall. If it is a paper-cutting or painting assignment we put them on the wall, too.

I: What materials do you use in your lesson besides the book?

P2: The internet a lot, we have interactive boards, we use them too, and also whenever we can, we do crafts. And also, especially in the third grade, where the book has some stories, they like to do it as an act out, that is, like a little theater. We get up on the board and do the dialogues, and whenever I can, I also bring realia, objects like hats to make the lesson more lively and engaging. In the first and second grades, I use dolls. Participation is increased in these.

I: Are there students who refuse to participate entirely in activities? If so, what do you do in this case?

P2: It depends, if it's something that someone has to stand up to present or do a play, I don't want to pressure them, I tell them to read from the seat. But if it's something I need to check, how they read or how they write, I can't let them not do it at all. Or in first grade, which is difficult this year, if they don't want to draw, for example, there's no point in pressuring a child, so I let them.

I: Collaboration with parents? Is that something you're looking for?

P2: Yes, I'm interested, but the foreign language course is a bit disrespected in public schools, so many times they don't come to ask me about grades, so I have to look for them.

I: Through your lesson, do you think you promote a sense of belonging?

P2: Especially in this course, I think not, because many children attend tutoring centers and are more advanced, while others, especially immigrants, have never been taught English. It often happens that someone doesn't even know the alphabet, while someone has done three or four years more. So unfortunately the differences are obvious.

I: But is there something you would like to do but the context does not help?

P2: Normally we should have different levels and classes with lower number of students.

I: I have no more questions. Do you want to add anything else? Or an example where you were called upon to manage a student's negative emotions?

P2: Yes, especially students who have had very bad experiences. Who came from war zones, who have lost their loved ones or who are separated from their family, this is generally a challenge that we teachers face as a whole.

I: Thank you very much.

P2: Be well.

Participant 3 (P3)

I: What is your subject area?

P3: I am a teacher.

I: In which grade do you teach?

P3: Third grade of primary school.

I: How many years have you been teaching?

P3: 30.

I: What is your educational background?

P3: The teacher's degree only.

I: Which countries are your students from?

P3: The year before last, when we did statistics, my school had 34 countries. The first 15 years that I worked, we only had Albanians, then it was Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Poland, and in recent years it has been Syria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Moldova and others.

I: What challenges would you say you face from the presence of children with a migrant background?

P3: It is important to be able to calm the children down from what they have faced and make them feel happy and lucky. They carry an enormous sadness, especially refugee children. The difference in language and culture is a challenge, but it becomes manageable after a few years. Then, you don't give it as much importance. The first is the emotional contact with the child.

I: Do you have any examples of any problems that have arisen in the classroom that you believe are due to the different backgrounds of the students? For example, something that may have happened because a student has a different color or religion.

P3: Because I work with young children, I have not experienced tension. Verbally, various things have been said, but this shows the culture of their parents and is not theirs, "you are black, I don't want to sit with black people", these are said in a very small percentage. In the 25 years that I have worked in schools that have a percentage of foreigners of over 80%, there has not been a huge issue, there have been very few incidents.

I: Would you say that in general you find it difficult to work in a multicultural classroom?

P3: No. Of course, now that I'm getting older, it may have crossed my mind, but I think it's my own fatigue and my own stamina, but generally no, I wouldn't want to work in other classes. Going back to the previous point, we have more problems with Roma than with immigrant and refugee children.

I: Do you think it's important to know elements of your students' culture?

P3: Clearly, we talk a lot about countries, of course they don't know all of them because mainly the children from Eastern Europe were born here, but they only know from their parents. We

have a lot of intercultural celebrations and in the classroom, every day we say good morning in a different language. We have a book that we made with fairy tales from their countries. We play games from all the countries. I insist that they also experience the past of the country they come from, that they know the culture. And we listen to songs.

I: What do you think are the needs of immigrant students, on an emotional and educational level?

P3: Inclusion, acceptance and equal treatment.

I: To identify these needs, what means do you use?

P3: I have contact with the family, I try to get them involved in school life both with events and with personal contact. We want involvement, it helps us and it helps them too, because they don't know things and the teacher who will help them with one thing is considered a great supporter and this is very good for the children and for us and for everyone.

I: So, I understand that you believe that teachers should be interested in the psychology of the students.

P3: Yes, of course, if teachers are not interested in that, why would students be interested in the lessons? We are also interested in the learning outcome, but especially for immigrant children, it is a minor matter. It is my personal opinion. Of course, I care about the lesson, and I grade them the same way I grade Greek children, but I care more about immigrants and refugee children getting other things that they lack and will need more than a Greek child who has everything.

I: Can you recognize if a student is experiencing a traumatic event?

P: Yes, I think I can recognize it now, I hope I don't fall out. I would be sad if I didn't recognize it.

I: How would you characterize yourself as a teacher? Approachable, friendly or not?

P3: Yes, I am friendly and approachable, the students feel comfortable talking to me. A child from another class has come and shown me bruises, without being my student. I hope I will stay as I grow up.

I: Do you leave space and time in the classroom for free expression, that is, the students can talk about a topic that is unrelated to the lesson?

P3: I try, except for what happens automatically because it happens mainly in lower grade classes, they talk about anything other than what we are talking about.

I: But do you allow it?

P3: Yes, I even try to set aside a specific time during the week to talk about something that concerns us. I steal hours because the hours are tough, and the curriculum is huge. The subjects are too many, the hours are few, and we try to steal some hours called skills workshops. Maybe we can put a free expression there about what concerns us and how we deal with it. Of course, I am used to it, and my school in general, because we are a multicultural school, we bring in various programs that exist with Athina Ergani, from Kethea, various

projects programs on mental health, on mental resilience, and we have a little more discussion. We have found channels and try to work in various ways.

I: Do you use practices to strengthen student participation?

P3: I strengthen participation every day, giving them the opportunity and speak in everything. Some other special ones, no, I haven't thought of any. Every week I have a class leader, like an assistant, we turn to him for anything. Now, for those who don't talk much, when I see that a child is very silent, I first talk to the other children about the break to participate. But the fact that there is a class leader every week gives them tremendous self-confidence.

I: Are there students with little participation?

P3: Very few, I have found a child who didn't want to participate, he wanted to leave. I approached him, I sat with him during breaks, I got others to play, and he had an improvement. A Ukrainian boy that I have this year, his character is more closed, however, his participation is good now. It also has to do with the other children, if you motivate them, the teacher motivates them.

I: Do you use group activities?

P3: I use group activities for lessons and in general. This year. I have third graders so less because they are small and can't, but we do things in groups. It is important that group activities don't become like a textbook.

I: Do you use activities that promote self-expression? For example, teachers to talk about themselves.

P3: I try presentations, because of course they are children who don't know the language well, I struggle first with the spoken word and then with the written word, we start to present ourselves. Through these we learn grammar. We talk about my family, my interests, my favorite animal, etc. I try to make the reports and everything we do orally and then in writing revolve around themselves and allow them to express themselves. But there is little time, we are overwhelmed by the curriculum. Because I am 30 years in education I choose what to teach. All these endless grammar exercises do not help anything.

I: Do you allow students to use their first language in class?

P3: I tell them that they should use their mother language to learn everything about their parents' country, but I prefer not to speak in class because I do not know what they are saying, and I feel like they are cursing me. I do not want to because they may fight during the break and start saying Albanian curse words. I say to them, "We speak Greek here so that we can all learn Greek," but not in a selfish way.

I: How do you give feedback to students?

P3: We have our good grades and our stickers. In spelling, I put lines under the errors, and students find the mistakes themselves in the book. We have good grades and congratulations, and I count behavior more. I care about behavioral mistakes and use punishments like missing a break.

I: Do you give homework? Do you think about what you will give based on the group you have each time?

P3: If you see the exercises I used to give 20, 15 years ago, you will go crazy. I give very few now, I give a little exercise, a copy, a little math exercise maybe, and a weekend assignment where there will also be a written expression with vocabulary, because we don't have vocabulary. In other words, most of the exercises are based on vocabulary development. They don't know words and I give much less than I used to. But not because they are not all Greek, nor do Greek children no longer read. The reality of school has nothing to do with the reality of 10 years ago in relation to the children who used to read, now everything is only on the screen. They don't go to a tutoring center because they are children of immigrants and refugees and they don't have the money to go to them. The full-day school is very helpful to us. I worked full-day last year, great experience, it helps them a lot in terms of learning, but it is very tiring for these children. A child who is from 8 in the morning to 4, I don't think that is good. But everything has its other side, they play with their classmates during recess, they play ball, they are with friends, do I know how it would be at home?

I: Do you encourage students to present their work in class?

P3: Of course, every day, when they have something to say, a report, let's say, to answer a question that has something to say, they stand up and present it, and we applaud. I don't see any hesitation. I've never seen any hesitation, even from those who don't speak Greek well. In fact, they want to say a poem even if they don't speak it well. Everything. No matter how wrong they say it, they say it. It's impressive that on national holidays, immigrants and refugees come in their best clothes, little girls with nice hair and high socks. Greek children come in their athletic clothes if their Greek parents wake them up. So, the absences are Greeks. I don't know if it's fear or respect or how the state will treat them, but I see respect.

I: What materials do you use in your lesson?

P3: We have a projector, which sometimes turns on and sometimes turns off, I have a projector on my board for the language and math books, I show videos about history, in third grade we learn it differently on YouTube which is very nice, with all the lessons there are videos, we watch documentaries. I would like an interactive board but we don't have one. And I put on music to calm them down sometimes, we listen to Lilipoupoli a lot. But I don't have time for that, I try to include it in the lesson, I also show a movie when Christmas is approaching. We take them to the theater, everything comes there and even if they don't understand, then I tell them you will ask me, what didn't you understand, but they understand everything in the end. After the theater we have a lot of conversations, the excitement that they saw it, you know that there are children who have never seen theater, they don't know what theater is? While they are very familiar with television, when they see it live they get confused. Theater should have been included in schools.

I: Through your lesson, do you think you promote a sense of belonging?

P3: I want to believe that they feel that we are all a small family, we greet each other, we give kisses with our hands, we used to give hugs but after the coronavirus we gave them less often. But we give hugs, a hug always heals. With the soul and the body, that's how we say and they learn it, we say a kiss for today, one for tomorrow and one because we love each other very

much. Can I leave if I have four hours and they tell me “won't we give our kisses?” They need that: “one kiss because we love each other very much”. This year, we have also included reading a lot, that is, we say we love each other and we read a lot.

I: Regarding the sense of belonging, is there anything you think you could do but can't because of the context or another reason?

P3: I would like to do so many things, to do theater, to show that we are all together, I don't have time, and I've grown up already. And this is something that will strain education, now I am 58 years old. I will leave at 67. No mood, I don't have that much stamina. I am 50 years older than my students, soon it will be 60 years. It is an objective difference, I come back tired. And I think the material is far from the needs of the children. What we teach them is very far from their needs.

I: I don't have any other questions, maybe you have something to add or an example where you were called upon to manage negative emotions of students?

P3: We have had difficult incidents from time to time, we have even gone to the prosecutor's office because we have seen cases of violence. We were shocked by a sixth grader who wasn't mine and she came and said, "I want to talk to you" because she was a girl and I was used to them coming when they were on their period. I thought that was what she would want, because mothers often don't tell them anything about their period. In the end, she told me that her stepfather was sexually harassing her. We have cases like this. It's very valuable, I want to believe that all my colleagues at school should have their antennas open, a child who wants help will ask us. We are usually the closest, after the parents. I believe that in our school we have achieved this. This helps because we are teachers for many years. That's where experience comes in. It's very valuable to be open and to be able to talk to you, because if something happens in the family, student has nowhere else to tell, they will tell a woman teacher. No male teacher, mainly a woman. This child spoke to me because she had a male teacher. They don't get along easily with men. And another child was being beaten and bitten by his mother, he came to me. These are the important things.

I: Thank you very much.

P3: Thank you too.

Participant 4 (P4)

I: What is your subject area?

P4: I am a teacher.

I: How many years have you been teaching?

P4: In public school, a total of 29 years.

I: What is your educational background?

P4: I have a master's degree in theory and evaluation of educational work and a doctorate in the educational identity of students. I also have attended seminars that on learning difficulties.

I: In which grade do you teach?

P4: Fifth grade. I usually take fifth and sixth, I prefer the higher grades to prepare them for high school because I am also a philologist, you know how to take away their fear of ancient history, let's do a little etymology, etc.

I: This year, what countries are your students from?

P4: In addition to Greeks, three girls are of Albanian origin, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, China, and Egypt.

I: What challenges do you face with the presence of children with an immigrant background?

P4: The biggest problem is usually the language, that is, the fact that these children and their parents usually have little or no contact with the Greek language. Many times I overcome it by mediating other languages. English, French, I know many languages so where I can I help I use the mediation of other languages. Beyond that, I usually have no problems with the acceptance of these children by their classmates, in general we work on this, we talk about acceptance of the different and how important it is that we have children from other cultural backgrounds which helps us a lot to become more open. So I don't have any behavioral problems, because usually there are 2-3 children, either on their own initiative or at my urging, to take them into their company and help them. For example, on November 17th, when we had the celebration, I had given each child to memorize two or three lines from a chronicle that they would all recite together in turn. For the child from China, because he had difficulty memorizing the lines, some of their classmates helped him and they did it together during breaks, they read it to him, they recited it to him and he recited it at the same time, so that he could learn to recite it at the celebration without having a problem.

I: So, do you have any specific examples of any problems that you believe are due to the different cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the students?

P4: We usually prevent them, they know that racist behavior is not allowed in class.

I: Would you say in general that it is difficult for you to work in a multicultural classroom? Would you prefer to work in a classroom with only Greek students?

P4: On the one hand, it would be much easier, but it would be more boring. I consider it very important educationally and professionally to be able to adapt your teaching and benefit children with different cultural backgrounds, and especially what these children bring improves my own teaching. That is, it provides things that were not present in our classes before. Habits, behaviors, knowledge, traditions, and how immigrant children tell their stories are all huge wealth we would not have had without them. Of course, it is more work because I have to do my teaching at different levels so that they can also participate. I would have to use English to explain something to Jasper, the other children in the meantime also attend the integration section so it helps them a little more with the language and they are also older, that is, they are not beginners so I have no problem. In language lessons and in history, I make the questions simpler so that they can also answer. Or I prefer to give them, if I have three open-ended questions, I let them answer the one that is easier. I prefer open-ended questions. I give more time, maybe I go to their desk during the exam to explain some things

more specifically or sit next to them to do the exam together if they don't understand something. But that's how it should be.

I: Do you think it's important to know elements of your students' culture?

P4: Yes, I think it's very important for these children to feel better, more familiar, more secure in the classroom and because I take the elements to show the similarities with our own culture, that is, I don't see it as the different elements that come but, look, in China and Sri Lanka they do what we do to find similarities, we focus more on the similarities than on the differences.

I: Do you think that immigrant students have different needs than Greeks?

P4: Usually due to the fact that many of these students are also in a difficult financial situation, parents are forced to be away from home for long hours, working or looking for work, more unstable situations at home, not having what they need. We have a stable home, a job, a mom and dad. For these children, home and relatives are not a given. They clearly have more needs. They don't have a mom or dad who will sit down and help with the lesson. I have to explain it better in class.

I: How do you identify these needs? By observation, do you talk to the parents, to the colleagues?

P4: Because I spend a lot of time in the classroom because I am the main teacher of the class, I identify them from their behavior. From their participation or non-participation in the lesson. So, I understand what is happening and I try to help as much as I can. Sometimes communicating with the parents is not very easy, they work long hours, but when they manage to do so, they want contact with the school, they want guidance and they accept what we tell them, they are very cooperative. I have never had an immigrant parent who was negative, as many newly rich Greeks happen to be.

I: Should teachers be interested in the psychology of students? Is it important for children to feel comfortable and safe in the classroom?

P4: If the child does not feel well and is not safe in the classroom, he cannot learn. First you have to build a safe climate, for the child to have a good time, to feel good and then on this you will build knowledge. Knowledge cannot be built on an unstable psychological environment.

I: Can you understand if a student of yours is uncomfortable in the classroom? Or if he is experiencing a traumatic event?

P4: In general, I believe that yes because children are quite open in their expressions, when for example you have a student, I have a student from Sri Lanka who is an introverted child who has selective mutism, that is, he speaks with difficulty, but he understands Greek quite well, he also writes moderately, but he does not want to speak, he is withdrawn. I approach this child, I talk to him, I talk to the inclusion class teacher to see what's going on, I'll talk to his mother, that is, to have as much information as I can. To be by their side.

I: How would you characterize yourself as a teacher, approachable or not?

P4: I am approachable, the children come to me easily, I like what I do, they understand it. But at the same time, I am strict in order to set some limits and so that we can do work in class.

I: In the classroom, do you leave space and time for free expression? That is, can students talk about topics that may be unrelated to the lesson?

P4: Yes, there is always. Not when I deliver the new material, but I always make sure that when a child wants to announce something, we leave time to announce it in class. Or someone may want to find me during the break to talk to me or tell me that they want to say something in class. If they tell me, "I took part in the running race and got this medal," we will definitely go into the classroom and announce it and applaud it, you understand. When it's something that concerns them, we bring it to class because everyone benefits from it. Usually, unfortunately, the conversations that take place are after recess on the occasion of some inappropriate behavior of a child, something that happened in the game, they didn't like someone, they got into a fight, in other words, unfortunately, the conversations that take place are to explain negative behaviors and try not to repeat them. This year, we're running a program, because the kids have been together for five years and they carry anger from all the years, you know, some kids have been targeted, he hit me, I don't want to sit with him, so in addition to having them sit in groups of four or six at desks, I'm also running a program, at the beginning of the year I bought a stuffed doll, a fox, Foxy, and a big notebook like an album and by lottery each child takes Foxy home, we do Foxy's journey, they keep her for a week and at the end of the week they bring her to class and they have written in notebook what Foxy did. "I went to visit Nikos' house, and I met his dad and his mom". It follows the children's lives and helps them get to know each other better. Telule, who is from Sri Lanka, told me now, "on January 11th, we are going to India, can we take Foxy with us?" I told him that it is an opportunity for Foxy to travel, so when Foxy returns from India, she will have written to us about what she saw, what she did, where she went, and we will discuss it. They really like it; it helps the children get to know each other. They also take pictures, print them, the other one is in karate and holds Foxy or the basketball, the children show their interests.

I: Do you use special practices to enhance participation?

P4: In this case, I either personalize my teaching or ask the children who are struggling questions that I know they will be able to answer. I try not to isolate them by asking a difficult question that will make them feel bad, but I try to engage and inspire them. When they have made a mistake, because we do group correction many times and mainly in mathematics, I ask who has not understood and I lift one of those who said they did not understand on the board to solve the exercise together. I try to solve the questions they have together and the question of one person helps the others who may not have had the courage to admit it and we work like that.

I: Do you use group activities?

P4: Not a lot of group activities, yes, we do a few things in the classroom, but more individual ones. They mainly do group activities if 4-5 children all work together on a weekend to do a project. They have difficulty, however, depending on the group. I do not put them only with their friends. In class we do a few things in groups. Sometimes it can even work because it helps the classmate to explain it in relation to the teacher. However, we have many cooperation problems.

I: Activities that promote self-expression?

P4: Foxy is one such thing. Sometimes, on the occasion of something we have done in class, I ask them to tell a personal story. For example, we wrote a text about Penelope Delta's *Mangas* who was on a ship, and I asked them to tell me about their own experiences with ships and traveling. They have a lot of experiences.

I: How do you give feedback?

P4: There is always verbal reward, there is also the grade that will be entered at the bottom of the test or notebook. The grade is, for example, 34 out of 45, which is an 8, if it is a 9 or 10 I also put a smiley face. They really wait for the happy face. Also, if it is a retake exam, I lift the students who have gotten a 9 or 10 up on the board and we all applaud them together. We haven't managed to correct themselves or correct their classmates yet. That's why we do group work many times, so that they can see the correct answer on the board.

I: When you set homework, do you think about the level of the class?

P4: I try to see who will be able to respond, I don't set something that I know only five will answer. The goal is for all 25 students to answer, so I adjust accordingly, and I can also make a grading if someone wants and can do something more. I say that some questions are optional.

I: Do you encourage students to present their work?

P4: Yes, always. Apart from Foxy presenting what she did, now I have them read a literary book for Christmas, whichever one they want, and we will dedicate the first two days when we get back to doing a book presentation. What did each one read, a summary of the book on cardboard, a few words about the author, a drawing, to talk about the book they read. They really like it and if they have difficulty reading, I am there to help and we read together.

I: What materials do you use for your lesson?

P4: Fortunately, I have a computer and a projector. I also open the books, and they see it on the projector. Depending on what we are talking about, I may show a photo or information from Google. We were talking about windmills, so I opened it and showed them windmills.

I: Videos, music?

Not much, because it is a large class, and we take up a lot of time. Also, in terms of materials at the beginning of the year and for two months, I had laid out half the class with soft floors and had put three desks and in front and back a large balance ball, those yoga balls, which anyone who wanted could use as a seat for an hour. For example, we have math, 6 children go with their books and do the lesson from there. This helps them release their hyperactivity, concentrate better, have better posture and makes them very happy. In fact, I had noticed that they wrote better in exams. They understand this and the weaker students come and ask to sit on the ball when we have an exam. The balance balls as a seat with a very clear framework of use, of course, help them a lot. Also, when we do a lesson that doesn't have a lot of writing, we take off our shoes, sit on the soft floors in a circle and discuss the lesson together. There I have seen that because the framework is more relaxed, the children are more comfortable, they say more things, they say more ideas. Normally they sit in groups of

four with two desks, where some look at the board a little sideways to work in groups and I saw that it helped them work as a team.

I: Do you think that cooperation with parents is important?

P4: It is very important. Although it is a little difficult. Where I am, everyone expects us to only give their children a 10. The day before yesterday when we were giving grades, a mother was furious with a miserable expression because she got a 9. And a furious mother came to me because I gave a 6. The next day when they saw the 8 and 7 and I had informed their parents, all 25 assignments in history that I had set came. The average delivery of assignments was 12 to 13, with the eights came, all 25 came. The parents are very intrusive. I have a communication notebook, if the parents want to inform me about something or I want to inform them, we write in the notebook, I have said not to send me emails. I write if someone has not brought a notebook and underneath the parents note that they were informed. And the parents write accordingly if the children did not have time to do something. I have a mother who writes a couple of pages that she does not agree with what I did, I do not respond to them of course. Immigrant parents are not like that, they respect, they listen. They have a greater need for meaningful communication, which is why they like it when I know their language, because I speak many languages. They feel more comfortable. If the parent does not understand what you want to do with their child, you cannot move forward. So, I try to have good communication with the parents to explain to them what we need and for them to tell me what problems the child is reporting so that I can help the child. It is important to have this channel of communication so that we know what is happening at home and they know what is happening at school. Immigrant parents focus more on behavior, not grades.

I: Do you think that you promote a sense of belonging, that all students feel visible, that they are equal?

P4: I think that equality can be very unfair sometimes, because for these children it is not always easy to understand what they have to do to reach a certain educational level. They have to make a much greater effort because first of all there is the language barrier, the language barrier and the fact that they live in another society with different habits that they have been living for two, three, five years while the other children have been born into this culture so it is easier for them to respond to the linguistic and behavioral code of the school and the demands of society as a whole. In other words, the children of immigrants and refugees have to overcome many more obstacles to reach the same learning level as their Greek classmates. Belonging is a continuous process and much more difficult.

I: Is there something you would like to do to promote a sense of belonging, but maybe the context or other reasons do not help?

P4: The curriculum. This is very tiring. I have the curriculum chasing me. I would like to organize events, for example, one day without lessons, a food festival where each family will cook food from their place of origin. Let's talk about them. I want to strengthen the children's cultures. But unfortunately, I'm pressed for time because all this curriculum has to be taught.

I: I don't have any more questions, I don't know if you want to add something.

P4: Because I have also lived as an immigrant by choice, I had requested a secondment in Vancouver and Bucharest, I have understood what it's like to live in a different culture, this

made me more open. It's also a matter of moral responsibility to help students understand better, to support them.

I: Great, thank you very much.

P4: Thank you too.

Participant 5 (P5)

I: What is your subject area?

P5: I am a Philologist.

I: How many years have you been teaching?

P5: 21.

I: What is your educational background?

P5: A basic degree and some seminars. In Special Education and in the administration of educational units. I will attend one on artificial intelligence.

I: What do you think are the challenges in a multicultural classroom? The language, the religion, the habits?

P5: Maybe it is the language, not only because I am a philologist. Because they cannot communicate easily, certainly also because they do not understand since in their home the mother tongue is different. In fact, by chance I had given them a language test in the third grade of secondary school and I was looking it today and what the child from Georgia wrote to me was "you cannot communicate easily because the Greek language is difficult and makes you forget your mother tongue, which is very bad". In general, the child combined their native languages with Greek, trying to learn because they are smart, but unfortunately, children find it difficult to learn Greek because they spend too much time playing video games. They don't read books, of course, it's not just that their environment uses a foreign language, but that the children are also completely fascinated by the internet.

I: Do you have any examples of difficulties that you have faced and that you believe are due to the different backgrounds of the students?

P5: No, so far, fortunately, there are no conflicts related to language or origin. The Greek children have been familiar with foreign-speaking children since primary school, they grow up together, they are friends. We have a few children of other religions, but they never clash or talk about religion among themselves. What has struck me, however, is that immigrant children, because they want to integrate and feel Greek when we take them to church, want to receive communion. And they want to be baptized, although they now keep their own name. They say "we" meaning that they are Greeks, and when they talk about refugees from Syria or elsewhere they say "them, the foreigners".

I: In general, would you say that you find it difficult to work in a multicultural classroom?

P5: Not at all. In fact, because most of our children are Balkan, through literature and language we find that there are many similarities and let's say I have them find traditions from their grandmothers and they come and tell us about them. They translate them into Greek. An example is the bridge of Arta which has similarities, the poem of the Dead Brother has similarities.

I: Does this interest you in the practices you follow, to include activities that include the students' culture?

P5: Yes, they realize that we are one and we have nothing to separate us, neither as nations nor as people.

I: Do you generally include such activities? That is, which promote self-expression?

P5: Yes, of course, I include many. Where I can find elements that are intercultural, I try to strengthen this interculturality. Through Language and Literature mainly.

I: Do you think that these practices strengthen the participation of children?

P5: In the first grades they feel a little uncomfortable and at first when they come, it is as if I am reinforcing their diversity. They see it that way, but when they start saying "we have this too", they realize that they do not have big differences after all.

I: Are there students who refuse to participate completely?

P5: They refuse because they are bored, both Greeks and immigrants. Immigrants have the excuse that they do not know the language. We try to help them as much as we can. For example, we give them fairy tales to read, easy ones, fairy tales that Greeks used to read in kindergarten, and slowly they are evolving. We also make a discount in our demands towards these children. And so that they don't get discouraged and so that they feel like they are doing something and that they are participating.

I: Do you think that immigrant students have different needs from Greek students, educationally, socially, emotionally?

P5: Educationally, definitely. They have additional needs. Especially in the first few years, they may not get a grade in language, but they are graded in History. Instead of integrating slowly and smoothly and making it easier for parents who are economic immigrants, we try whenever we have a gap or through informal remedial teaching to learn the basics. History has demanding vocabulary and what will this child understand? In the first year, all the teachers help.

I: In these cases, how do you give feedback?

P5: I reward them both orally and for what they write, of course. I don't pay attention to all the mistakes, not even spelling. My main concern is definitely for them to learn the basic structure of the language, the sentence and slowly the rules. I focus more on the positive. Otherwise they get discouraged.

I: Homework exercises?

P5: I say them to do whatever they can. And you see that it gets into them and they have to and the need to get rewarded and they strive. I may ask one thing and they may write another for an answer, but whatever they write I will count it positively, it's an effort.

I: But you see that even if they write something irrelevant, they want to write something, to participate.

P5: Exactly, that's the nice thing.

I: Apart from educational needs, on a psychological level?

P5: I haven't seen any differences. The only thing is that they may miss their parents for many hours.

I: But do you think that teachers should be care about the students' psychology?

P5: Of course they should, we never stop being educators.

I: So is it important for children to feel comfortable in the classroom?

P5: Very important.

I: Can you recognize if a student is experiencing a traumatic event?

P5: Yes, it has happened to me when some parents were violent towards their children and the children had reached the point of asking for help. A girl had said "I can't take it anymore, I'm going to kill myself" and I spoke to the parents, okay when the father realized what he was doing he cried, but he said he was very angry. The children know that I am available at any time, they come to the office and can say anything they have a problem with.

I: How would you describe yourself?

P5: Do you know what the children call me? Mom. I have a motherly attitude and many people tell me that I spoil them, maybe I should be more distant. I am also strict but they have learned to have limits and so everything works well. There are consequences if necessary. Before the holidays I imposed three-day suspensions because I had indications that bullying would start at school and I could not stop it. This is the difficult part of being a principal because you take full responsibility.

I: Do you leave space in your class for free expression?

I: I let them, yes. It can't be otherwise, there are times when they need this or something is on their mind, I see them are absent-minded, their mind is not on class. They may be concerned about the tea they are organizing, I give them a few minutes to discuss it. Or to talk about a topic related to behavior. I tell them everything is a lesson that we do. They may have seen something in the news and of course we comment on it, because how can I motivate them to become more active citizens if I don't do these things and stick to grammar?

I: Do you use group activities?

P5: Yes, not so much writing things together, I think I'll start that now too. I started them before the holidays because they are used to having speech contests, things like that. You give them a topic, for example, electronic games promote war and they have to talk about it. I put

kids there who are not good at language. Some are for it and some are against it. Or I give them role-playing games. I let them say that one is the salesman and the other wants to buy a house. Or I have them work with the dictionary, which the kids don't know how to work with the dictionary anymore. I put them in groups to find synonyms, antonyms.

I: Do you allow students to speak their language in class?

P5: It's disruptive, but sometimes we've done that too, we've accepted it. For those kids from Georgia, when they couldn't express themselves, we had their cousin translate into Greek, as best he could, of course. It wasn't for long. I think the other kids felt a little uncomfortable. There's also the suspicion that they would curse them because they know all the swear words in Albanian but they don't know them in Georgian. I'm not afraid because it's clear from their tone, their communicative disposition that the kid was trying.

I: What materials do you use besides the official books?

P5: I use the internet a lot, exercises from the internet and videos that we see on the board. I'll slowly use artificial intelligence to put videos and exercises on them. Then I will have them change the type of speech based on images from artificial intelligence, that is, change poems and make them dialogues. I write the exercises for them on the board, then I will give them ready-made ones.

I: Do you collaborate with parents?

P5: Quite a lot, I can say that we are doing well. Many times I am a little strict towards them. In students' homework, I chase after them to take care of their children because our life is not just work. We are doing well. The parents love me and I feel it. And because whenever I need to, I tell them to go do something, we made sculptures in the sand, they come and go with the children to the sea. Or other programs outside the school that we do and the parents are by their side.

I: Through your lesson, do you believe that you promote a sense of belonging?

P5: I think yes, of course it would be difficult to say the opposite, but I think every teacher wants this. I think it is possible.

I: Is there anything you would like to do about this but maybe the framework or something else doesn't allow you?

P5: I would like to put all these children in the integration classes upon the parent's request, you used to be able to. I would have the parents make a request and the children would enter the integration classes.

I: I have no other questions, do you have anything to add?

P5: The children who are most in danger of exclusion are the children with disabilities. Mainly in the first year of secondary school, then the children are not like that. The kids who come from elementary school are tough, because elementary school doesn't have the means to gather the kids. I'm fighting to cultivate empathy in the school. The kids with disabilities, the kids who are obese, those are the ones who have issues now, not the foreign language ones.

I: Great, thank you very much.

P5: Be well.

Participant 6 (P6)

I: What is your subject area?

P6: I am a philologist.

I: How many years have you been teaching?

P6: I have been teaching for 13 years.

I: What is your educational background?

P6: In addition to my degree in Philology, I have a master's degree in special education.

I: In which grades do you teach?

P6: In all grades of secondary school.

I: What are the nationalities of your students?

P6: In addition to Greeks, I have students from Albania, Romania, Georgia and Nigeria.

I: What do you think are the challenges in a multicultural classroom?

P6: I would not say that there are very serious challenges for the educator, at least in the secondary school where I am, the children are fully included, they know Greek quite well or even perfectly, they have primary school experience, so personally I would not say that it is difficult for me. On the contrary, I like having children from other countries in the classes I work in. It is interesting in many ways. You learn things about other cultures. It helps our children, the Greeks, to be more open. Interesting discussions take place. And in terms of the learning level, which is sometimes lower, look at the Greek students' level which is also low. For example, text comprehension, which is something that interests me a lot in the language, so don't think that the Greek students can understand a text. A very large part of the students cannot understand a text. The difficulties we face and the challenges in general are independent of whether the class is multicultural or not. The challenges are of course many, but I do not believe in any way that they are due to multiculturalism. On the contrary, I would say that when you have children from other countries, the lesson becomes more enjoyable and I often feel that I have more motivation. Yes, sometimes I work more, I have to plan a personalized learning, but anyway I believe as I said before that the difficulties are now independent of the origin of the students. We have to work individually, there are so many, the needs of the children are so complicated, they have a lot of difficulty especially in the literature lessons. In the language part they have a very limited vocabulary, very much difficulty in understanding the text, difficulty in the presentation so you have to work in a personalized way regardless of whether you have children who speak or do not speak Greek well in the class.

I: Do you have examples of any difficulties that you believe are due to the different ethnic and cultural background of the students?

P6: What I observe is that the different ethnic background of the students can be a reason for any conflicts only when the students are of a different color. Balkan students or the students from Georgia, well for Albania I do not discuss it at all, they do not have a problem. They do not face difficulties. The school does not have to manage unpleasant situations due to this. If something happens, it might happen to children of a different color, such as children from Nigeria. But again, the difficulties and bullying, let's say nowadays, I think it has nothing to do with children from other countries, I do not think that bullying has racist motives. The children who most often fall victims to bullying in my personal experience are children with disabilities and overweight children. Children from other countries not so much, I only told you that maybe some small comments could be heard about color. For example, we had taken a photo together and the child from Nigeria in the photo because it was not a good photo, was very dark, we had no lighting and the cell phone did not take a good photo, so this child, a boy, did not appear in the photo at all. There were some comments there that "you are so black, how you could be seen?" But it was from the few times that I heard racist comments in the schools where I have worked, I tell you mainly in bullying, the attack, the negative comments, the insults and the exclusions are made towards children who have some kind of disability. With children who are immigrants, Greek students will find their common ground and you know now the common ground and what interests children especially in adolescence is Minecraft, Fortnite and all those games that they play, so if a child plays Play Station the boys will join them, or if he also play football, the girls will also accept them, they also accept girls from other countries quite easily. The children who are left alone, if you look at them and at the yard, are the ones who have some kind of disability. These are usually the victims, and many negative comments about the chubby children.

I: So I understand that it is not difficult for you to work in a multicultural classroom.

P6: No, not at all, I told you the opposite, I like it. Of course, the truth is that I have never had a student who did not know any Greek at all. I imagine that if I had students, and indeed many in the class, who did not know Greek at all, then perhaps it would be difficult for me, not because I would not be able to cope, but perhaps the lesson would have to be slower, as a result of which they would not be able to cover the curriculum. With me in my experience so far, it doesn't bother me at all, I like it. The students I've had so far are children who, although they don't speak Greek well, but their level is from average and above, it's not zero. If the first year comes and I have to teach them ancient Greek, let's say, and history, that would be difficult for me. But when the students understand the basics, you can come to an understanding, then you can easily work with them on the learning and behavioral aspects.

I: What do you think are the needs of immigrant students on an emotional, educational and social level?

P6: As the most important need, I would say the financial difficulties of the family and poverty can be a part of exclusion and creates other kinds of needs, it also creates emotional and educational needs. It seems that the children I have who are from countries such as Albania and Georgia, the parents cannot support them, they cannot help them with their lessons, nor can they easily send them to tutoring and study centers. So there you see the difference with the Greeks, that is, the Greeks are more likely to have studied even if you don't think they are properly studied, they may also be poorly studied or have been taught by others, at study centers or by the teachers they have at home. Immigrant students in this area of learning are

not very well cared for, I'm not saying that parents are not interested in the progress of their children, they are interested but I think they can't cover their learning needs very well. In many cases, parents work long hours so they may not cover their emotional needs either, that is, I see that many times children and especially girls from other countries are more likely to approach me to talk to me, they really need contact with adults, especially female teachers. I suppose this is due to the fact that the parents work long hours or the parents may also have to face additional difficulties. The economic difficulties of immigrants are evident and I think it is the most important thing, that is, you see it in many cases, you see it from their clothes, you see it from the school excursions that immigrants may not participate in, you see it from when we say our news. What they have to share is much less compared to the Greek students. That is, what they do is much less now, for example, we had the Christmas holidays. I am not saying that all Greeks went on vacation, of course not, now we all face economic difficulties, but the Greek students had more news to say, they did more things. Most of them had a village to go to, a grandmother or an aunt somewhere. The children from Albania, Georgia, and Nigeria, what they said is that "we did nothing", "I was at home and watching TV", "I was playing with my mobile phone". And you know that is important and affects the entire functioning of children, it also affects the learning outcome, if it has no experiences, you have no experiences it affects the development of children, so yes I would say that the financial is the most important.

I: What means do you use to identify the needs of students?

P6: What I mentioned before, the financial needs are visible. As for the emotional ones, I talk a lot with the children, that is, I try to create a relationship with them when I find time, we also have one-on-one discussions and in the classroom we have many discussions. During breaks I am close to them, they know that anyone who wants something can contact me so it is not difficult to identify the needs. The most basic means by which you can identify their needs is the relationship with the children, relationship and observation.

I: So how would you characterize yourself as a teacher? Do you consider yourself approachable?

P6: Yes, I consider myself approachable.

I: Do you consider it important to know the culture of the students?

P6: Yes, I am very interested in the background of the children I work with. I am interested in learning things from their culture, I also put a lot of pressure on the parents to speak to them in their native language because you know, many immigrant parents speak Greek to their children. What I tell parents and students is that they should speak their language and know the culture from their country of origin. I encourage this and I bring it into the classroom as much as I can, that is, the way I teach the lesson includes this part, to get to know new cultures, so I myself am looking for it, I consider it very important for the teacher to know the cultures of the children.

I: Do you think that teachers should be interested in the psychology of the students?

P6: Of course. Because I also have experience from special education, I know very well that if a student is not having a good time, he will not learn and will make life difficult for you too,

they will make a fuss in the classroom, aggression, intensity. The psychology of the students is a very important part of our work.

I: Do you leave space and time for free expression in the classroom?

P6: I try, it's not very easy. But I'm very interested. When I manage to do it and I'm not pressed for time and the curriculum, I really want the children to talk and that's what happens. So even if I didn't allow it or even if I didn't plan to leave time, the children will find a way to express themselves. You know, many times it seems that something is on their mind. Even if you don't want to, you have to give them time to say what's on their mind because if you don't, you won't be able to teach a lesson, they won't listen to you, they will talk to each other or they will make noise.

I: So can you recognize if a student is experiencing a traumatic event?

P6: I think so. It is not difficult to understand the students if you are observant. You will understand it and even if you don't understand it because he hasn't expressed it to you in words, you will understand it in other ways, you will see that someone is not participating, you will see that someone is not talking, you will see that someone is not writing, you will see that someone is not playing during the break. You can understand if someone is not having a good time if something is bothering them.

I: In the case that someone or some students are not participating, what do you do?

P6: If I see that some students have something that is bothering them, I ask them and we discuss it. If it is something they do not want to express, I give them time. If I understand that they are not participating because the lesson is difficult for them, I change it, I try to be flexible.

I: You organize the lesson with the aim of everyone participating, I imagine.

P6: Yes, definitely. I always think about what they like and in some way I try to put it into the lesson. When we work on texts with comprehension questions, at the end I always ask questions that concern them, for example, "What would you do in the author's place? Have you experienced a similar incident?" Since you study teaching practices that promote belonging, for me belonging means being visible and accepted, and the best practice for belonging is to let the other person talk about themselves, about their experiences, about what they would like to do, and about what they believe. There is no student who does not want to talk about what they believe. Perhaps they do not want to write them down. Especially those who do not know Greek well may have a refusal to write. But they will talk. Of course, we want them to write, but if they talk, in the future they will write too. Because there is this refusal to write, I use mind maps a lot. Instead of comprehension questions that require them to write long paragraphs, I ask them to make mind maps based on specific questions. That's how they write and they are not afraid. Then they can more easily move on to sentences and texts. I also include many group activities that do not go well, of course. It's hard for the children to cooperate, but as long as they don't fight, I do it. It helps immigrant students. I also set up a lot of projects. All the students like these. I also set up group project-based activities that they prepare at school, find the material, photos and texts at home, and then compose them again at school. Many projects have themes based on the characteristics of the students, such as the food that each person writes about, food from their place. We also made fairy tales from various parts of Greece and the students' countries. The personal

information helps, as I told you. Like choices. They are motivated. Although some may be shy. When I ask them to speak in their language, they are shy, they don't want to. They don't even want us to say good morning in their languages, maybe because they are teenagers and want to identify with their Greek classmates, maybe they feel different when we speak in their language and they react. When we hear songs from their countries, some may be a little embarrassed at first, but then, as the months go by, it gets better.

I: Do they want to present projects or other activities? Do you encourage this?

P6: Of course, I encourage it and they do. And those who don't speak Greek well do it, although they hesitate. If it's a presentation with a classmate, they are more positive about speaking. We also stick them on the walls.

I: Do you put a lot of homework?

P6: No, very little and I give choices. I say, from the five exercises, choose any two you want. Some days I don't put anything at all.

I: How do you give feedback?

P6: I don't say a lot of bravo, nor do I correct all the mistakes. What I do is at the end of the exercises or the report, I write a few comments, starting with the positives and then what they should pay attention to. I also write a few words that the students got wrong as a small vocabulary. I usually let them see the mistakes themselves, we write the correct ones on the board and the students correct them.

I: What materials do you use?

P6: The internet a lot. For everything. For everything we say I show relevant images and videos. We watch a lot of videos and music.

I: Do you collaborate with the parents?

P6: I try, I want to, but they focus too much on grades and learning. They don't want other discussions.

I: Through your lesson do you believe that do you foster a sense of belonging?

P6: Yes, I believe so. I believe that it plays a role in the fact that I am not prejudiced against foreign students and all the students are influenced by my attitude. I believe so. They are influenced by us. So I think the climate in my classes is positive and that helps. That's what I want to believe. I hope I'm not wrong.

I: Is there anything you would like to do that you can't?

P6: Yes, I would like another school. I would like less curriculum to teach, better books and a different direction, from elementary school. A student-centered school. Children have been trained since elementary school to be passive, the weakest are observers. Many times I think they refuse to think. As if they don't know how to think. The damage has been done since elementary school.

I: Would you like to add anything else?

P6: No.

I: Thank you very much.

P6: Be well.

Participant 7 (P7)

I: What is your subject area?

P7: I am a Philologist.

I: How many years have you been teaching?

P7: 8.

I: What is your educational background?

P7: In addition to my degree in philology, I have a master's degree in special education and a seminar in special education.

I: What are the countries of origin of your students?

P7: Apart from Greece, I have students from Albania, Russia, Bulgaria, Nigeria and Madagascar.

I: What do you think are the challenges in a multicultural classroom?

P7: I think language is the most important thing, not only because I am a philologist. It is important in a classroom that all students speak the same language and this would help our work a lot. When there are children who do not speak Greek well, the teacher has difficulty, that is, many times I have to stop the lesson and explain something that for Greeks is known, this makes it difficult for me, I think they are wasting time. Also, children from Africa are poorer, and this can also affect their psychology or affect the support that parents can give them. A family that does not have such big financial problems can support their child's learning by sending them to a tutor or when the child is having difficulty, they can take them to a teacher outside of school to help them. Parents from Africa or other parents are mainly immigrants, not that Greeks are always rich, on the contrary, Greeks also have difficulty, but for immigrants it is much more difficult.

I: Would you say in general that it is difficult for you to work in a multicultural classroom?

P7: Yes, it's not too difficult for me, but I definitely have to work harder, maybe I should work more individually, for example, when I think about the exercises I'm going to set for homework, I have to think that there are some children who either won't do it at all, or will do fewer, or will do the easier ones, and so I have to prepare 2 level exercises that are easier so that even the weakest students who don't speak Greek well can participate. The same goes for exams. I can't have one exam and give it to all the children because there are some who won't write anything. You know, giving 5 or 6 students blank sheet is devastating to the class, it doesn't help me, but it doesn't help them either, the students get frustrated, then they can get tense, become defiant, or feel like they don't belong in the class, so they can be aggressive

with their classmates, or try to gain ground by making a fuss and trying to get attention. When you let students feel like they're just spectators, I think that's what happens, in the end they find other ways to exist. They'll make a fuss, they'll bother their classmates, and they'll be defiant towards me because they feel like I'm not doing anything to support their participation.

I: Can you talk to me a little bit about the issue of participation, are there any students who refuse to participate? What do you do about that?

P7: Yes, of course there are students who don't participate, the only reason they don't participate is because they feel like they can't. So, as I said before, I do everything I do by thinking about the needs of the children and their learning level. I operate on many levels at the same time because I don't want to do injustice to those who are more advanced, so all the exercises have many levels, I give students choices. And in the exams and in the homework exercises and in the exercises they do at school, I have prepared 5-6 exercises and I say "choose the 2 that you want". Also, to strengthen participation, I put a lot of personal information into it, we have a lot of discussions about the children's interests, we have discussions about their countries of origin, I give them project-based activities for home which if I know that the students live nearby, they can also be group projects and are related to their interests. Recently, I put a project on football and both Greeks and children from Africa wrote in it. It turned out really nice, we have also done similar projects on music, food, the children really like these and even those who seem to get bored when I have to ask them to look up information on the internet, they all do it, there is not a single one who will come and say, "I didn't do it." Another thing we did recently and they really liked it is because I play guitar, I asked them to find a song from their place and bring me a song that they like, of course this also concerned the Greeks because not everyone is from Athens, everyone has a place of origin, some are from the Cyclades, some from Crete, some from Thessaloniki. So they brought the song and I played parts from the songs they brought to the class, they liked it very much, their eyes lit up and since then they keep asking me to do some of them. Sometimes I bring the guitar and we play some songs. We definitely listen to a lot of songs, I use the internet a lot in class and we talk a lot about other cultures and I am interested in knowing the cultures of the children and mainly through music but also for the children it is important to know the cultures of their classmates, to know what people eat in other places, to see other places with photos, to listen to music. I work a lot with music and I also put music a lot in the literature lesson. In the literature lesson I also ask them to bring me examples from their place, poems, legends, and myths and there we see a lot of similarities, with the African students not so much of course, but with the Balkans a lot. You can't imagine how many poems we have in common with them, how many common themes we probably encounter in literature, we have a lot with Albanians and Bulgarians, and the children like that when they discover it, and that's how you make the literature lesson more interesting. In general, in language and literature, when you have immigrant students, in some way the lesson becomes very, very interesting. On the contrary, where I haven't found way to make it interesting at all is in ancient Greek language and history. I mean that I can't easily use alternative material, nor simplify the lesson too much, nor have them put in their personal element, that's where I limit myself, and unfortunately some are absent-minded, of course, and again, in history, they don't give everyone the same, I also make a lot of sketches. Or sometimes I write the text myself in a short paragraph with easy vocabulary.

I: So do you think that the greatest need of immigrant students is participation?

P7: Yes of course because participation means visibility, means equality, and participation is the most important thing for immigrant students. Of course they have other needs, They have financial needs and psychological needs and learning needs but when they come to a school and feel visible everything else is kind of softened at least for school hours they feel that the differences they may have with other children, for example other children wear better clothes than me or other children were on holiday at Christmas I didn't go. But as long as they are at school it doesn't exist that's all we are all the same. And if we don't promote participation they won't stand up nor is everyone the same. I mean, I can often tell you that I get moved when a student from a foreign country who doesn't know Greek well gets up and presents his work, presents an exercise he did, a report he wrote, a project he did and the others are quiet, they listen to him ask questions, he answers and when he finishes there is always, always a small smile on his lips, that smile moves me.

I: Do you think teachers should be interested in the psychology of their students?

P7: If you don't care about the psychology of the students, you don't care about the learning outcome of the students either. These two are connected.

I: Can you recognize if a student is experiencing a traumatic event?

P7: I think I can, children show their emotions, show that something is bothering them, it is not difficult to understand what children are feeling, girls talk very little, they close themselves off a lot when they experience something unpleasant, boys can also close themselves off or they can show aggression.

I: Do you leave space for free expression in the classroom?

P7: Look, I don't let them speak whenever they want, everyone can speak, but this has to be planned. In other words, I have made sure to leave time for free expression, for everyone to talk about whatever they want, to solve a problem that may have happened during the break, but I do not allow the lesson to stop and someone to talk about something irrelevant. I have told them that if you want to say something, you will have told me previously and I will have made sure to leave time, because then I feel that I cannot control it, and then it can happen that they keep jumping around and saying irrelevant things. They know that they can talk about their own issues, as long as they have told me previously.

I: Do you allow students to speak in their own language?

P7: Look, this has never bothered me because it doesn't happen, the children don't want to speak in their own languages. The new children that still feel like they are foreigners and that they need to integrate in some way, like the children from Africa that are the children who have been in Greece for a few years. Even if I ask them to say something in their own language they don't want to say it they are embarrassed or if I put on a song from their country, at the beginning they are embarrassed. We have to conquer this for them to start accepting it or for them to talk to me. It takes some time. Those who are more comfortable with their language, with their mother tongue are the children from Albania who have been in Greece for many years. Inclusion for them is a given. So there they speak Albanian. But not for good, that is, they speak Albanian only when they want to swear. And they have also learned Albanian

swear words to the Greeks. And I know that when they speak Albanian in class it is swear words. So no, I do not allow it.

I: How do you give feedback to the students, do you give verbal rewards for example?

P7: I do not correct all mistakes. Sometimes I do not correct anything. If what I have put was more personal and free and they had to talk about something personal to them, whatever mistakes there are, I will not correct them, I will not say anything. If the goal was from the beginning the new vocabulary, the grammar and syntax, there I correct either by myself from below. I note which the correct answers are, I don't put a grade. What I do the most of the time is to write the correct answers on the board and they correct themselves.

I: Do you collaborate with the parents?

P7: I mainly try to talk to the parents about behavioral issues, but most are more interested in the grades. Immigrant parents are interested in their behavior they feel maybe a shyness or a shame, they also see us as an extension of the state. But I see that immigrant parents if you help them with something, if I give them an extra piece of information, if I spend a little more time they appreciate it very much.

I: Through your lesson, do you think you promote a sense of belonging?

P7: I try very hard, as I told you, I care about students feeling visible, I care about knowing that they are all equal, I treat them as equals, and that helps. And how other students think about their classmates. The teacher is often a role model for students. So if they see that I, for example, am interested in music from Africa or music from Albania, they automatically start to be interested too. Or in any case, they don't underestimate it. The important thing is that in the classroom we never have problems that are due to the different origins of the children. Problems do exist, they are teenagers, there may be conflicts between them, but there are no racist comments. And that interests me very much. Also about belonging I'll give you an example I've been in the same school for 3 years and I have a student who is in third grade now, he's from Africa. When he first came, that is, in first grade he didn't talk much, he didn't play much and the most important thing is that he didn't laugh, you could see that even if something funny happened in class he didn't laugh. So now in third grade this kid laughs. He talks louder. He's not afraid, that fear doesn't show in his eyes that was there when he was in first grade. So this difference in laughter for me is an indication about belonging.

I: Do you think you could do something to promote belonging even more but the context or other reasons don't help?

P7: You know what doesn't help, what doesn't help is the curriculum. It's so big, so much useless information that no matter how many ideas someone has, it's very difficult to implement them.

I: I don't have any other questions, I don't know if you want to add anything?

P7: No, I don't have anything to add.

I: Okay, thank you very much for your participation.

P7: Thank you, be well.

Participant 8 (P8)

I: What is your specialty?

P8: I am a sixth grade teacher, I have been working for 11 years and I have a master's degree in Greek literature and 2 seminars, one in adult education and one in special education.

I: What nationality are your students?

P8: In addition to Greece, I have students from Russia, Albania, Italy and Bulgaria.

I: What do you think are the challenges in a multicultural classroom?

P8: Language is a challenge, when all the students do not have the same language, then communication in the classroom becomes difficult and the teacher's job becomes a little more difficult I do not consider the other differences that children have among themselves, such as culture, important because the students are now all engaged in the same things, and they easily find their common interests and elements. This makes it clear that these children are a little more emotionally stressed. And you understand this because children easily show their emotions when they are not having a good time or are facing a traumatic event or are being abused by their parents, for example at home. You will see that they do not participate much in class, that they are aggressive towards their classmates and may even be provocative towards us teachers.

I: How do you identify these needs?

P8: Through the relationship with these children, I want to be very observant, talking to them so that they know that if they need anything, they can turn to me. I try to create a relationship with them and that way I understand what they may be experiencing. They already tell me, the children open up and are always ready to talk to the teachers.

I: Do you consider it important to know the students' culture and information about their country?

P8: Not only do I consider it important to be able to get to know these children better, but I am also interested, I personally like learning about different cultures. This also helps the classroom climate, we all know each other and we know each other's information. I also include elements of my students' culture in the lesson, and it helps a lot to organize activities based on the characteristics of the children, so the lesson becomes a little easier because when you include things that interest them and concern them and they can talk about them, they participate more easily. I show photos, music, videos from the children's countries and what I also include are many project-type activities where the students have to present something and if I can, they do this in groups. That is, if I know that the students live close by or that there is a possibility of meeting on the weekends, I include group projects in which they have to present something and everyone can add information depending on their country of origin or the place of birth of their parents.

I: Do you use alternative material in your lesson?

P8: I use the internet a lot to show videos, music, images and find information. I also use the projector a lot to work on school books in groups so that they can see them on the board and we solve the exercises on the board, that's how the correction is done. I very rarely correct the students one by one, usually we solve what they are asked to do on the board and the students below have to correct themselves.

I: How would you characterize yourself as a teacher, approachable or not?

P8: I would characterize myself as approachable, meaning I try very hard. I believe that it is very important to know my students and understand their mood, whether they are having a good time or not, so I want to be approachable and accessible so that they can share things with me.

I: Do you leave space in the classroom for free expression?

P8: I do, but I don't want the students to talk about irrelevant things on their own, I have made sure to give them time to talk about things that interest them.

I: Do you use group activities or other activities that you believe will enhance participation?

P8: As I told you, I set up group projects for the house and the composition, the desks are joined in pairs so that 4 students sit in each group, so almost everything we do is done in groups, that is, when we do an exercise, I let them talk to each other, exchange ideas, help each other, and I have told them that I want you to ask your classmates when we write, for example, a report on the spelling of words, they can ask their classmates for help. I want them to help each other whenever they try, and I also strengthen teamwork. Well, this strengthens participation, you see that being in groups makes them feel more comfortable, it also reduces exposure, but in general, I am interested in putting on interesting activities so that all the children participate. I want them to express themselves and share personal information, I put on activities about their hobbies, about their interests, I ask them to present themselves. Self-expression helps participation a lot.

I: Does it allow students to speak their own language?

P8: They don't do it on their own, I many times ask them to say some words in their languages but they are embarrassed and don't want to. Albanian students who have been in Greece for longer and feel more comfortable sometimes speak in their language but usually swear and the problem is that they have also learned these swear words from the other children so whenever another language is heard in the classroom besides Greek it is to swear. Of course I intervene there and I don't allow it.

I: Do you give homework exercises?

P8: Yes, but I do give them very selectively and I don't give everyone the same. For students who don't speak Greek well I give exercises that will help them practice a little on new vocabulary and of course I give them fewer exercises. I also give fewer exercises to children who have learning difficulties. And of course for all the children who are having difficulty I give less history lessons which is a lesson that is very difficult for them.

I: Do you cooperate with parents?

P8: We don't have very close cooperation and communication, when something comes up and I think I need to discuss it with them, I call them.

I: Do you think that the feeling of belonging is promoted through your lesson?

P8: Yes. I try very hard to do this, I want the students to feel equal to each other and I believe that they feel equal to each other and I treat them as equals. We don't have any incidents with immigrant students that we could characterize as racist. That is, the children who experience difficult situations at school, the children who are usually targeted are the disabled children mainly or the overweight ones. Immigrants are not targeted or at least I haven't seen it.

I: Is there anything you would like to do to promote the feeling of belonging but you can't because of the context or for another reason?

P8: I would like to have less curriculum so that I don't feel the pressure that I can't do everything I want because I won't have time to cover the material.

I: I have no further questions. Do you have anything else to add?

P8: No.

I: Thank you very much.

P8: Thank you.