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**Multicultural Education: Highlighting the cultural identity of migrant and refugee students as a means for learning the host language and managing the potential psychological trauma that will emerge.**

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To Giannis and Lakis,

My faithful companions on this journey.

## **Abstract**

Expanding and upgrading multicultural education is necessary in the modern interconnected world with massive migration and refugee flows, as it constitutes the cornerstone of the substantial integration of migrant and refugee students in each host country. In Greece, which has faced for years the challenge of integrating thousands of people persecuted by war and disasters, this form of education needs development and modernization. Based on semi-structured interviews with nine Greek multicultural educators, this qualitative study aims to investigate the role of students' cultural identity in acquiring the target language and their psychosocial development. Despite systemic deficiencies, the data demonstrate that participants use translanguaging and highlight aspects of their students' cultural identity in various ways. However, the monolingual and monocultural ideology dominating the Greek educational system is an obstacle to fulfilling their role. The educators attempt to showcase pupils' cultural backgrounds through inclusive group activities that promote collaboration, trust, and respect for diversity. At the same time, the research examines how teachers manage the psychological trauma that these students often carry. The resulting data demonstrate the structural changes that are required for Greek multicultural education to effectively respond to the complex needs of this vulnerable student population.

*Keywords:* multicultural education, migrants, refugees, cultural identity, psychological trauma, educational reform

## Περίληψη

Στον σύγχρονο δικτυωμένο κόσμο με τις ογκώδεις μεταναστευτικές και προσφυγικές ροές, η επέκταση και αναβάθμιση της πολυπολιτισμικής εκπαίδευσης αποτελεί αναγκαιότητα, καθώς συνιστά τον ακρογωνιαίο λίθο της ουσιαστικής ενσωμάτωσης των μεταναστών και των προσφύγων μαθητών στην εκάστοτε χώρα υποδοχής. Στην Ελλάδα, που εδώ και χρόνια αντιμετωπίζει την πρόκληση της ένταξης χιλιάδων ανθρώπων που διώκονται από πολέμους και καταστροφές, αυτή η μορφή εκπαίδευσης χρειάζεται ανάπτυξη και εκσυγχρονισμό. Αυτή η ποιοτική μελέτη, που βασίζεται σε ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις με εννέα Έλληνες εκπαιδευτικούς της πολυπολιτισμικής εκπαίδευσης, στοχεύει στη διερεύνηση του ρόλου της πολιτιστικής ταυτότητας των μαθητών στην κατάκτηση της γλώσσας-στόχου και στην ψυχοκοινωνική τους ανάπτυξη. Τα δεδομένα πιστοποιούν ότι οι συμμετέχοντες παρά τις συστημικές ελλείψεις χρησιμοποιούν το Translanguaging και τονίζουν πτυχές της πολιτιστικής ταυτότητας των μαθητών τους με διάφορους τρόπους. Ωστόσο, η μονογλωσσική και μονοπολιτισμική ιδεολογία που κυριαρχεί στο ελληνικό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα θέτει εμπόδια στην εκπλήρωση του ρόλου τους. Οι εκπαιδευτικοί επιχειρούν να αναδείξουν το πολιτιστικό υπόβαθρο των μαθητών μέσω ομαδικών συμπεριληπτικών δραστηριοτήτων που προάγουν τη συνεργασία, την εμπιστοσύνη και τον σεβασμό στη διαφορετικότητα. Παράλληλα, η έρευνα εξετάζει τους τρόπους με τους οποίους οι εκπαιδευτικοί διαχειρίζονται το ψυχολογικό τραύμα που συχνά φέρουν αυτοί οι μαθητές. Τα δεδομένα που προκύπτουν καταδεικνύουν τις διαρθρωτικές αλλαγές που απαιτούνται προκειμένου η ελληνική πολυπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση να ανταποκριθεί αποτελεσματικά στις σύνθετες ανάγκες αυτού του ευάλωτου μαθητικού πληθυσμού.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: πολυπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση, μετανάστες, πρόσφυγες, πολιτιστική ταυτότητα, ψυχολογικό τραύμα, εκπαιδευτική μεταρρύθμιση

# 1. Introduction

Migration and refugee flows have increased dramatically in the first decades of the 21st century. People persecuted by war, ethnic cleansing, economic strangulation, and environmental disasters seek refuge in Western countries. As a country of entry into Europe, Greece has been accepting a large percentage of these vulnerable populations for years, which often causes dissatisfaction among the natives, who simultaneously suffer from a long-term economic crisis. Their integration constitutes a significant challenge as pressure is exerted on institutions, and xenophobia is caused among many citizens. Respect for international law and the protection of the rights of migrants, especially refugees, is achieved through their meaningful integration and the provision of opportunities to meet their urgent needs.

Education is a cornerstone in their inclusion in the host country and their transformation into active citizens. Multiple challenges, such as systemic, linguistic, and general cultural barriers, hinder the learning process. The dominant monocultural and monolingual ideology perpetuates outdated traditional teaching methods that do not meet the needs of modern globalized society (Chatzidaki & Tsokalidou, 2021). However, multicultural educators can contribute to these vulnerable students' academic and psychosocial development with innovative and inclusive pedagogical methods. Treating multiculturalism as an opportunity rather than a challenge and obstacle broadens the learning process, and teachers and students are enriched by diversity.

This thesis is the result of research questions that arose during my internship. While teaching ten refugee students from six different countries and attempting to build bridges of communication, I wondered about the role of their cultural identity in achieving learning and psychosocial goals. I noticed how showcasing linguistic elements and elements of their culture as a bridge of communication facilitated the learning process. At the same time, I was confronted with the psychological trauma of some of them, which led me to wonder about how educators manage it.

The small-scale research was conducted online via the Skype application. Thus, the communication was audiovisual and flexible in time. The participants are women aged 28 to 57 years. Several of them have long experience in multicultural education. They have worked or are working in a multicultural school in the center of Athens, in an area with a high migrant and refugee population.

This research, therefore, focuses on investigating the role of students' cultural identity in promoting their language development. It is aligned with various studies that certify that cognitive and psychosocial development is founded on the utilization of the cultural acquisitions of each individual or people (Gay, 2018, p. 106-8). It sheds light on their methods to incorporate elements of students' cultural identity into teaching. It, therefore, aims to demonstrate the beliefs of Greek educators regarding promoting diversity as a bridge for linguistic and emotional advancement. Furthermore, it examines how Greek multicultural teachers manage the emerging psychological trauma of refugee students in particular. At the same time, it highlights the multiple systemic obstacles that participants face in their efforts to meet the needs of their students, as well as their suggestions for overcoming the barriers (Gay, 2018). Thus, the challenges that govern multicultural education can be transformed into opportunities for integration and equity.

Qualitative research is the most suitable for emerging and understanding complex human experiences. It is based on semi-structured interviews with nine multicultural teachers. The choice of a flexible interview structure aims to build direct and meaningful communication between the researcher and the interviewees so that unpredictable data can often arise (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 102-105). Through these, the participants' experiences, beliefs, pedagogical methods, and the measures they propose to facilitate their work emerge (Isari & Pourkos, 2016, p. 28). Thematic analysis of the data highlights the dominant patterns and issues that concern teachers, allowing for a deeper understanding of their experiences in the context of multicultural education. Ethical principles such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and anonymity were ensured during the research process as the goal is for participants to gain a voice, demonstrating the complexity of the multicultural context (Taylor et al., 2015).

The sample is limited, and the findings cannot be generalized to the majority of Greek teachers. Furthermore, most come from the same work environment, a model school for the underfunded and understaffed Greek education system. Therefore, they do not have universal validity.

This study aims to outline the Greek multicultural reality for which there is limited literature, as the State is not particularly interested in expanding it. In particular, it seeks to shed light on the management of diversity by teachers and the traumatic experiences

that vulnerable students carry and hinder their cognitive and psychological development. It could contribute to informing the competent authorities for the effective design of appropriate educational programs that will train teachers to meet the particular needs of this student population. Although many of them unfortunately remain outside the educational system due to practical obstacles, the majority who do enter face significant difficulties in acquiring the target language. Theoretical and superficial approaches to diversity inevitably need to be replaced by innovative methods and modern teaching tools so that teachers and students can become carriers of knowledge and equity. Inclusive and culturally sensitive pedagogical methods are essential for a sustainable multicultural society in the 21st century.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Multicultural education seems necessary in the modern globalized world with massive migration and refugee flows. Researchers and educators who embrace the values of equality and respect for diversity have been studying cultural interaction for decades and proposing radical changes to the hitherto dominant educational systems to respond to the multiple cognitive and psychosocial needs of migrant and refugee students.

### **2.1. The foundation of multicultural education**

Multicultural education is a product of processes that have taken place over the past 50 years. The global upheavals after World War II and the large migration flows of recent decades have highlighted multicultural education as a necessity despite the systemic resistance states often pose to its prevalence.

Multicultural education's philosophical foundations were laid by the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in 1968 (Freire, 1968). As a proponent of transformative education, he emphasized the role of critical awareness and processing of the socio-political and economic conditions that create oppressors and oppressed (p.73-74) (Freire, 1968). This priority and questioning of the dominant perception of education that perpetuates inequalities and marginalizes the weak make Freire a precursor of later multicultural education. At the same time, respect for the cultural achievements of oppressed peoples and their utilization in the learning process was a central demand of researchers and educators of subsequent multicultural education to integrate different cultural aspects into each educational curriculum (p.108-111) (Freire, 1968). Although Freire's views seem utopian, as decades later, educational systems are still primarily determined by the oppressors and deny opportunities to the oppressed; he undoubtedly inspired the pioneers of educational reforms that promote equality and diversity.

Sonia Nieto's *Affirming Diversity* (1992) is a remarkable source of inspiration and motivation for multicultural educators who seek to consolidate equality and equity in education. Differentiating the two concepts, she underlines the latter's value as the quintessence of effective multicultural education. She points out the importance of equal opportunities for all students but emphasizes that it is not enough as it is necessary to illuminate and remove the socio-political and economic injustices that prevent marginalized students from their cognitive and psychosocial development. It therefore

calls on teachers to become aware of the social inequalities that the educational system perpetuates through the homogenization of students' different cultural backgrounds and their assimilation with the dominant ideology and culture. It even emphasizes the value of diversity as an advantage and not as a problem as it enriches the learning process and the personality of students (p.7-9). However, the practical directions she provides are difficult to apply in underfunded educational environments such as Greece. The institutional framework that restricts teachers often does not allow the implementation of Nieto's ideas and inhibits the implementation of substantial reform.

In the article “Equity Pedagogy: “An Essential Component of Multicultural Education” McGee Banks and Banks (1995) emphasize that the effectiveness of multicultural education depends on five parameters related to the integration of the corresponding content, the knowledge construction procedure, the reduction of prejudices, the pedagogy of equality, and the strengthening of school culture and social structure. They even present practices for implementing multiculturalism. They demonstrate the importance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum and teaching methods so that the learning process becomes familiar to everyone and familiarity with diversity is achieved in depth. The democratization and modernization of curricula to respond to students' life experiences is crucial for learning to acquire meaning. Collaborative classroom activities with different layouts will favor various student engagement and interaction activities. This will sharpen the team spirit and reduce prejudices against diversity while prioritizing understanding and critical thinking. The researchers finally underline the importance of educators’ introspection and self-analysis so that they become aware of the prejudices that limit their psycho-spiritual flexibility and tolerance. However, that the above positions that promote equality in education, they largely require the activation and participation of the competent authorities in implementing these changes, which often does not happen.

Additionally, despite the positive attitude of many educators towards diversity, it seems that the multiple and varied shortcomings in the field of multicultural education make it difficult to fulfill their role as agents of transformation. Banks (2013) outlines the evolutionary stages of this form of education. With its roots in ethnic studies during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of the 1960s, it has taken on new forms over time. Gradually, it evolved into a multi-ethnic education that included content from

different ethnicities in the school curriculum to promote equality among students. However, this approach proved to be insufficient, and later scholars pointed out the necessity of reflecting diversity in many aspects of the school environment (p.74-75). As a result of these demands, modern globalized multicultural education was formed with an emphasis on understanding the interaction of aspects of diversity such as race, class, and gender on a global level. This establishes a broader approach to the concept of diversity within the educational process.

Sleeter (2001) follows the same line as Banks' holistic approach to multicultural education. While the former emphasizes the need to reform curricula and educational organizations and systems, the latter complements the proposed reform framework by underlying the value of substantial teacher training. More specifically, she proposes strategies for upgrading the teaching relationship and practice with migrant and refugee students (Sheeter, 2001). She emphasizes the necessity for teachers to cultivate self-awareness regarding their cultural prejudices and to critically process them with the aim of strengthening their cultural competence and sensitivity (p. 96-98) (Sheeter, 2001). However, although it highlights the role of teachers in promoting inclusion and eliminating educational inequalities, it probably overemphasizes their responsibility by overlooking the systemic obstacles that teachers are called upon to face.

A comprehensive view of multicultural education provided worldwide is presented by Carl Grant in his work "Global Constructions of Multicultural Education" (2001). In this collective effort, researchers present the different conditions that prevail in various countries and the practices that are applied in the context of multicultural education. It highlights the need to address issues of inequality at a global level rather than merely superficially accepting diverse cultural elements (p. 54-55, 321). It considers radical reforms in the education sector necessary to promote equality and social change. Grant recognizes the socio-political and economic resistance faced by implementing meaningful and effective multicultural education and attempts to suggest ways to overcome the obstacles (p. 225-6). Grant suggests curriculum changes to include elements of students' identities related to race, language, gender, and economic class (p. 365-6). At the same time, he emphasizes the need for training and changing the mindset of educators to more fully address the complex needs that emerge in a multicultural classroom (p.17-19). Despite the difficulty of implementing the practices he proposes,

the work of Grant and his collaborators constitutes a cornerstone of multicultural education.

The necessity of culturally responsive pedagogy is demonstrated in the remarkable work of Delpit (2006), which examines the dynamics that develop due to the clash of the cultural backgrounds of immigrant and refugee students with the dominant ideology and culture (p. 24-25). She introduces the concept of the culture of power and the need for students to analyze and critically process it while highlighting the value of their lived experiences (Delpit, 2006). She sees multicultural educators as cultural mediators who, with cultural sensitivity, are called upon to bridge the gap between the dominant culture and the cultural identity of students (p. 144-146). Delpit highlights the importance of the context of knowledge by emphasizing the participation of the students' family in the learning process. The relationships of trust that usually connect its members favor acquiring and consolidating knowledge (p. 96-97). However, the problem of inadequately trained teachers, especially in underfunded systems, remains, and the necessary skills that Delpit points out are often absent.

The importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into learning is demonstrated through Geneva Gay's many years of research. Her recent article, which is in line with the study of Delpit, contains the quintessence of her path in multicultural education to date as she defines CRT (Culturally Responsive Teaching). This is an approach that aims to highlight students' cultural identities as a means of academic achievement, respecting diversity and establishing equity (Gay, 2018, p. 106-8). Gay provides educators with guidelines to transform their teaching and classrooms to express diversity and achieve inclusion. She encourages them to foster students' critical processing of the status quo and to decode the hidden forces that perpetuate inequalities (p.110). Her contribution could therefore be considered crucial as she does not simply theorize but also provides practical and in-depth proposals for transforming the still dominant monocultural perspective of education.

The catalytic role of students' cultural identity in their cognitive and psychosocial development is also confirmed in the study by Altugan (2015). She highlights that highlighting their cultural origins strengthens their self-esteem and their ability to socialize and collaborate. As a researcher and educator, she proposes adapting teaching to the cultural backgrounds of students so that they are motivated to actively engage in

the learning process. However, the implementation of this approach seems utopian, especially in educational systems such as the Greek one, where classes are overcrowded and the logistical infrastructure is inadequate.

## **2.2. Cultural identity promotion educational practices**

The application of the theory regarding the value of multiculturalism has been achieved to a large extent by scholars who have practically highlighted cultural diversity as an advantage and not a simple challenge for educators. Great emphasis has been placed on the linguistic identity of students, which plays a fundamental role in the construction of new knowledge in host countries.

One of the most influential practices in achieving the academic and psychosocial development of foreign-speaking and often marginalized students is Jim Cummins' Identity Texts. These are creative, multimodal, and collaborative creations of students that stem from their experiences and reflect their cultural backgrounds. These dual books, written in two languages, the language of the students' home and that of the host country, empower students and their identities (Cummins et Early, 2011, p. 48-50). In his studies, he emphasizes the usefulness of L 1 for the acquisition of L 2. For this reason, he criticizes educational policies and practices that degrade students' home language and hinder its use in the context of educational practice (Cummins et al., 2015). He even considers the prevailing view that using only the target language to the detriment of the native language leads to academic success and faster learning of the dominant language to be simplistic. From the many years of research he has conducted in multicultural educational environments, he has found that respecting and utilizing students' pre-existing linguistic repertoire accelerates language learning (Cummins, 2019). Although Cummins' work demonstrates the close relationship between language, identity, and educational equity, it focuses on the linguistic domain, overlooking other aspects of students' identities such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, which also play a critical role in the learning process.

Roswita Dressler (2014) and is also moving in the same direction of highlighting students' linguistic identity. With the Language Portrait Silhouette (LPS) task, she seeks to develop students' self-awareness regarding their linguistic repertoire. This includes three levels, experience, affiliation, and inheritance, that students need to realize to develop further. Through this multimodal and creative practice, the students' linguistic

repertoire is visualized and the connection between language and emotion becomes apparent (Kusters & Meulder, 2019). It seems that with such methods, learning is transformed into an experience of self-awareness.

The seamless use of students' linguistic repertoire in the context of acquiring a new language has been studied in detail by Ofelia Garcia. Translanguaging is an innovative and at the same time completely natural practice of language development. Humans utilize whatever linguistic capabilities we have to communicate and develop (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). However, educational systems have for decades promoted only the dominant language of each state, downgrading the value of the language skills already acquired by the student. Garcia and Kleyn (2017) demonstrate the value of this practice in acquiring a new language and academic success. Embracing Cummins' findings regarding the importance of L 1 in acquiring L 2, she encourages students to develop their mother tongue so that it can serve as a foundation for building the target language. It highlights, therefore, the fluid nature of language and the inexhaustible possibilities in the combination of linguistic elements in the context of communication. However, the scientifically proven effective practice of Translanguaging clashes with outdated monocultural and monolingual ankylosis that largely dominate the educational systems of the modern world.

The need to promote Culturally Responsive Teaching is also confirmed by Jo Worthy et al. (2003), who coined the term “subtractive schooling” to highlight the failure or refusal of many educational systems to include the linguistic and cultural identity of students in the shaping of the education provided. In the context of new technologies, Woodley et al. (2017) underline the crucial role that online programs can play in highlighting the cultural identity of students attractively and interactively. With the multimedia they provide, they facilitate communication by removing language barriers that may arise, especially at the beginning of the learning process. Despite the innovative applications to overcome the barriers preventing people from communicating in the modern globalized world, these require appropriate user training and adequate funding to modernize outdated educational systems.

Effective interventions such as targeted workshops, systematic guidance of teachers by mental health professionals, and teacher support groups are deemed necessary (Bottiani et al., 2018, p. 378-9). Through these, a supportive learning and culturally sensitive

environment is achieved, leading to academic and psychosocial development. Cummings & Blatherwick (2017) present a Creative Development Program through which creativity and cultural sensitivity are promoted, and students are motivated to participate actively (p. 65-67). These are crucial reforms that the 21st century demands to meet the multiple needs that the multicultural contemporary reality creates (Bottiani et al., 2018).

### **2.3. Trauma management**

Multicultural educators often face the psychological trauma that refugee students carry. Effectively managing it from a pedagogical perspective is necessary for students to feel as safe as possible and to be able to develop cognitively and psychosocially. A holistic pedagogical approach requires the provision of multi-level empowerment and care for traumatized and marginalized students.

Trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by interfering with physical and psychosocial functions of the human being are examined by Van der Kolk in his remarkable work “The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma” (2014). The researcher explains how trauma distorts the brain's normal functions by disrupting perception, memory, and emotional balance (p. 59-60).

Van der Kolk also highlights the beneficial effects of a safe environment where mentally traumatized people can find their voice and express their experiences. For that reason, he underscores the critical role of school in the trauma-healing process (“schools can function as islands of safety in a chaotic world”). These students urgently need to be seen and known (Kolk, 2014). He suggests often discouraged teachers to build day-to-day routines of interaction with students that will set boundaries of mutual respect and self-respect that they are unaware of. Van der Kolk stresses the need for training of all educational staff regarding psychological trauma to achieve its effective treatment. He proposes creative ways of teaching and communication to build a channel for externalizing and transforming trauma into awareness and action (p. 377-380). The documented effect of trauma on mind and body and the measures proposed by the researcher, although enlightening, often prove challenging to implement, especially in under-functioning educational systems such as the Greek one (Kolk, 2014).

Kaplan et al. (2016) certify with their research that post-traumatic stress slows down cognitive development, as it causes psychological instability, lack of concentration, reduced self-control, and ability to concentrate. They confirm with their research that post-traumatic stress slows down cognitive development, as it causes psychological instability, lack of concentration, reduced self-control, and inability to concentrate (Kaplan et al., 2016) They emphasize the need to implement culturally sensitive assessments to establish a climate of respect and safety that will favor the development of students. Rousseau and Guzder (2008) propose creatively processing and transforming students' trauma through collaborative, culturally responsive educational activities. They argue that school has the potential to function as a catalytic means of spiritual and mental empowerment of migrant and refugee pupils so that they can acclimatize and integrate more effectively (Rousseau, 2008). In additional research, Rousseau et al. (2012) investigated through a pilot program the effectiveness of educational art forms in the field of psychological trauma.

Montgomery's inquiry (2010) examines the close relationship between individual traumatic experiences and the post-migration environment, highlighting the pivotal role that school can play in this area. This is the conclusion reached by Kia-Keating & Ellis (2007) as they discovered that school can alleviate symptoms of post-traumatic stress such as depression. Through accepting diversity and cultivating a climate of belonging, students develop their spiritual and mental balance. Within the field of strengthening students' psyche, Tummala-Narra (2007) emphasizes that teachers need to become aware of and take into account people of different cultural backgrounds deal with traumatic experiences, acquiring psychological resilience.

Particular emphasis has been placed on managing the traumatic experiences of war that refugee students often carry. Chandi Fernando and Michel Ferrari (2016) explore the psychological trauma of children in war zones and conclude that a supportive learning framework dominated by cultural sensitivity can have a balancing and healing effect on war experiences. Institutional programs and targeted interventions become crucial to creating a safe framework for these vulnerable populations (p.100, 121). Thus, school can be a means of strengthening mental resilience and adaptability. Sullivan & Simonson (2016) focus on educational interventions aimed at empowering student war survivors. They distinguish them into three categories depending on their beneficial

effects on the way students think and express their emotions, as well as on the multimodal effort to meet their needs. Although the proposed measures are not always effective as traumatic experiences may be multiple and hidden, targeted interventions are likely to improve the psychosocial and cognitive state of victims.

#### **2.4. The Greek multicultural educational reality**

This small-scale research highlights the need for an organized and specialized provision of multicultural education. The Greek educational reality is far from realizing culturally responsive education. The underfunded and under-functioning intercultural programs and schools seem to reflect the refusal of the state and, to a large extent, Greek society to embrace diversity and protect the rights of refugees.

The article by Chatzidaki and Tsokalidou (2021) presents a picture of the situation prevailing in multicultural education in Greece over the last decade, focusing on the obstacles and offering suggestions for their removal. Inadequate education and training of teachers, the lack of appropriate materials and infrastructure, as the large number of students of different cultural backgrounds, constitute the main challenges for educators. The above picture is complemented by the findings of Georgia Fotiadou et al. (2016), who underline the largely outdated approach of educators to multiculturalism. They found that the emphasis on language teaching, and indeed a monolingual approach to it, dominates the educational community. They underline, also, the largely outdated approach of educators to multiculturalism. To the aforementioned challenges, Zsófia Nagy (2018) adds the lack of adequate coordination between NGOs and the Greek state regarding the management of the huge refugee flows, situations that are exacerbated by the economic crisis that the country has gone through.

Greek teachers, largely under-trained in managing multilingualism and multiculturalism, need corresponding specialization. When this is provided, according to research by Giorgos Simopoulos and Kostas Magos (2020), both they and their students strengthen their respect for diversity. The determination and resilience of the students in the face of adversity shook in several cases the teachers' prejudices towards foreign students and strengthened their motivation to upgrade their pedagogical methods. It would contribute to strengthening their demanding work, according to Antoniadou et al. (2022), learning and utilization of modern methods and digital educational tools for Greek teachers to respond to the multiple possibilities and

challenges of a multicultural classroom. Karanikola et al. (2022) point out that in the modern digital era, global capabilities are developing, while intercultural competencies are weakening. Although they attempt to utilize the cultural background of their students through interactive teaching methods, they recognize the importance of their substantive education. Despite the ethnocentric beliefs that some educators still hold, the majority support the integration of migrant and refugee students into Greek schools and society recognizing the benefits of multiculturalism (Giavrimis & Dimitriadou (2023). It seems that the educational community is becoming familiar with diversity and realizing the need to train teachers and modernize educational tools.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The present research intends to investigate the significance of highlighting the cultural identity of refugee and migrant students as a means of learning the host language in multicultural education. At the same time, it aims to discover the methods that educators apply to deal with the possible psychological trauma that could emerge from pupils with refugee and marginalization backgrounds. The study seeks substantial participation of multicultural teachers in the research process through interviews that reveal the strategies they apply within the multicultural classroom.

#### **3.1. Methodological Approach**

The qualitative method, which sheds light on the experiences of the research participants and promotes the understanding of their point of view, was deemed more appropriate for an in-depth comprehension of the subject. The flexibility of the method makes it ideal for studying human behaviors and experiences, as the research can be adapted to new research data that may arise (Isari & Pourkos, 2016). The approach, though descriptive data, seek to explore the relationship between cultural identity and learning in conjunction with the management of psychological trauma. However, the limited sample does not allow generalization of the scientific findings.

#### **3.2. Data Collection**

Primary data collection was based on semi-structured interviews with nine multicultural education teachers. Although the researcher has a general plan of issues she seeks to investigate, she also allows experiences not directly related to them to emerge. The open-ended questions they answered were concerned with using students' cultural diversity as a springboard for their language development. Thus, participants are invited to openly share their subjective experiences and express their concerns and feelings. It is a method that favors the emergence and detection of inner thoughts, behaviors, and trends that would be more difficult to identify with other qualitative methods. As the questions do not provide possible answers desired by the researcher, they leave the field of expression of the interviewees free. The flexibility in the structure of the interview and the range of answers that can be given to the questions that compose it, allow the perspectives of the interviewees to emerge (Mills, G. E., & Gay, 2016, p.386-7). At the same time, the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees ceases to be completely formal and becomes more spontaneous and human.

Digital applications, such as Skype and Turboscribe, were used to record and transcribe the interviews. The participants were aware that they were being recorded, a fact that is also indicated by the digital means that record the start and end of the recording. The aim was to uncover the strategies they use to support their students' cultural identities in the classroom and the ways of managing the trauma that may emerge.

This research is at the same time secondary. It builds on existing literature regarding past scholarly works in this field. As the highlighting of cultural identity with the aim of students' cognitive development has been investigated in the past, the researcher focused on the Greek reality and the possibilities provided to teachers by the educational system to manage cultural and linguistic diversity as well as the refugees' psychological trauma. This work, therefore, aspires to fill a part of the gap related to the Greek educational multicultural reality.

### **3.3. Research Questions**

The interviews are based on the following open-ended questions:

#### Multiculturalism and inclusion

1. How do you build a sense of belonging and general inclusion in your classroom?
2. What do you think is the role of the cultural identity of your students in their cognitive, mental, and social development?
3. Do you highlight their cultural identity? If so, what specific methods or practices are used?
4. How do you deal with linguistic diversity in your classroom, and what makes this challenge difficult for you?
5. What is your opinion about the value of involving members of your student's family or cultural community in the learning process?

#### Trauma management

6. How do you manage the trauma of your migrant and refugee students that may emerge?

7. What are the main obstacles to its effective treatment?

#### Educational support and training

8. What support do you receive from the educational institution where you teach so that you can manage problems that may arise promptly and effectively?

9. Do you find your systematic training useful to face the multiple challenges of a multicultural classroom and why?

10. How could the school community help more effectively meet the needs of these vulnerable students?

The above open-ended questions are divided into three sections that aim to investigate the practices of highlighting students' cultural identity as a means of cognitive development. The first focuses on the relationship between inclusion and the motivation it develops for learning the target language. The second explores the management of the psychological trauma of migrant and refugee pupils. Finally, the needs of multicultural teachers and the measures they propose to cover the gaps that exist in the Greek educational reality are highlighted.

### **3.4. The Participants**

Nine Greek teachers who have sufficient experience in multicultural education were selected to participate in this investigation (N=9). They are interested in integrating the cultural identity of their students into the educational process and are willing to use diversity as a tool for learning and social equality. Due to their many years of experience, they have been called upon to manage the potential emerging trauma from their students with refugee backgrounds. They have worked in public primary schools in Greece and camps. The six of them work in the same educational environment of a multicultural school ideal for Greek conditions, which made finding them and their participation in the research easier for the researcher (Mills, G. E., & Gay, 2016). Their ages range from 28-57 years (Table I).

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Educational level</b>
Chrysa	28	Primary school

Theodosia	36	Primary school
Anthie	37	Primary school
Margarita	40	Primary school
Lia	41	Primary school
Dafni	42	Camp
Sophia	52	Primary school
Maria	53	Primary school
Eleni	57	Primary school

Table. I. Name, Age and Educational Level.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed thematically to identify and record patterns emerging from the participant interviews. Thematic analysis is a flexible qualitative method (Braun and Clarke, 2013) that, although it involves the risk of subjective interpretation of the data, allows the emergence of common ideas and concerns of the interviewees (Taylor et al., 2015). However, the approach is deductive as the interviews are based on predetermined topics the researcher seeks to discover.

According to Braun and Clarke (2013), the thematic analysis involves the following six steps:

1. To be familiarized with the interview data through their in-depth study so the researcher can understand the emerging themes.
2. Identify the interviewees' common phrases or sentences to decode the data. These elements constitute codes that demonstrate the dominant issues they experienced.
3. To highlight from the extracted codes the themes that are answers to the given questions.
4. Check the correspondence between the data and the themes that arose to ensure consistency and coherence in the conclusions drawn.

5. To accurately define and name the emerging themes and their relation to the research topic.
6. To write the analysis by synthesizing the common themes and drawing conclusions from them.

In this approach, a substantial amount of material is usually produced, which can be especially rich and complex due to its non-standardized form beforehand, mainly due to flexible production methods (Taylor et al., 2015).

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Critical ethical issues were considered. First, the researcher relied on the educators' voluntary participation, assuring them they could withdraw from the research if they wished (Liamputtong, 2008). They were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and confidentiality regarding their data. Their identities were ensured, and their personal experiences were not made public. In this way, freedom of expression and a willingness to share their experiences from the multicultural class were sought.

The above practices encourage trust between the researcher and the participating educators. Confidence is crucial so the interviewees can honestly share their reality without self-censorship (Liamputtong, 2008, p.6). As the researcher is also an educator, it was essential for the interviewees to feel safe that they were not being judged by a colleague but were being asked to narrate their experiences (Liamputtong, 2008). To achieve this, the researcher recognized from the beginning the adversities that multicultural teachers face, especially in the reality of Greek schools. Therefore, respect and the unimpeded expression of thoughts and feelings were prerequisites for conducting research. After all, beyond the research purpose, semi-structured interviews also aim to empower the interviewees. Through recounting their experiences and active listening, their voice is empowered.

However, a constant challenge for the interviewer was to conduct the semi-structured interviews as neutrally as possible. As the researcher is positively biased towards the free expression of cultural diversity, her neutral verbal and non-verbal responses to interviewees' answers proved demanding. For this reason, both in the context of data collection and analysis, the investigator's self-observation and self-analysis became

critical (Bourke 2014). The researcher had to reflect carefully on her presuppositions and interpretations. At the same time, she had the opportunity to indulge in her prejudices and gain an awareness of her viewpoint of the examined subject.

## 4. Findings

Various findings emerged from the interviews, organized according to the research objectives and questions. This chapter includes the themes and patterns that emerge through the Thematic Analysis of the interviews of the participating teachers. The main axes of the research are the following three: a) Multiculturalism and inclusion, b) Trauma management, and c) Educational support and training.

### 4.1. Multiculturalism and inclusion

One of the most important goals of education is to cultivate a team spirit that will contribute to the smooth socialization of students. This pursuit, however, constitutes a significant challenge for the teacher in a multicultural classroom. The various cultural differences, as well as the economic and family problems of immigrant and refugee students, make it challenging to achieve inclusion and may inhibit the dynamics of the group (Fig. 1). Nevertheless, integrating elements of the student's identity in learning motivates their desire to learn (Cummins & al., 2005). 85% of respondents participating in the research found that by utilizing the diversity of their students, they strengthened their interest in participation and the acquisition of new knowledge (Fig., 1).

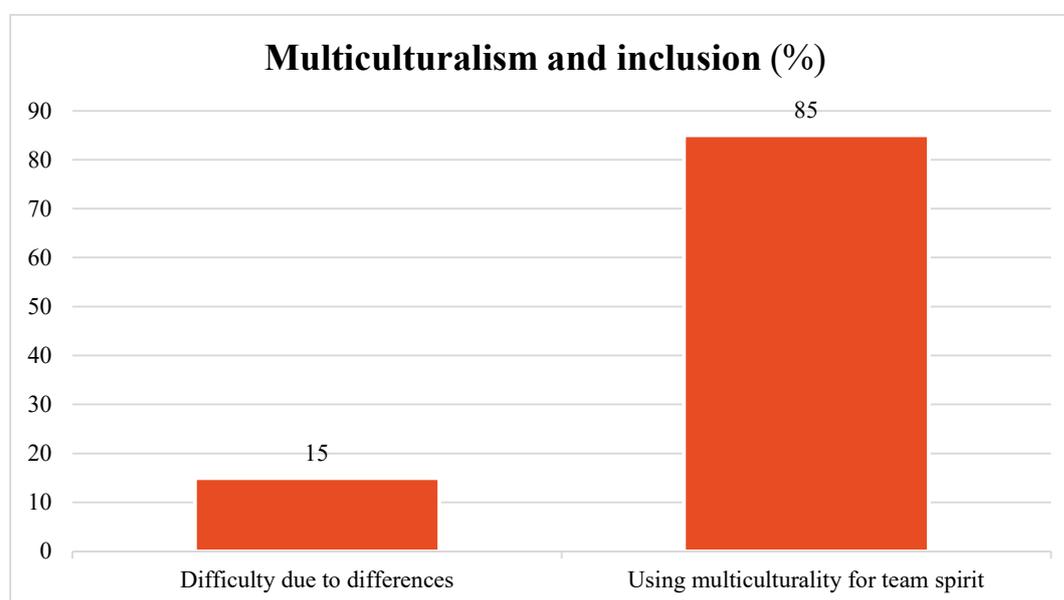


Fig. 1. Multiculturalism and Inclusion.

#### 4.1.1. Team spirit through cultural exchanges

The analysis of the responses demonstrates the positive attitude of teachers towards the multiculturalism that governs their classes. 50% of educators highlighted diversity to develop team spirit and inclusion (P1, P8) (Fig. 2). Elements of the culture of their

migrant and refugee students, such as language, history, habits, celebrations, games, and the foods of their people, are transformed into means of communication (P2, P4, P9). At the same time, they sharpen students' interest in actively participating in the learning process and enriching them with diversity.

**P1:** “I mainly tried from the beginning to show that everyone comes from somewhere. They have a story. They speak a language at home.”

**P2:** “...I think that by demonstrating their identity, linguistic and cultural, the process is definitely strengthened.”

**P3:** “The team will necessarily happen at some point. It is not easy to do from the beginning because we are talking about classes that are children of different ethnicities, different regions, different economic status, which plays a vital role”.

**P4:** “I always have the system in whatever I do, beyond that, but it also helps here; I always have the system that I show interest first, and the others usually follow me. I will discuss, let’s say, for example, I have a student from Nigeria, and I will say to him, “Wow, very nice country! Tell us a little about what you eat there, between serious and funny. What food is that? Oh, and what is it made of? Bur, bur, bur.” And a conversation begins. That is, I usually start the conversation.”

“...The issue is how you create a group; when they are different languages, different cultures, they usually form cliques because they feel safe in their cliques”.

**P8:** “First of all, it is essential in the group that they feel accepted. Acceptance of this identity. To be able to express it”.

**P9:** “Holidays, let’s say, are a great opportunity to ask about the customs and traditions of other countries, even if it concerns another religion. To say what happens here or if the children celebrate a specific period, a religious holiday of their own, to explain how it happens, why it happens too. Regarding the diversity of the other nationalities. I mainly do this with the holidays, customs, and traditions”.

However, participants 3 and 4 pointed out the difficulty of cultivating teamwork and inclusion in multicultural classes due to the students' multiple differences, culture, and class (Fig. 2).

#### **4.1.2. Team Spirit Through Shared Activities**

45% of participants highlighted the value of group activities, especially the playful nature of teaching, for students to overcome the obstacles that cultural diversity may cause. In this context, the role of Projects related to vital needs such as food was also emphasized, as well as Identity Texts that highlight aspects of the student's identity (P5, P8). Barriers such as different languages and cultures are removed through the experience that play and art offer (P.2, P8). Finally, P2 highlighted the need to create a routine that all students in the class will apply, which increases the students' sense of security (Fig. 2).

**P2:** "... the first thing that comes to mind is creating a playful climate or even using a game, as many of the basic rules of games are universal, can be represented with non-verbal elements, and are usually something that children cannot resist in a way, so they are forced to enter the process... in cases of children who are stressed or have difficulty, I try to create a stable routine in the classroom, so that they feel safe, know the frameworks in which they can act and the interactions between the children and me, and so little by little, feeling safe within this routine, they can influence each other, feel more independent".

**P5:** "They can work together only through teamwork, that is, we work with groups. From there and then other techniques that I have seen other teachers do in the field are organizing some events with food from the places where each student is. For example, this event could have a theme of bread. So, everyone will bring either bread or puff pastry from their place".

**P8:** "... throughout the year, I am very involved in Projects, that is, I have work groups, I try to have the children work in groups and not alone",

"I also use Identity Texts; that is, I let the children write or draw or present something about themselves. So, we need to create get to know each other. Then, the team spirit comes from what they mentioned above",

"... I was trying to create this feeling first of all from the first days, by doing some familiarization games, which could also be theatrical games, that is, they could not require such a good knowledge of Greek or English, they could be more physical games, experiential, etc., or painting, to present something through painting".

**P9:** “Holidays, let’s say, are a great opportunity to ask about the customs and traditions of other countries, even if it concerns another religion. Let’s say what happens here or if the children celebrate a specific period of time, a religious holiday of their own, to explain how it happens, and why it happens too. Regarding the diversity of the other nationalities. This is mainly what I do with holidays, customs, and traditions. Games, we talk a lot about games, if they are common. What else can I think of? Maybe through some videos, it takes time for some of the children, but not all. It takes time for them to integrate and open up, to say even these simple things.”

Group activities, however, proved to be difficult in some cases. This is because they may bring to the surface underlying tensions and conflicts between students from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, these are time-consuming procedures that the school curriculum does not provide for (P4, P5).

**P4:** “... And you will try to integrate them, to form a team, but due to time, this will be on the sidelines. That is, within the school framework you do not have the time to resolve children's problems. And necessarily what you choose is to change teams, not to put them together, to put them with another department, not to sit next to them, to sit like a wall in front of them so that they do not have rivalries”

**P5:** “. At some point they may come to a rift between themselves and the country to which each one belongs will come to the fore. Let them take advantage of it.”

#### **4.1.3. Team spirit through a climate of trust**

40% of educators emphasized the importance of building trust between class members. Strategies, such as creating a “class contract”, foster a sense of security and mutual trust. At the same time, they promote mutual assistance to solve problems that arise as well as familiarization with the diversity that governs the multicultural class (Fig 2).

**P1:** “We must integrate the children and from there the children themselves create a situation in which they will include the children who did not speak in the groups, in their groups with the technique of assistance. Don’t you understand? Come and help you, since you don’t understand”,

“Because from the moment they trust you and share it - it won’t always happen - it will happen sometimes, though. The one who trusted you, at least that’s how it works for

me; I have to be there for them in whatever they need. Because with me he feels the bond. The direct one. And he asks for my help. And he feels that I can support him”.

**P3:** “But it is not easy because cliques are created. You will now see Filipinos hanging out with Filipinos. The issue of security prevails, right? Yes, but it also plays a very important role in that.”

**P5:** “...we see that black children are closer to black children. They will hang out, talk about their place, and feel like brothers among themselves. Albanians also have their own part. Their own company. I observe it in all the classes. That is, children are closer when they belong to the same nationality. They tell me, he is Albanian. We are friends. The same goes for refugee children.”

**P6:** “... I think the way I was trying to do it... is in a way to create a communicative climate... of safety initially”.

**P8:** “Then, the class contract helps a lot, because the children can work in groups, discuss, sit in groups first, and think about how exactly they should function as a group. The class contract creates for them the concept of a group”.

Nevertheless, 25% of participants reported that the frequent creation of cliques and security groups with their fellow nationals prevents students from coexisting in groups with multicultural characters where they will get to know and respect diversity.

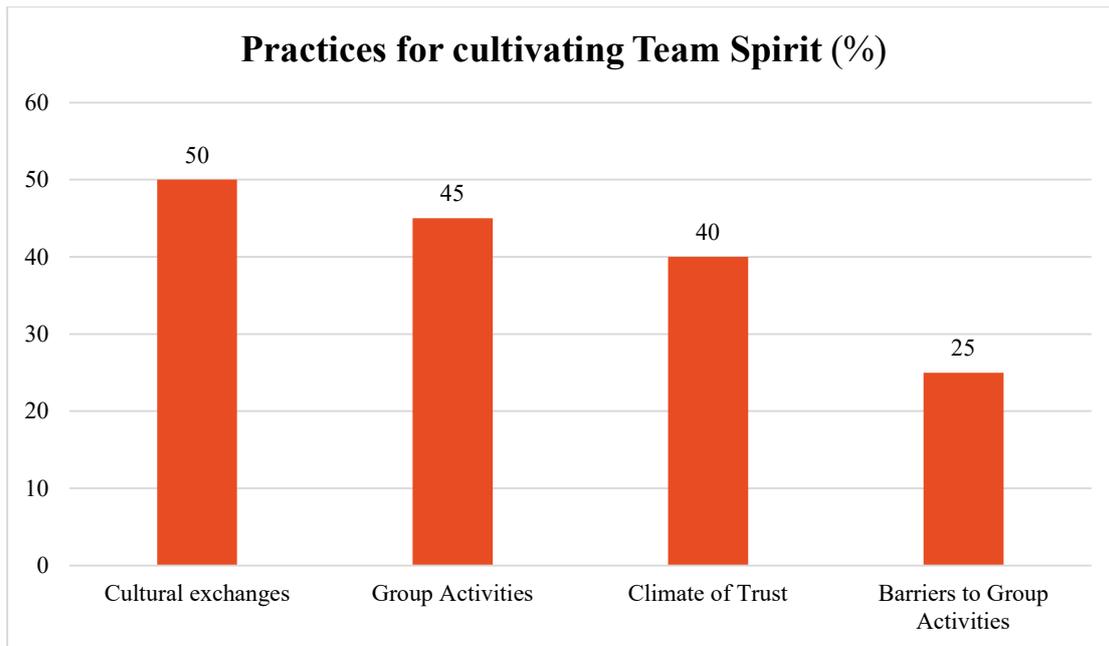


Fig. 2. Practices for Cultivating Team Spirit.

#### 4.1.4. Multilingualism

The participating teachers mentioned that they allow students to use their mother tongue during the learning process. Despite the initial objections of some regarding the effectiveness of this practice in terms of learning the target language, 77,8% of educators encourage students to use their mother tongue to approach new knowledge. Through their experience, 44,4% of participants have found that the linguistic repertoire of students is a tool for understanding the language and culture of the host country as well as a means of integrating them into it. 55,6% of teachers underlined the sense of acceptance that pupils experience acts as a motivation for their further cognitive and social development (P2, P5, P6). 55,6% of teachers pointed out that the function of students as interpreters to support their classmates who have a lesser command of the host language has the effect of promoting cooperation between class members as well as facilitating the teacher's work (P2, P8) (Fig. 3).

**P1:** “Of course, and let’s say now I have two little brothers who speak Arabic. Because the girl started to understand much faster than the boy, of course, I told her to tell your brother in Arabic what you understood. Of course, I used whatever means I had, even Google Translate, to have them listen to instruction in their language, always when it had to do with something related to the organization of the group, with some instruction that was for the next day, that they had to understand that these are the rules”,

“...for older children, who understood the vocabulary faster, which word corresponds to which, in their own language, I asked them to say it, write it, show it to us, and teach it. To count a few, let's say, in Farsi, to say five words in Arabic”.

**P2:** “There are also children who speak the language, Greek very well, but they are second generation, let's say... They function as interpreters but also remind the identity of second- generation children. In other words, a connection is evident. Of course, there are indeed children who function as interpreters for children, that is, child to child, and child often to parents”,

“...when they are heard and their languages are more connected and the same with the learning process and perhaps, they do not experience the same stress as it is a little more normalized. To be able to find meaningful connections between their language and the language they are learning. It is very interesting because many times they feel the same that they are teaching”.

**P3:** “I do not want to use any other language besides Greek at all. But... Because the goal is for us to learn. For them to understand that they know some words. For children who do not speak at all, yes, I will allow it. Because I don't have any other way of communicating. I have to allow it. It's an intermediate language. We can't communicate otherwise, only with meanings. Which won't happen”,

“I try to have classes with at least one or two children who speak the same language to help communication”.

**P4:** “Before I did my master's degree, I believed all this nonsense we were saying, that you should only speak Greek and speak Greek at home and all that nonsense. After I did my master's degree, I changed my mind... I couldn't imagine that you have to give

**P6:** “...the role of me taking on the role of co-teacher, very important, that we are a group here and when someone understood something, they can convey it in a better way than me, which may not have been the case with English. So, I definitely left that out”.

**P8:** “Many times, to give examples, very many times in the past, when we were learning new words, I would ask the children what it is like in the language, to tell us

theirs... So, this thing opens up, and now a multilingual environment is created. And it is very helpful, both for children from other countries and for Greeks. Very helpful.

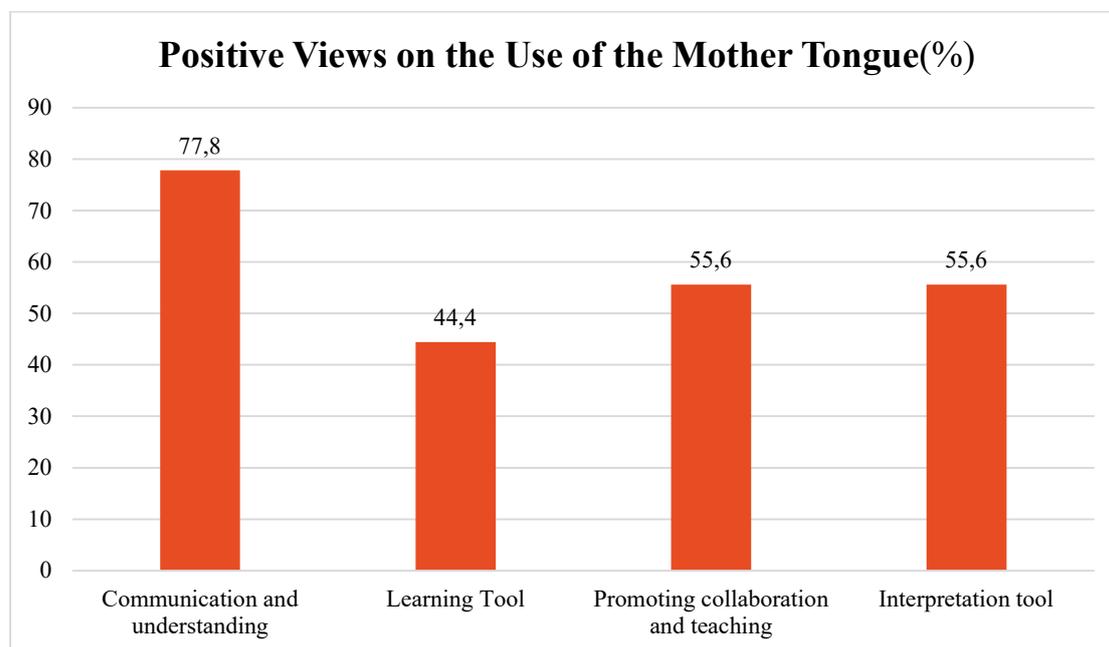


Fig. 3. Positive Views on the Use of the Mother Tongue.

The multilingual teaching model, however, is a great challenge. Some teachers at the beginning of their professional careers were negative and adopted the dominant monolingual teaching model in Greece. However, the experience of the multicultural school reality and their training in intercultural education contributed to the revision of their previous perspective.

On the other hand, the balance in the use of the students' linguistic repertoire and the target language was mentioned as a challenging goal to achieve. For reasons of convenience, students often choose the former (P1). In combination with the curriculum determined by the Ministry of Education and its strict teaching schedule, the pressure experienced by teachers increases. Therefore, the acquisition of the target language may slow down. Furthermore, when homophonous students act as interpreters, the transmission of knowledge may be incomplete, a fact that the teacher can hardly notice (P3).

**P1:** "Within the context of the classroom, if I translate everything I say in Greek in one way into Arabic, I do not consider it particularly useful. Because the child expects to

have help in his language and does not make an effort to acquire it. That is, the times I tried it, I saw that it did not help much.”

**P3:** “When you have a child who doesn’t speak Greek, it’s more important to help them learn the letters, write five words, learn a basic vocabulary than to maintain their identity. This will happen in the second year when a basic code of communication has already been mastered”,

“...the school time is very limited anyway, don’t lie, Easter, Christmas, holidays, Halloween, holidays anyway, the time is very limited to work on the learning and to be able to organize

“Because you don’t even know what is being transferred. This is the... I mean, I don’t know what they say. I don’t know if it has been said. You just trust the child and say, no, I would take it. I allow it to answer that, I allow it in moderation though. So even in... mainly with English, I have an issue. Because the kids who speak English, I have noticed, mainly understand and can chatter in Greek. They just do it for convenience. Because they don't want to have a hard time thinking in Greek. To get into this process. Most of the kids who have seen me and who speak English understand and can talk until we learn Greek. Therefore, I put more pressure on them not to use it.”

#### **4.1.5. Motivation for learning**

22,2%% of participants agreed that by highlighting pupils’ cultural backgrounds, students are mostly psychologically empowered, and their self-confidence increases. In this way, 77,8% of teachers observed that their desire to participate in the learning process is heightened as they feel accepted as members of a group in which diversity is respected and cooperation is promoted. With various activities and projects, with multimodal means that bridge differences and mobilize students' interest, the educators mentioned that they attempt to meet the special needs of migrant and refugee students (Fig. 4).

**P1:** “...their willingness to develop a personal relationship with me increases. So, and finally, to learn”.

**P2:** “... In the learning process, a very important part is for the children to be able to express their own identity. Therefore, they connect more. For example, many times,

whether children speak the language or not, we can talk about, for example, customs from their place or how this word that we are learning is called in other languages”,

“... the meaning of the word for each child has a different weight in their language. So, when this is communicated throughout the class and among the children there is an interest in how it is said in another language. So, yes, I think that by demonstrating their identity, linguistic and cultural, the process is strengthened. The motivation to learn Greek, let's say, in Greece”

**P5:** “...the children are very happy, of course, and they function better. As a group, socially, friendly, in all respects. They are calmer. They cooperate. This, of course, may not be permanent”.

**P6:** “Surely, in general, the issue of identity and, okay, culture, now that you mention it... plays a huge role in this whole thing. I also know, I remember that I could learn one, two, three phrases, I'm telling you, in their language... and that directly changed their entire psychology. First, that is, what you say about highlighting, even in a very simple way... either, let's say, you have been a little busy knowing some things as an educator... to say a couple of phrases in their language, to show them something or somehow to tell them to bring something. This completely changed the motivation, in general, in all of this. They felt that they had an identity. Because in general, let's say, as refugees they felt completely lost in a foreign country... Because they feel there, in the classroom, that now here I exist. I have a presence. Yes, I have a presence, I have an identity. And not only that. And that, let's say, counts here. Yes, yes. That is, and all of this certainly created a motivation”,

“... I don't know if it was a motivation for learning, because many people may not have had it for learning anyway. If nothing else, it was for psychosocial development”.

**P8:** “... it is very important for the group to feel accepted. Acceptance of this identity. To be able to express it. If they don't feel that, I think it stagnates; let's say, it has a bad impact on their cognitive development. If the student cannot feel free within his group, within the classroom, to feel that he can express himself and that he is accepted, he cannot learn. He is not free”.

However, the main obstacle that 33,3% pointed out was the uncertainty of pupils' residence in the country, as many sought asylum in other European countries. Finally, the pressure of the school program's time and materials makes it difficult to implement the goals mentioned above (Fig. 4).

**P3:** "...When you have a child who does not speak Greek, it is more important to help him learn the letters, write five words, learn a basic vocabulary than to maintain his identity. This will happen in a second year when a basic communication code has already been mastered".

**P6:** "...I had worked with many people, both teenagers and adults, who were with one foot in Greece and with the other foot to leave, over there the issue is that I don't care now about learning Greek, because I won't stay here".

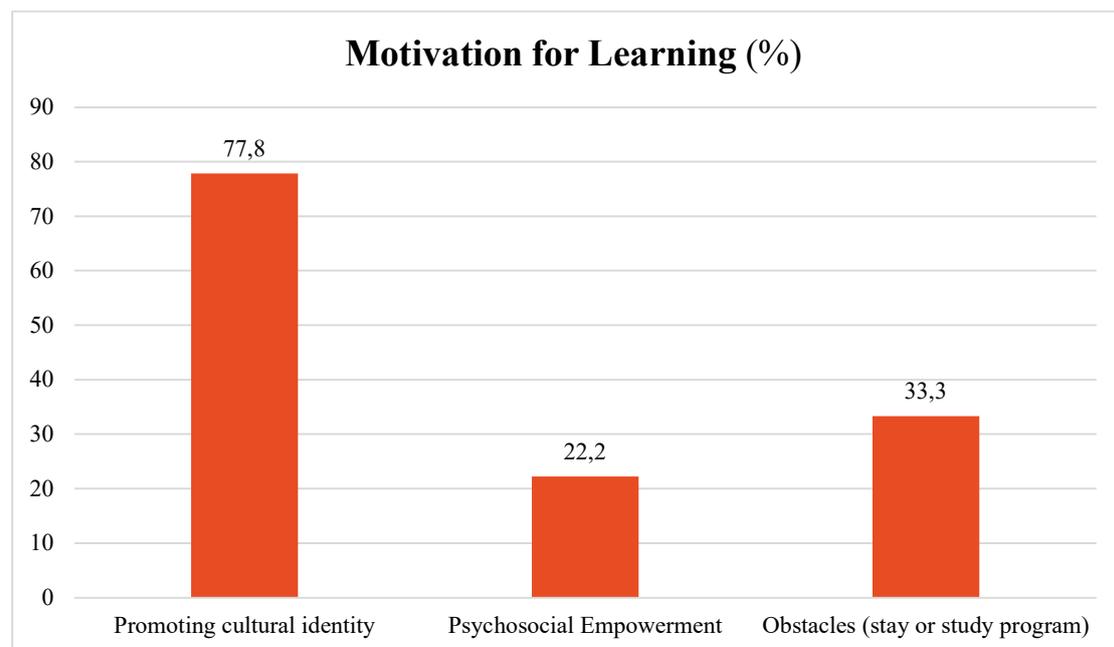


Fig. 4. Motivation for Learning.

#### 4.1.6. Inclusion of family members

Some of the participants attempted to involve the students' family in the learning process. This happens mainly when students face particular difficulties and their guardians are called by the school or the latter wish to assist in the teacher's effort to help their child. This practice may strengthen ties with the teacher and the school and establish a climate of trust.

**P1:** “...And a very close relationship was developed with the student, as well as with his mother who wanted to have a very personal relationship, to thank us as a school for listening to her child and sharing, in any case, the whole heavy psychology that the child had, still remembering everything he went through.”

**P2:** “...I believe that it has a great benefit because many times the parents, because interpreting is something very difficult to do, that is, practically, it also brings them face to face with the learning process, are called as parents to the school themselves, so they have a different type of status. And certainly, equal treatment with the parents”.

The participation, however, of the family members proved to be a great challenge. The participating educators pointed out the dysfunctionality of these families due to their migrant and refugee backgrounds (P3, P4)). Their painful stories, which often include the loss of parents and guardians, prevent teachers from trying to involve the family in the educational reality. The suspicion of families towards the educational system of the host country, which constitutes an unknown factor in shaping their children, was also highlighted. Finally, the pressing time frame set by the Ministry of Education does not favor similar initiatives that require time and willingness to communicate on the part of teachers and guardians (P8).

**P3:** “The truth is that it is not possible, in the sense that at least the children in this particular school have families that are a little, I cannot characterize them, they are dysfunctional. Therefore, they cannot get involved very easily, because they are not in the mood, they do not have the will”,

“...because I do not know the context of all the children 100%, I have in some cases that I need to know of course and I know some things, but I cannot go into more depth. That is, it is a bit risky to put family members into the school context because you do not know where you will end up. The school context is not a learning process”.

**P4:** “...I have noticed that because they are usually painful stories, they do not want to communicate them. In other words, they are closed in this regard. They say very little about the past, very little about relatives, with exceptions of course, but most of them do not say, they do not mention. So, I do not involve this.”

**P8:** “Nevertheless, there are basic difficulties. First of all, it requires some preparation and a lot of work for the parent, from what I understand, to be able to enter the school community. Many times, he/she feels a... He/She has a reservation towards it. Okay, while he/she respects the teacher that he will learn Greek and so on, but to enter the school, if the school does not take the first step, if it does not open the doors, it is difficult. And the school, on the other hand, doesn't always open these doors, because it's very closed, because of my personal opinions. There's so much workload at school, such pressing times, that you don't have the opportunity... Yes, I mean, you have to get a subject out, for example... You have to go on trips, have meetings with parents. And at the same time, you run to maybe two or three schools. The club is rarely all together to make some decisions and organize something together.”

#### **4.2. Trauma management**

88,9% of educators pointed out that they attempt to foster a climate of trust and safety by demonstrating particular empathy in the management of trauma that may arise. They emphasized the importance of discretion in the management of students' sensitive personal data, prioritizing the children's need to share their painful experiences (P1, P2). Dialogue, when children wish it, contributes to strengthening relationships between class members and promotes a positive mood (P8). In this context, P1 stated that she seeks to bring students with similar experiences together so that they do not feel lonely because of the trauma they carry. As P6 pointed out, these are experiences that hinder the process of acquiring new knowledge. Furthermore, 66,7% emphasized the need for a systematic presence of a psychologist in the school was evident so that teachers and students could address them to manage severe traumas and crises. The close cooperation of members of the school community who face similar problems was noted to have a catalytic role, as through their discussions, they jointly find ways to manage the challenges they face (P1, P3, P9), (Fig., 5)

**P1:** “And a very close relationship was developed with the student, as well as with his mother, who wanted to have a very personal relationship, to thank us as a school for listening to her child and sharing the whole heavy psychology that the child had, still remembering everything he went through,”

“...I tried to create a small community, to bring the children together. For these children who had difficult experiences...to have a little communication between these children,

I tried to bring them together a little and talk about their stories. So that they don't feel like they're the only ones carrying such a trauma. Because their stories were really difficult. Very difficult”,

“We also have a team at school with a psychologist, and we are five people in constant monitoring for four years now... especially when there is mental trauma that comes from the child to us and shares it with us and we try to create a network, to see what contacts we have available and what we can do for this family and this student. But these are mainly actions of the school unit, it is not support from the state and the wider...”.

**P2:** “For me, I try to deal with it as a matter of, let's say, pedagogy and humanity. It has happened, let's say, many times that some trauma appears, to be discussed. Many times, it is enough that the child simply wants to discuss it. They may not ask for anything”,

“Just share it. Exactly, just want to share it. I try very hard to be very careful about this, not to say any information that I perceive the child is not ready to receive. In other words, I usually answer questions if they are asked. I always listen to the child’s sharing of it”,

“Also, I have been impressed by how resilient children are. That is, either the trauma can be very bad and they do not have awareness of it, or a particular conscience, or they have not yet metabolized it, or they have metabolized it, but many times I have seen the joy of life...”

**P6:** “But it takes sensitivity and attention, but that doesn’t mean we won’t talk about some things... many times trauma can block the learning part. That is, the other person doesn’t learn anything.”

**P9:** “Of course, most children don’t talk about traumatic experiences. They come out through other things. And there have been times when I myself have talked about it to children. When their classmates who have lived these traumatic experiences are not present, of course. We have discussed it as a group among ourselves, about how this child might feel what reaction he might have, and what reaction we might have. Regarding this part now, if something is too far-fetched, that has not happened to me, we turn to specialists, that is, the school psychologist... And in general, we have

discussed it with the school community. That is, I want to say while with the teaching community. That is, I will go and discuss it with colleagues about my concerns. Colleagues will come to tell me about their concerns. That is, it is something that concerns us and we discuss it. It is not something that remains within the classroom”.

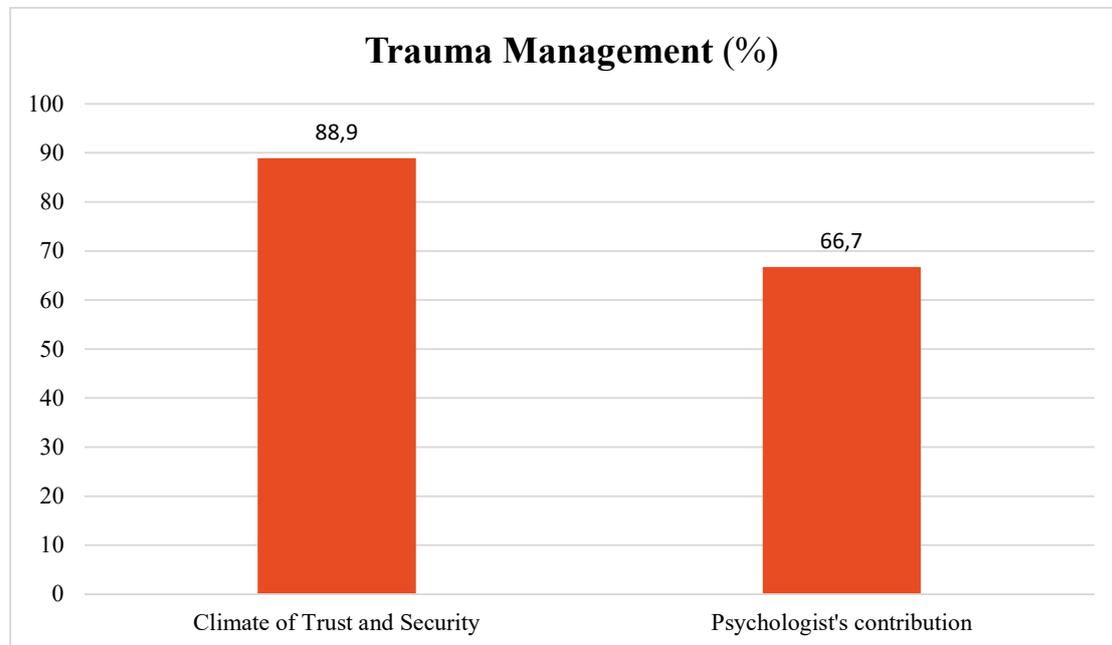


Fig. 5. Trauma Management.

According to the teachers, the absence of a permanent psychologist in every multicultural school who will know the students and their history constitutes a major problem. The participants noted that the fragmented presence of specialists and monitoring of students with intense psychological trauma makes the work of teachers more difficult (P1, P8). As a result, insecurity and fear of the emergence and incorrect management of the mental trauma of migrant and refugee students prevail (P3, P6). The educators mentioned the lack of support and training in dealing with such situations. This situation burdens them psychologically and leaves them relatively unprotected (P6) (Fig. 6).

**P2:** "...the psychologist at the school comes for very few hours. He comes once a week. In a school where issues of migrants, refugees, economic and social problems are being addressed... when he comes once a week and is in 5-6 different schools, work cannot be done. Especially when he is not a permanent staff member and changes every 9 months with contracts, work, and contracts, it makes things very difficult”.

**P3:** “If you enter into this process to get some information that may not be very easy to manage, I will have to, after opening it, close the issue. And I don't... I don't know if it's my place. Then other things come into play. I don't want to create an issue with the school and... Not just specifically, with all schools”.

**P6:** “...I remember a psychologist who told us a nice thing, that when you interact with people with trauma, the trauma comes to you, it's, she says, like sitting somewhere, a bottle breaks next to you and the fragments come to you, you may not have experienced it but a lot of things come...”

**P8:** “Of course, I should say that in general schools lack the issue of psychological support. I see a big gap there and not only for these children.... And there is no psychologist every day. There is a psychologist who comes back from the schools and comes once a week, so this person has a lot of children to see and doesn't have the time to connect with the school community, with the daily life of the school and, with the children. So, it's superficial”.

### **4.3. Educational Framework**

As the needs of migrant and refugee students are complex, the educational framework of host countries must adapt and modernize. Innovative methods and practices can effectively contribute to the integration and safeguarding of the rights of these vulnerable populations (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, p.55-57). However, the anti-migration policy that characterizes countries affected by massive migration flows is not conducive to upgrading the multicultural education provided.

#### **4.3.1. Deficient instructional system**

The participants pointed out the multiple shortcomings of multicultural education. 55,6% mentioned that the limited number of ZEP classes and the lack of permanent staff for the reception classes make these schools dysfunctional (P2, P3, P8, P9). At the same time, 44,4% noted the inadequate logistical infrastructure and poorly written school textbooks make the work of teachers difficult (P3, P8). P4 underlined the feeling of abandonment she experienced on the part of the State as there is nobody active in solving the problems that arise. Finally, the pressing time frame and the volume of the material were mentioned as crucial burdens for dealing with the additional issues that these children face (P8) (Fig. 6).

**P3:** “Special needs is a sector, after all, it is a category that needs help. If you don’t have the support and help from the teachers, especially from the teachers who come into daily contact with these children, it’s not easy to get out. It won’t get out. You won’t be able to help”,

“...I don’t even know if it makes sense to deal with interculturalism in Greece because there is no help anywhere, no one will tell you what to do, there are some books that are circulating about the ZEP, they are poorly written, without any coherence”.

**P4:** “As a teachers’ association, we are on our own. That is, we and the principal are trying to manage the situation as best we can. But there is nothing organized. To turn to somewhere. Yes. As you turn to administrative matters, let’s say, in primary school. There is no such thing.”

**P5:** “I would add that one year we may be in one school and the next year we may change schools. Whatever communication the children had made would be lost. It would be lost completely. This is difficult for the teacher.”

**P8:** “There is not even a ZEP. That is, the ZEP requires 7 people, a lower number. If I had it like when we had the three children from Congo, these children could not do language.”

“The school is so full of subjects, such a heavy program, especially in primary school, that there should be time to do other things.”

**P9:** “The ZEP helps a lot. But there are very few people who staff it now. “So, we used to have three people in the ZEP, now we have one.”

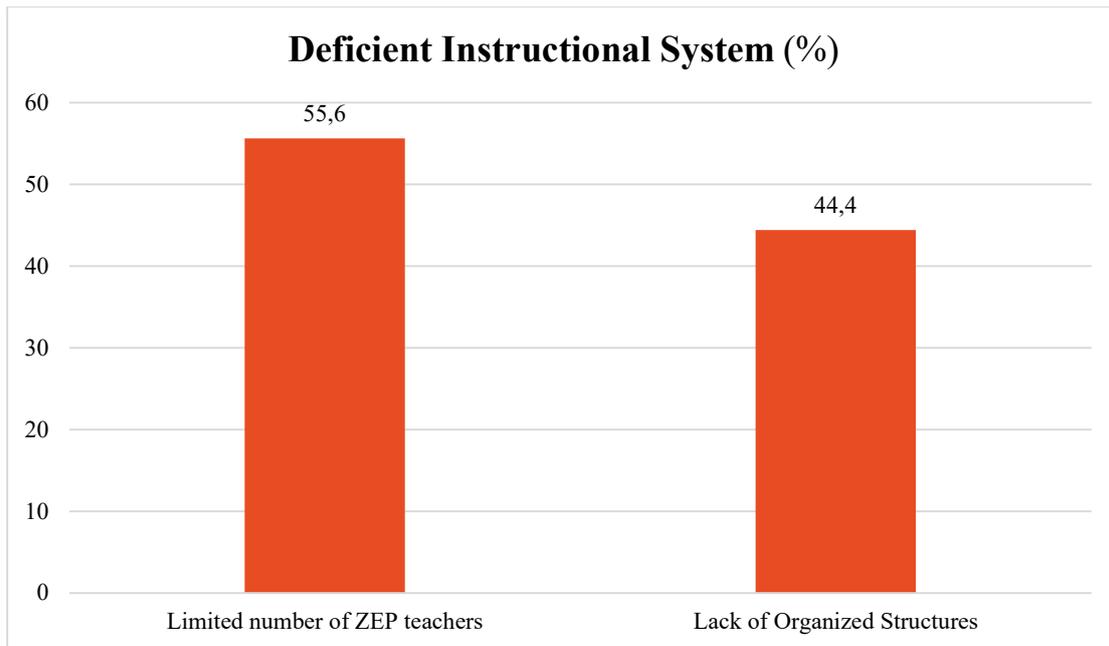


Fig. 6. Deficient Instructional System.

#### 4.3.2. Proposed changes

Teachers considered various structural changes necessary for multicultural education to yield results. First, they suggested increasing the number of reception and ZEP classes, so that the number of students is manageable and their needs are adequately met (P3, P4). The institution of a preparatory class, where they will initially be included and then placed in a school class appropriate for their age, will ensure that students can attend classes smoothly (P 9). Furthermore, the educators pointed out that the permanence and stability of the teaching staff are essential for developing relationships of trust and familiarity with the problems of these vulnerable students (P2, P3). Participants suggested redesigning the curriculum for multicultural schools to ensure time for organizing and conducting activities appropriate to their student's learning and psychosocial needs. Upgrading the logistical infrastructure and school textbooks available to them would contribute to implementing innovative and experiential activities (P3, P8) (Fig. 8).

To promote the learning process, both students and teachers need support. 27,3% of educators indicated that migrant and refugee pupils, due to the psychological trauma they usually carry, need to have immediate access to a psychologist who will know their history and needs (P2, P4, P8). 18,2% emphasized their own need for psychological support (P6, P8). At the same time, 27,3% highlighted the role of social workers and

9,1% the role of interpreters, which proved to be essential for solving practical problems that vulnerable students and their families often face (P2, P5). On the other hand, 18,2% of teachers underlined the need for systematic group meetings with a permanent school psychologist, so that he/she can guide them in the proper management of the various challenges that may arise daily (P4, P8), (Fig.,7).

**P2:** “One is that the teaching staff should be stable. Because in many reception classes, not in many, I think in all reception classes now, contractual substitutes are hired, every year”,

“I think that it is also very crucial to have a social worker. In addition to a psychologist. Apart from being a psychologist, mainly a social worker because the problems that refugees and their families usually face are very practical”,

“I would consider it very useful to have stable, balanced things in school, that promote communication with parents and inform them about their rights or about benefits that they can have, such as, for example, interpreting at school, which is one of the most basic, to be balanced for parents as well, so that the children’s learning can be helped. So, we are talking about another immigration and educational policy, right?”

**P3:** “The number of teachers hired by the ZEP should be huge. There should be a permanent ZEP teacher just like there are permanent teachers in the integration department. There should be a permanent teacher for ZEP because he knows the children”,

“There should be communication between the ZEP teacher and the main teacher of the class anyway because those are the two teachers who have the children. If there is no communication, I don’t think it can function smoothly and the year will come out. It will come out but I don’t think it will come out for the benefit of the children. It will come out just to come out”,

“The book also needs a change for me, in addition to the organization being better, the book also needs a change, and of course it also needs training”

**P4:** “Definitely psychological support, definitely more reception classes, definitely training seminars as you said. One hundred percent. From there, if these three were done well...”,

“Psychological support would be needed. Both for the teachers and the students. The rest of the children need psychological support here. But that's another discussion”,

“In my opinion, there should be a psychologist as an organic position in the school. In every school. Just as there should be a nurse. In general, there should be two things in every school, permanently. These children who come from war, who have crossed seas and waves, would want psychological support”.

**P6:** “in the multicultural environment, which has to do with refugees and trauma, something that helps a lot is the groups that are formed with people who do the same, to discuss and share their experiences and how everyone on all this, in practice, has come up with an idea, something has happened, all this sharing does me a lot of good...”,

“There are ways to deal with some things and we know them. And also, now that we are reaching about the tenth year of the refugee issue, we know very well what can happen. There are a lot of people who have to propose and do, to implement things, but there is no... We are going backward. In other words, the exact opposite is happening. There is no political will, basically. Because political will would influence the educational system and so on.”

**P8:** “There is a psychologist who comes back from the schools and comes once a week, so this person has a lot of children to see and doesn't have the time to connect with the school community, with the daily life of the school and the children. So it's superficial. I mean, if I were to face something like that, I think I would need the help of special personnel”,

“The pedagogical meetings that I mentioned before are very important. And the pedagogical meetings between schools. To form groups, to be able to discuss among ourselves. I think that this is missing. This is missing among teachers. And for our empowerment. Because all of this requires your own empowerment”,

“First of all, I think that schools should have a logistical infrastructure. And they should also have the personnel needed to support these students. And all of the students, ultimately. That is, a psychologist and social workers. Permanently. To be part of the school community. The second is to review the curriculum a little. And to relieve it. That is, it is not possible to have six hours of such a dense cognitive lesson. The books are too heavy for elementary school. I am now talking about elementary school mainly. And that there is no time for extracurricular activities. In which the whole community can be involved. The teachers, the students, their parents. The way the school operates, to a large extent it is... suffocating for everyone. And even more so for children who come... from another country who do not speak the language. In other words, we see it as a mountain. Particular emphasis has been placed on cognitive... and not on the rest.”

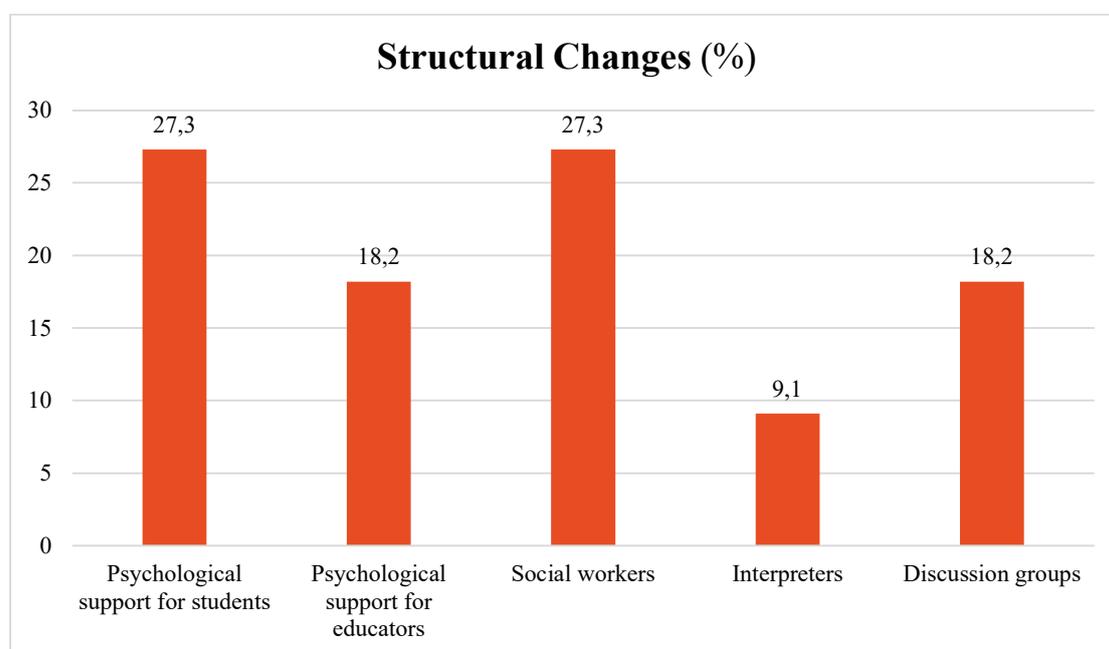


Fig. 7. Structural Changes.

### 4.3.3. Training

The participants considered it necessary to upgrade the training provided. 33,3% characterized it as incomplete, outdated, theoretical, and ultimately meaningless, as it has no particular practical application in addressing the multiple challenges they face (P1, P4, P8). Furthermore, most of the time they are asked to cover the training costs themselves and attend it outside their working hours (P2, P3). They argued that it is necessary for a more effective response to the challenges of a multicultural classroom. 22,2% indicated that it should be systematic, 22,2% within their working hours, as well

as 22,2% modernized, to contribute to the practical resolution of the various needs of these students (Fig. 8).

**P1:** “Not just a seminar once a year, but systematic, ongoing support, there should be a platform where they can discuss things, tools should be provided to have access to material, yes everything!... it should be mandatory, especially it should be approximately in our area, here where we are. Yes, there is a huge need”,

“...Training tends to be a bit horizontal when it is provided for free. Without tending to where there is a need and for what. On a case-by-case basis”.

**P2:** “The other part is of course certainly not from their pocket and certainly in a work context. That is, in working hours. The necessity of the training itself is great”.

**P3:** “I am one of those people who did a nine-month seminar on interculturalism before they took me to the ZEP because it was a part that interested me... it was quite expensive compared to what is available and you would think, one would say that you would have gained some skills and some knowledge from it. No, when I think about it, I didn't get any help from this seminar.”

**P4:** “A proper training on practical issues, right? That is, not the ones that, like we do in seminars, that we hear, hear, hear, blah, blah, blah, blah. Theoretical utopias and so on. Yes, utopian things in reality.”

**P6:** “Yes, the training of course. Because many times, some training from someone, either a psychologist, for example, I don't know, or someone who has more experience, somehow tells you something and suddenly unblocks everything. Yes, that is, you say, “Oh, okay, my child.” Or many times the teacher himself may feel that he is not doing something right and may be ashamed to say something, I know. So, things come out in all this. You are relieved that, “Oh, okay, it's not just me”, or “I'm not the only one who has this difficulty”. Because some things are really very difficult in practice”.

**P8:** “Training is necessary. But it is not enough. And also, when we say training, sometimes it is done simply for the sake of it. To get a paper. The point is to have something more stable... It is not just training that we hear in every seminar. There is

also repetition. In other words, if someone does three seminars, they hear almost the same things”.

**P9:** “...Yes, I would like there to be training, but it should be essentially... I want to say that trainings are done of this kind, but they do not give you the right things, because they are done theoretically. They don't give you the right tools, the practical ones, that is, the practical ones are the issue, not the theory...if you show me a slide and start telling me things, I don't need to sit for three hours listening to this. I want to tell you my problems, to tell you very truly, for the team to tell you its problems after all, and for the other person to provide practical solutions and professional solutions and solutions from people who... You know, what you said, that we don't have the knowledge and training on this part to deal with everything. That is, I think that my sensor has been good so far, but what I consider correct and what it means in reality, let's say, is very relative.”

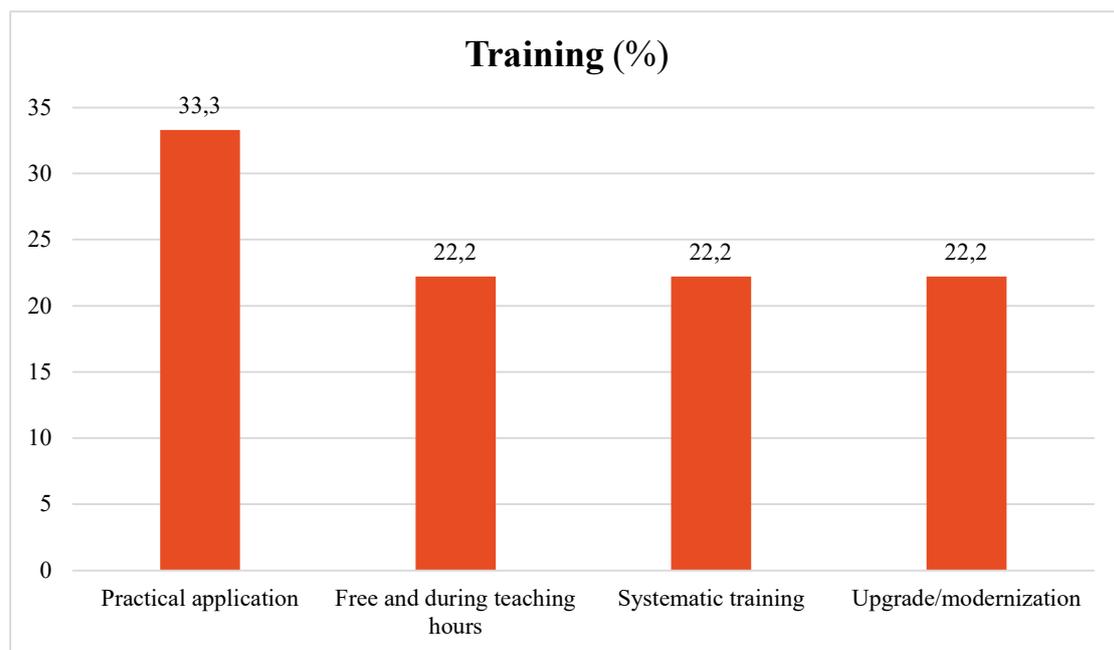


Fig. 8. Training.

## **5. Discussion**

The results of this qualitative research demonstrate that Greek multicultural educators face various difficulties in their efforts to respond to the specific needs of vulnerable migrant and refugee students. The integration of the latter by highlighting their diversity, the management of the psychological trauma they often carry, and the inadequate educational framework in which teachers work are fundamental issues that govern Greek multicultural education.

The collected data confirm that despite the cultural and socio-economic differences that dominate these classes, the teachers participating in the research attempt to promote team spirit. By incorporating elements of the student's cultural identity into the learning process, which they base on group activities and practices, they cultivate a climate of trust crucial for children's psychosocial and cognitive development. The analysis supports the theory of the multilingual teaching model as a means for teaching the target language, which, although a great challenge, becomes a crucial tool for acquiring new knowledge and integration (Sanchez-Flores, 2018). Teachers underlined the importance of psychological support for psychologically traumatized migrant and refugee students and pointed out the necessity of hiring permanent psychologists and having a broader supportive framework.

However, the shortcomings of the Greek education system - limited number of reception classes and special needs classes, limited and temporary teaching staff, outdated training, and monocultural teaching model - constitute notable obstacles to the fulfillment of the role of teachers. To address them, the participants in the survey propose the restructuring of multicultural education, which would include the appointment of more teachers, a revision of the curriculum, an upgrade of the logistical infrastructure, as well as substantial and modernized training. They consider the above to be necessary prerequisites for them to be able to implement innovative methods that will enrich the form and content of their teaching while at the same time stimulating the cultural competence and linguistic horizon of the students (Rauschert & Byram, 2018).

The present study was designed to investigate, through semi-structured interviews, the role of highlighting the cultural identity of migrant and refugee students in the learning process as well as the ways of managing the psychological trauma they may experience.

The interview data revealed the shortcomings of the Greek educational multicultural reality as well as the need to provide modernized and free training that would be in line with the research that has been conducted in this field.

About the first research question, two significant results emerged initially. The participants have realized from their experience the importance of highlighting the cultural backgrounds of students to motivate them to participate in the learning process. This finding is consistent with Cummins's research on the highlighting of pupils' identity elements to promote their willingness to learn (Cummins, 2000). Through the promotion and sharing of aspects of their identity, their motivation to broaden their cognitive horizons and socialize is strengthened. At the same time, the educators mentioned that a genuine team spirit of confidence is built that is founded on respect for the diversity and uniqueness of students (Rousseau et al., 2012). Despite the innate tendency to integrate into groups of fellow nationals that create a sense of security, teachers pointed out that they seek to cultivate relationships of trust between class members regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

The educators have found that promoting experiential learning through creative activities that highlight and at the same time mitigate the cultural differences of class members contributes to the development of a team and cooperative spirit. Projects, such as Identity Texts and various playful activities related to Art, function as a motivation for participation in the team and as tools for intellectual and spiritual development. This fact echoes Cummins' findings regarding the creation of multimodal bilingual books by students where they tell their personal stories in their native and host country languages (Cummins et al., 2005). Through the involvement of their cultural backgrounds in the creation of their personal life book and through sharing with their classmates, the bonds between class members are strengthened. In this way, the desire for knowledge as well as the empowerment of their voice (Cummins et al., 2011).

At the same time, participants emphasized the importance of creating a climate of trust between educators and students, as well as between children, so that they can share their personal stories (Cummins et al., 2005). Implementing and maintaining a daily routine sets boundaries and creates a climate of safe interaction among class members (Van der Kolk, 2014). In this way, pupils seem to experience their participation in the learning

process as a safe and creative experience that enhances self-respect as well as mutual respect.

Despite the monocultural and monolingual teaching model that dominates in Greece, teachers, either from their experience or from conviction, stated that they allow pupils to use their linguistic repertoire. Due to the accumulation of a large number of students from many different countries in reception and ZEP classes, the utilization of their linguistic repertoire proves to be necessary. Otherwise, communication would be significantly limited, and the promotion of new knowledge would be hindered (Velasco & García, 2014). This is a student population with a migrant and refugee background that is often associated with relevant language skills for survival reasons. In addition to their mother tongue, these students know English or French to some extent, depending on their country of origin. In the context of communication and understanding of instructions and new knowledge, educators allow “translanguaging.” This practice allows for direct student participation, a sense of acceptance, and the promotion of multicultural identity, resulting in removing the obstacles that diversity often poses (Vogel et al., 2017). Students become creative and critically thinking speakers who emphasize primarily the meaning and secondarily the form of linguistic communication (Sanchez et al., 2018). The stress of social, cultural, and linguistic adaptation seems to be reduced, resulting in increased student autonomy and self-confidence (Lieberman et al., 2017). At the same time, using native-speaking students as interpreters strengthens cooperation between children despite the risk of data corruption due to incomplete transfer.

Multilingualism, however, is a significant challenge for teachers. The number of students and the different languages they speak is often large and complex to manage. The monocultural and monolingual teaching that the Ministry of Education promotes prevents educators from implementing innovative multicultural practices that would promote the learning process and the integration of students in the host country (Papapostolou et al., 2020). Moreover, the strict time frame set for teaching the voluminous material hinders the efforts of teachers, such as the participants, who wish to experiment with new educational methods based on diversity. Furthermore, in the context of the exploitation of students' linguistic repertoires, the participants point out the danger of ease and rest on the already acquired language skills of the students. This

may lead to a slowdown in the acquisition of the target language. Finding the balance between the use of the mother tongue and the new language requires alertness and experience on the part of the teacher. Despite the aforementioned obstacles, the feeling of acceptance of diversity seems to function as a springboard for psychosocial and cognitive development, especially for the student population with migrant and refugee backgrounds (Hornberger, 2004, p. 167-8). It seems that the safe framework that tolerance and cultural sensitivity towards diversity create ultimately favors rather than hinders the progress of these students.

In line with Cummins (2015), all participants, except P9, confirmed the positive role of diversity and its promotion in students' cognitive and psychosocial development. The interest they showed in the children's cultural backgrounds strengthened their willingness to participate in group activities where they had the opportunity to share aspects of their identity. In this way, the students cultivated the skills of cooperation and empathy by coming into contact with their classmates' different cultural backgrounds and histories. As P8 characteristically states, the usually marginalized immigrant and refugee students gain a sense of freedom as they are put in the spotlight by speaking and writing about their personal stories. Mainly through Identity Texts, they gain the voice they had lost and become active participants in acquiring and producing knowledge (Cummins et al., 2011, p.48-50). Therefore, by rejecting the monocultural and monolingual ideology, teachers favored the democratic functioning of the student community where cultural sensitivity, equality, and justice prevail.

In agreement with the research findings of Graham et al. (2016), the effort of some participants to involve the parents or guardians of the students in the learning process is based on the realization that it can be a catalyst for the psycho-spiritual development of the latter. At the same time, the caregivers of the children ensure the opportunity to talk about themselves and feel accepted (Helot & Young, 2002). An open school to diversity does not reject but integrates differences and is enriched by otherness, arousing the trust of students and guardians. Thus, the willingness to participate in it and spiritual development increases.

Pupils with a migrant and refugee background carry psychological trauma due to abusive experiences they experienced both in their country of origin, during their migration journey, and in their respective host countries. Teachers may come into

contact with their traumatic past during the learning process. The participants in the research, therefore, emphasized the importance of building a climate of trust and safety within the school community, so that students begin to realize that trauma belongs to the past and take advantage of the opportunities of the present (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 32-3). With empathy and discretion for the sensitive personal data of the students, they allow traumatic experiences to emerge, if they wish to share them. As they are not experts, they avoid going into details that they may not be able to manage appropriately. However, reaching out to psychologists is difficult as, due to the underfunding of Greek public education, their number is minimal in relation to the needs of these students. For this reason, they primarily address colleagues who face similar challenges and share their experiences. It seems, therefore, that the power of a well-functioning school community functions as a counterbalance to systemic inadequacies and that teachers, by exchanging suggestions and ideas through their experiences, find new ways to deal with multiple challenges.

Students with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) usually do not talk about their traumatic experiences, which, however, hinders their psycho-spiritual development. Pre- or post-migration psychological trauma has been found to inhibit their cognitive and psychosocial development (Graham et al., 2016). This fact further complicates the work of teachers who, as non-experts, are unable to penetrate the barrier of terror that these vulnerable students may have experienced and has caused them to become alexithymia and disconnected from the present and new potentially healing experiences (Van der Kolk, 2014). They seem to feel psychologically vulnerable and inadequate, as they are called upon to manage, without the systematic support of psychologists, issues that are not related to the specialty of an educator (Rousseau, Guzder, 2008). P6's reference to the effect that the psychological trauma of students may have on teachers demonstrates the need for their support from the State by appointing experts in the field of mental health.

As corroborated by Arvanitis et al. (2019), the data from the interviews confirm the need to modernize the Greek educational system to support multicultural education students and teachers. More creative and inclusive pedagogical methods and practices are needed that will utilize students' pre-existing linguistic repertoire (Gkaintartzi et al., 2018). Outdated monocultural and monolingual ideology, inadequate logistical

infrastructure, inadequate multimedia, and poorly written school textbooks compose a problematic educational reality for teachers and students who have feelings of abandonment. Combined with the voluminous and strictly oriented to the cognitive development of students' exam material, the educational task becomes even more difficult. According to Papadopoulou et. al. (2022) indicated that teachers need to develop global and intercultural competencies to move beyond the outdated educational model. This will strengthen their cultural sensitivity and stimulate their students' willingness to participate.

Increasing the number as well as the permanence of educators who staff the reception and ZEP classes was set as a priority. Thus, teachers will be able to individualize the lesson and more fully cover the diverse needs of students. The institutionalization, in fact, of a preparatory class that will prepare students for their integration into regular classes was proposed as an auxiliary process for their cognitive development. In support of Banks' suggestions (2015), the participants pointed out the need to modernize educational programs, the logistical infrastructure, and the means at their disposal to more easily deal with the barriers posed by multilingualism and cultural diversity. In particular, the poorly written and inappropriate textbooks emphasized that they should be revised and adapted to the needs of students and new research data. At the same time, they considered it crucial to have a permanent presence of a psychologist and social worker in every multicultural school for the proper management of the mental traumas and crises that arise and are unable to be dealt with effectively. Finally, the presence of interpreters often proves essential for achieving communication between teachers, students, and their guardians.

The participants underlined the value of training. They pointed out, however, that it is crucial to be systematic so that teachers frequently renew their practices and tools and respond more fully to the multiple needs of students. At the same time, they considered it necessary for it to be provided free of charge by the State. This seems logical since teachers' salaries are not high even though their work is often carried out under adverse conditions. P1 noted that it should be mandatory, especially in demanding areas such as intercultural education. However, everyone agreed that it should be substantial and with practical application to contribute decisively to the normalization of obstacles and to the treatment of the various crises that teachers are called upon to resolve, feeling

inadequate. Their views converge with the research data of Arvanitis et al. (2019) according to which multicultural teachers are insufficiently prepared to manage and utilize the cultural diversity of their students. They lack a specific pedagogical framework and educational planning regarding diversity as well as modern teaching methods. It seems, of course, to be expected, especially in Greece where the huge migration flows have caused an increase in intolerance, that the State devalues these areas of education addressed to vulnerable populations, ultimately hindering their effective integration.

## **6. Limitations**

Although this qualitative research demonstrates the value of highlighting diversity in promoting the cognitive and psychosocial development of migrant and refugee students, several gaps limit the validity of the results. First, as Isari and Pourkos (2016) argue, the small sample of interviewees does not allow for general conclusions regarding recognizing the value of diversity in the context of the learning process (p. 81-82). Moreover, the fact that six of the nine participants work in the same school that provides education in an exemplary way in a multicultural area contributes to the formation of a positive attitude and prejudice towards diversity and its highlighting. Good cooperation between the principal and teachers promotes team spirit and the smooth management of challenges. In less supportive educational environments, diversity may be viewed negatively by both the administration and teachers as well as by the student's classmates, with the risk of further marginalization. Consequently, the data from this research do not imply a generalized cultural sensitivity on the part of the members of the Greek school community. However, they attest to the value of respecting and highlighting diversity as the specific sample, apart from one participant, promotes it and highlights its positive results. Finally, it is a fact that the researcher conducting this research is also positively disposed towards diversity. The subjective perspective of the research problem constitutes an obstacle to conducting objective research (Isari & Pourkos, 2016, p. 126). The questions she chose to ask as well as the extralinguistic characteristics of online communication with the participants may have indicated to the interviewees the answers she secretly wished to receive. As a result, the validity of the answers to the research questions is limited.

## **7. Conclusion**

This research aims to demonstrate the practices that Greek multicultural educators implement to manage the diversity and psychological trauma of migrant and refugee students. Through the qualitative method, specifically the semi-structured interviews of nine teachers, the role of cultural and linguistic identity in the cognitive and psychosocial development of students is demonstrated. At the same time, the need for psychological support is emphasized, primarily for students with psychological trauma and secondarily for teachers who are called upon to manage it.

In support of relevant research, the majority of participants emphasized the importance of cultural backgrounds and their utilization in the learning process (Cummins, 2019). In an attempt to build a conducive environment for communication and learning, teachers use inclusive activities that incorporate elements of their students' culture. Multimodal media and creative projects such as Identity Texts create a safe space for the expression of their silenced voices. They highlight the effectiveness of these innovative practices in the academic progress and spiritual flourishing of students.

Although some of the participants began their teaching careers having embraced the dominant monocultural and monolingual ideology, their experience demonstrated the value of the opposite approach to language teaching (Fotiadou et al. 2016). The translanguaging method, which allows the full use of students' linguistic potential, is considered necessary for achieving communication between class members (Garcia & Kleyn, 2017). By highlighting their linguistic repertoire, students master the target language more easily than by prohibiting its use. In fact, by expressing interest in learning words from their students' languages, some teachers seem to have upset power relations and taken the students' place. Thus, they increase the enthusiasm and self-confidence that these persecuted student populations usually lack. Despite the promotion of multilingualism, participants pointed out that the difficulty of communication is great, as systemic shortages in teachers, appropriate means, and infrastructure make their work difficult.

Managing the emerging psychological trauma of vulnerable students is a major challenge, according to interviewees. In the absence of permanent psychologists and social workers, they are called upon to deal with the students' post-traumatic stress and psychological instability on their own. Some stated they had been abandoned by the

State and were mentally burdened by the traumatic experiences of their students. They pointed out, however, the importance of teachers supporting each other and sharing the experiences and problems they face. At the same time, they noted the value of boundaries in the mental balance of students. The establishment of a daily educational routine as well as structured activities create a sense of security in students whose uncertainty dominates the rest of their lives.

Through personal experiences, the participants highlighted the multiple pathologies and shortcomings of the Greek educational system. The limited number of ZEP (Zone of Educational Priority) classes as well as non-permanent teachers undermine the quality of the education provided and the teaching relationship (Chatzidaki and Tsokalidou, 2021). The inadequate logistical infrastructure and the meager multimedia that would facilitate the learning process are evident. Outdated school textbooks do not meet the needs of students. Educators, therefore, feel inadequate in fulfilling their complex role.

Through the interviews, teachers' requests for the upgrading of multicultural education in Greece emerged. To facilitate their work and effectively meet the complex needs of students, the participants highlighted fundamental problems that the State must address. They set the first priority to increase the number of reception and special education classes and multicultural teachers. On the contrary, they proposed reducing the number of students per class so that teachers can provide individualized instruction based on the needs of each student. Furthermore, they stressed the need for systematic, modern, and free training that responds to the Greek educational reality. Innovative educational tools and materials were characterized as essential for overcoming the difficulties that diversity often brings. Original books and appropriate multimedia would contribute to increasing participation and inclusion, as all students would have the opportunity to transform into active class members. Some research participants emphasized the importance of involving family members or students' community in the learning process. They found that this enhances the motivation for learning and the sense of acceptance of their diversity.

Regarding the management of the emerging mental trauma that migrant and refugee students may be experiencing, teachers highlighted the need to appoint permanent mental health professionals so that they can serve as a stable point of reference for both students and teachers. Building a climate of trust and acceptance has a healing effect

on psychological trauma (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 377-380). In this way, they believe they could intervene much more effectively to heal the psychological trauma that prevents students from developing cognitively and psychosocially.

This research has limitations. The limited sample of nine teachers does not allow for the generalization of the findings to all Greek teachers. Furthermore, the researcher's biases in favor of diversity and equality in education may have biased positive responses to these questions from the participants. To form a comprehensive picture of multicultural education in Greece, further research and awareness-raising of the competent authorities is required.

This research, therefore, demonstrates the value of the cultural identity of immigrant and refugee students in promoting their psycho-spiritual development. It also highlights the challenge of managing students' psychological trauma by teachers. Finally, it records the participants' suggestions for upgrading the multicultural education provided. The Greek State must listen to the demands of professionals in the field as their experiences reflect the real challenges that could be transformed into opportunities for inclusion and meaningful integration of vulnerable students.

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## Appendix

## Interviews

### P1

- The first thing I wanted to ask you is how in a multicultural class do you manage to build team spirit and achieve inclusion, when you have people from different nationalities, different languages, etc.

- Well, now this also depends a bit on age. That is, by trying it with older children I could do other things and by trying it this year with first graders I do other things. With a more difficult part this year because the children are very young.

That is, first grade. Yes, so we started with six-year-olds in a class where at least two-thirds were of foreign origin and bilingual or completely foreign-speaking without having Greek as one of them. So, now the teamwork part, yes.

I will try to think about what I am doing for this year. Mainly, I tried from the beginning to highlight that everyone comes from somewhere. They have a story. They speak a language at home. With this language, it is understood if the children know such languages. If they know where the countries of the children, we have contact with at school are. Anyway, they are in the same class. If there are other children at school who... Oh, I missed you... Can you hear me?

- Yes, I can hear you now. A phone call came and cut off the call.

- So I looked to find out if there are other children at school who speak the same language, to show that it is a group, there is a community in our school. They are not the only ones who came and do not speak at all. First of all, to make it clear that we are a class that has these characteristics.

We have to integrate the children and from there the children themselves create a situation in which they will include the children who did not speak in the groups, in their groups with the technique of assistance. Don't you understand? Come on, let me help you, since you don't understand.

- In what language?

- In body language. There was no language. I have two little kids who speak Arabic and there is no one else who speaks Arabic and knows Greek. And there is also nothing in common in the language. It is not English to throw out five words and somehow make a connection with what the little ones know. I tried by putting them in pairs where we sit so that the kids are always with someone who speaks Greek well in the pair, from the few possibilities I had. I tried to have the assistant there for the one who doesn't know. So what did the assistant do? He tried to show, explain with body language or simply point to what we were doing, where we were, what the lady was saying, something he said to try to show so that they could become a team. And in one case, the girls took on a little girl who didn't know Greek at all and they had her close and during the break, with the result that she learned very quickly to communicate orally.

- So, because another question is to what extent do you allow them to speak their language, in order for them to understand instructions to participate?

- Of course, and let's say now I have two siblings who speak Arabic. Because the girl started to understand much faster than the boy, of course I told her to tell your brother in Arabic what you understood.

Of course I used whatever means I had, even Google Translate to let them hear an instruction in their language, always when it had to do with something related to the organization of the group, with some instruction that was for the next day, that they had to understand that these are the rules. Not for the Greek part. I don't consider it particularly useful there.

- You mean for us to learn the Greek language, don't you consider it useful?

- When I was at the ZEP, as I was before, I used the data of their own language to make a mini dictionary, to make translations, to find common words, etc.

- So what do you not consider it useful for?

- Within the context of the classroom, if I translate everything I say in Greek in one way into Arabic, I do not consider it particularly useful. Because the child expects to have help in his language and does not make an effort to master it.

That is, as many times as I tried it, I saw that it did not help particularly. When we talk now, if I want to explain the letter a and a word, from the moment I show it in an image, I also give the information visually. You do not need to show it in his language.

Yes, yes, yes. But he has received the message from you that his language is acceptable and not to be rejected. Of course. I also like to use as many words as I can, because they are small and cannot easily make the connection. But in the past, with older children, who understood the vocabulary more quickly, which word corresponds to which, in their own language, I would ask them to say it, write it, show it to us and teach it. To count a few, let's say, in Farsi, to say five words in Arabic. Now, with the specific children I have this year, I have learned three or four that are very useful. "I take out a plastic bag", "I read this at home",

etc. and so on, and I use them in Arabic and I see that they are very happy with it.

- And have you noticed, beyond the joy, whether their motivation to learn increases?

- I'm not entirely sure what to answer. But certainly, their willingness to develop a personal relationship with me increases. So, and let's finally learn.

- So, you said with what methods you highlight their identity. And with others?

- And through lessons. And because I also came from a ZEP year, very recently, which was already very dynamic in this school, I used the geography lesson a lot, which is world geography in the Sixth.

And the goal was for me to select units from a vast material, anyway, and to highlight the characteristics of the countries and continents from which they came. And this was important work, which the student, who had the origin that interested us, was from there and would join a small work group with others who did not have the same origin, so that he could tell us about the diet, about the customs, about the language, about the clothes, about everything. that concerns his own culture.

- Yes. Ok

- So, yes. We could also use it a little in the cognitive or write, have the children write some things on the board, how it is in their own writing

- And there was a chance to involve members of their family or community in the learning process? That is, if they learned some words of a story, if it was a story that a dad, mom, grandma, grandpa who lives would tell or in cooking. I don't know.

- Look, now... No, in what has happened to me, I haven't done that. I have done it at the ZEP though, when I had the reception department. Because it was much easier to do. In personal meetings and with the parents who came quite regularly, because they also asked for help in general for the school, for their integration. They asked for it from us who had the reception department, not from the principal, for example. There were some students there who had this need, for example, we were learning how to write a recipe and they needed to bring and... Iman brought me this, I know, a recipe from home and Erfan. They had brought things that they had at home because he was telling me, he was telling me, they want you to try it. So, we exchanged some recipes and so on. But this was not in the context of the department. It was on an individual basis.

- Yes. Now, has it ever happened to you that mental trauma has emerged? Since we often talk about refugee children who are obviously mentally traumatized. And what did you do as a teacher, since we are not psychologists?

- A security for the entire class if it has been brought up or if the child has brought it to me personally?

- A valid question. Either one or the other.

- Because in the individual class this has happened. It has happened in two very characteristic cases. One case was when... You want me to tell you the cases or what I did.

- More, what did you do. That is, how did you handle it, I don't know. If you need to tell the case, of course. Whatever you want.

- Great. What did I do to handle it in which direction. Because...

As teachers, what do you do when the child shares a psychological trauma with you, since we are not psychologists and, therefore we do not have, my child, the knowledge to, I don't know, deal with it somehow.

- Great. Look. I have to tell you now, what came out and what I did with the direction.

- Yes, yes, yes.

- In case the child shared a very real experience for him. He was a refugee and had lived the whole process of coming to Greece and being in a situation in which he thought that there was a chance he would leave abroad to meet his father.

Such a case in general. The child had a very strong need to share this thing with me. This experience. Very detailed. In every detail. Because he believed that if he entered the process of leaving Greece, he knew that he could leave secretly the next night. That was the detail. So, he felt that if he left and did not share it with someone who had the time to listen to him and the willingness to hear this, he would leave and no one would ever know what he had experienced. And no one could ever not remember him. That this student should not be remembered so that he could one day bring up this story of his and tell it to the world. The first step... The first thing I felt was the first shock. It is a shock.

That a person of this age, an eleven-year-old at the time, this child shared something shocking with me. It was a very shocking story. The second thing I did was to ask the teachers if they knew him, the teachers who were involved with the student, that is, the class teacher, some specialists who were close to the children and the principal.

So, no one knew him. No one knew this story. I shared it with the school principal, in order to investigate further if we should intervene.

This is what interested me the most. If we should do something, that is, if this is a case that needs help from us.

- From you or do you mean from psychologists?

- First from the school. If practically we should do something. If we should do something with the parent. Because when he secretly tells you at night on foot, there is a risk. There is a search for the student that will arise along the way. If the student leaves school and you know why he left and how he left. So I have to say this thing that I am learning out loud. I have to share it. I have to talk to the parent. I have to look to see what is happening. If it is really reality. Since this has been resolved and we said that

we do not need to do anything in a practical sense, I will talk to the school psychologist. To see if the student needs some support in this regard.

- Sorry. Is he a school psychologist?

- You mean a psychologist who takes on ten schools at once. Yes. Once a week is basically the same.

And what I did, because it was also a COVID year, in this particular case, the first COVID year, was to try to keep my contact alive with the student when the schools closed. Because this happened a week before we closed. I tried to keep my contact alive in every possible way. With my cell phone, with phones, with messages, with calls, with emails that we exchanged, with assignments that I sent him and he sent me. With books that I gave him, so that he had a home before we closed, to read, because he liked certain things to read from the library. To keep in touch. And when we finally got back safely, I asked him if he remembered sharing this story with me. And, of course, he told me and I remember. I'm glad that I didn't leave Greece after all. And a very close relationship developed with the student, as well as with his mother who wanted to have a very personal relationship, to thank us as a school for listening to her child and sharing in any case the whole heavy psychology that the child had, still remembering all that he went through. Which communication has been maintained almost until now that the second child is still in school. I don't have him as a student, of course, but we have a very good relationship with this mother.

And from there on, knowing all these things and because the students we have have a completely different background, our refugee students. Completely different cases depending on which country they come from, if they come alone unaccompanied, if they come with their mother or with the whole family. Very different cases.

I tried to create a small community, to bring the children together. These children who had difficult experiences. Because initially these children were in separate groups, because there were different language needs.

When the linguistic need, after all, when the linguistic part could somehow come to a compromise and these children could have a little communication with each other, I tried a little like this to bring them together and talk about their stories. So that they

wouldn't feel like they were the only ones carrying such a trauma. Because their stories were really difficult. Very difficult. And always when I knew that it wasn't just the student's linguistic difficulty because it wasn't just one student, there were others who had very serious things behind them and it's with them that you develop the strongest relationship always. Because there are bonds. Because from the moment they trust you and share it - it won't always happen - it will sometimes happen, though. The one who trusted you, at least that's how it works for me, I have to be there for them in whatever they need. Because with me they feel the bond. The direct one. And they ask for my help. And he feels that I can support him.

From there on, I made sure to be present during many breaks, so that I could try to include them in the group. Sharing in a more direct way, since I had the linguistic background to make it their story, not to tell everything I've heard but to try to make a small group while they're playing and say, "So-and-so student knows this from his country, show it to you so you can play together."

- To make it a small group.

- Yes, yes. But, unfortunately, the time we have left to do this is very little. Yes.

Especially when they talk to us about the classroom context, that's why I asked you if you want from the classroom or if you want from...

- No, and the school community, not necessarily just the classroom. So from what you said in the context of the school, for dealing not only with the psychological trauma in general, but with the various difficulties that arise, there is support.

- It exists to the extent that... Basically, it exists when the student or the family decides to trust the school, and that doesn't always happen. When they share it, however, doors open because we have ways to get in touch with organizations that will help.

## **P2**

- Okay, so the question is how do you develop team spirit in a class where you have children of many nationalities, perhaps.

- Okay, so the first thing that comes to mind is creating a playful climate or even using a game, as many of the basic rules of games are universal, can be represented with nonverbal elements and are usually something that children cannot resist in a way, so they are forced to enter the process. The other, in cases of children who are stressed or have difficulty, I try to create a stable routine in the classroom, so that they feel safe, know the frameworks in which they can act and the interactions between the children and me, and so little by little, feeling safe within this routine, they can influence each other, feel more independent. An example of a routine. Let's say, especially to children who are foreign-speaking, when we come in, saying good morning, we talk a little about the weather, write the date on the board, which can also be using a card, with pictures, using pictures, say very few things about, for example, if it's Monday for the weekend, so with an element of the word. The routine, we collect the notebooks, we leave them in a specific place, we slowly prepare for the learning process. And this creates security.

- Now, have you noticed, highlighting some elements of their cultural identity at some point. Does their motivation to learn, for example, the language increase?

- Sure. In the learning process, a very important part is for the children to be able to express their own identity. Therefore, they connect more. For example, many times, whether children speak or not the language, we can say, for example, customs from their place or how this word that we are learning is called in other languages. First of all, the meaning of the word for each child has a different weight in their language. So, when this is communicated throughout the class and among the children there is interest in how it is said in another language. So, yes, I think that by demonstrating their identity, linguistic and cultural, the process is definitely strengthened. The motivation to learn Greek, let's say, in Greece.

- So, with what methods do you highlight, with what you said, that is, either I know such and such a word, such and such a concept in your language. So, to hear Farsi, to hear Arabic, while learning something.

- Okay, it is understood that some words may happen to be common in both languages or even in languages between them. Let's say, Polish to English. Many times, my children suggest words to me, the connections. Let's say, they tell me on their own what colors, what color is like in their language. They connect with English, with Greek. Sometimes with Albanian. There are also children who speak the language, Greek very well, but are second generation, let's say. An Albanian girl connected with an Albanian boy who doesn't know the language now. They function as interpreters but also reminding the identity of second generation children. In other words, a connection is apparent. Of course, there are indeed children who function as interpreters for children, that is, child to child, and child many times with parents. In other words, the parent who may not speak the language, let's say Greek or English, uses a child from the class who speaks the same language to communicate with each other or me to communicate some things when the interpretation is difficult.

- So, because now with these two are my next two questions, you, my child, allow the use of their languages during the learning process. It is not the monolingual approach, that since we came to learn Greek for example, only Greek will be heard here. I have tried both. That is, many years ago when I had around 7-6-7 different languages in a section at the ZEP, there was no common ground, the truth is. Not even English at all. Some children spoke English, but not all. There was also the necessity, it was at that time when the migratory flow was very intense and in Kypseli there was a huge population and there was the necessity for children who were in the sixth grade to immediately learn Greek in 6-7 months in order to go to high school later. Maybe it was my fault, but also because the sections were crowded, that is, in a ZEP, 5-6 children are too many to be able to manage. I had tried it mainly with Greek, that is, using cards or images, but I believe that after experience I think that when they are heard and their languages are more connected to the learning process and, perhaps they do not experience the same stress as it is a little more normalized. To be able to find meaningful connections between their language and the language they are learning. It is very interesting because many times they feel the same that they are teaching. It is known that when it calls you are called to teach something, you know it even better. During the teaching process you know it in depth. Yes, you realize it, so to speak.

- Yes, yes. Oh, how nice. And it is also nice that you have found it through experience.

- Yes, definitely. I think that, at least in my opinion, in pedagogy, of course, theory and being able to know and study it are very good, but experience always surpasses you. And with the work context and with the children and with the dynamics that develop within the school.

- You mentioned something before about parental involvement. So, in order to achieve the learning goals that you set, my child, you can also involve parents or members of their community, even at some stage, not only within the classroom. Parents get involved in the ZEPs that we had, beyond their duty in the classroom. They were parent meetings with interpretation, inviting external agencies to interpret for us or from their own communities that they were part of, that is, that supported them, or from agencies approved by the Ministry, so that they could come and interpret. However, in more current or everyday issues of the type, I know, tomorrow I would like this Notebook to come or we will go on a trip, I don't know what, apart from Translator, which helps a lot. Google Translate. Yes. Certainly, a child who speaks the same language and better Greek than another child, I can use, let's say, as an interpreter for the very basics of the current routine. So, in this way you involve them. Yes. I believe that it has a great benefit because many times parents, because interpreting is something very difficult to do, practically speaking, it also brings them face to face with the learning process, are called as parents themselves at school, so they have a different type of status. And certainly, equal treatment with parents.

With respect. Yes, yes, yes. And their responsibility that your child is a student, you also have to take care of some things at home.

- Now, often especially refugee children, if not always, carry mental trauma. Has it ever happened to you, on the occasion of some exercise, some activity, that a child's mental trauma came to the surface and yes, and we are not psychologists. What do you do there, because it is a special population.

- This is a very... The truth is that there will be a need for a psychologist at school, if there is one, which is not always there at school. For me, I try to treat it as something that is, let's say, pedagogical and humane. It has happened, let's say, many times that a trauma appears, to be discussed. Many times, it is enough for the child to simply want to discuss it. He may not ask for anything.

- What do you mean, not to ask for anything?

- Just for something to come out, that is, not to end up somewhere. Just for it to be shared. Exactly, just for it to want to be shared. I try very hard to be very careful about this, not to say any information that I understand the child is not ready to receive. In other words, I usually answer questions if they are asked. I always listen to the child's sharing in this.

I have also been impressed by how resilient children are. That is, either the trauma can be very bad and they have no awareness of it, or a particular awareness, or they have not yet metabolized it, or they have metabolized it, but many times I have truly seen the joy of life, that because the difficulties are such and are usually very common for these children, the difficulties or any traumas related to it. That is, a trauma can be the loss of a parent, very important, but also the way it is dealt with in the country they will come to can be equally traumatic. So many times, I think that this takes a long time to be able to realize it in a child and in this context, they cling too much. It is also the survival instinct. It functions exactly as a survival lever. I will play, I will make friends. The truth is very sensitive and over there maybe the school would like more support. From people who have contact with the school.

- From the school units that have come into contact with immigrant children, refugee children and so on, have you had or do you have support? That is, problems that arise.

- Yes, in recent years we have had an external agency at the school and we also have a psychologist at the school. Where you can share concerns and solutions can be given. However, the psychologist at the school comes for very few hours. He comes once a week. In a school that deals with immigrant, refugee, economic, social problems. In a wider school, let's say. It's very little. And the truth is that even he himself, which seems very little to me, cannot know the cases in depth. That is, when he comes once a week and is in 5-6 different schools, work cannot be done. Especially when it is not permanent staff and changes every 9 months with contracts, work and contracts, it makes things very difficult.

- So, you think that teachers who work in such classes, let's say in such schools, it would be good to train often, and of course not out of their own pocket, while the state, like that. Because the challenges are very special, my child.

- The challenges are special, it is true. However, I consider two things very important to be able to talk about things that will train. One is that the teaching staff should be stable. Because in many reception classes, not in many, I think in all reception classes now, contractual substitutes are hired, every year. Education is political, it makes things very difficult, first of all, the same teacher being in the same school for the last year and in the same position. Why can't you function as a ZEP teacher, the other as a classroom teacher. Which does not allow an educator to get to know in depth. To build relationships. To have contact with the microclimate of the school, the children and all the rest. That is one part. The other part is of course certainly not from their pocket and certainly in a work context. That is, in working hours. The necessity of the training itself is great.

- And of course the quality of training, I imagine.

- Of course, the quality of training. And also...

- I asked about the importance of training. Indeed. So, what you said would you suggest... as a change, as measures to deal with multicultural classes, etc.? That is, a psychologist, training within a work context, all of that.

- I think that it is also very crucial to have a social worker. In addition to a psychologist. Apart from a psychologist, mainly a social worker because the problems that refugees and their families usually face are very practical in nature. That is, they may need some kind of allowance, some referral to a structure, some agency that can really help them with their home. And these are the roles that the school is now called upon to take on for them, in a way, directly or indirectly. Something that, in a way, is not exactly its job, nor are the teachers exactly the experts for it. So, they really have to deal with practical things. How can a child learn a language if their home is not stable? If they know that in two weeks they will leave their home. If they live in a state of malnutrition. I definitely think that a social worker would be much more useful, as well as interpreters, a constant presence of interpreters in schools. Because the truth is that trying to find common time outside of your work context usually, which parents also have... That is, they imagine some things to operate very balanced at school. In a way, as we were talking about the children's routine, which you try to be very balanced, so that they feel safe, I would consider it very useful to have stable, balanced things at school, that

promote communication with parents and their information about their rights or about benefits that they can have, such as, say, interpreting at school, which is one of the most basic, to be balanced for parents as well, so that the children's learning can also be helped. So, we are talking about another immigration and educational policy, right? Unfortunately, I think that it is not possible to integrate just any person, adult or minor, let's say, or minor children, when practical issues remain unresolved.

- Yes, yes, yes, right. Indeed. That is, you are called to do things that are not exactly your role.

- The truth is that there are scientists and people who have these studies for training and we need them in education a lot.

- Yes, what you said seemed very interesting to me. Thank you very much. I am stopping the registration.

### **P3**

- So, what I would like to ask you from your experience is how in a class with many different nationalities can you create a team spirit? That is, a feeling, my child, that we become a team at some point.

- The team will necessarily happen at some point. It is not easy to do from the beginning, because we are talking about classes that are children of different nationalities, different regions, different economic status, which plays a very important role. A child who lives in the basement, with a child who lives on the third floor, let's say in Byron. Therefore, getting these children together is difficult. At some point, that is, now we are talking about mid-April, it has happened. It has not happened with all classes, because these children, apart from the contact they have for 3-4 hours at the ZEP, probably do not have any other contact at school. A typical example is what I always said, is that last year I was at the school in the center, where we had a lot of Filipino kids, that is, the percentage was very high. The Filipino kids formed small groups by themselves, without any other contact. No matter how much we wanted to and mixed the groups of different ethnicities, Chinese kids with black kids, Greek kids from Albania, we put them all together so that they could socialize. Because the issue of socialization for these kids is huge. Apart from the fact that they lack language, that they cannot communicate, they have completely different constants from the Greek kids. They have a different way of life, a different everyday life. These kids can go to their homes and accept violence, which is not the case for the majority of children in Greece in normal contexts.

- Yes. And that is a big story.

- So, what we wanted is to create the team at school and it is also a primary goal, at least in the beginning, so that there is a will to come to the ZEP, because some don't even want to come to the ZEP. That is, during the lesson, not everyone has the will to come. But it is not easy, because cliques are created. You will now see the Filipino kids hanging out with the Filipino kids. The issue of safety prevails, right? Yes, but it plays a very important role in that too. That is, there is also the language. A child who only speaks, I don't know, English, with another child who doesn't speak English, that is, he is from Albania, let's say, and doesn't know English, he will not socialize, he will not speak, you will not form a team. And correspondingly, in the sea there are children who

have a fight. And you will try to integrate them, to form a group, but due to time, this will be on the sidelines. That is, within the school framework you do not have the time to resolve children's problems. And necessarily what you choose is to change groups, not to put them together, to put them with another department, not to sit next to them, to sit like a wall in front of them so that they do not have rivalries. While it would be very important, I would love to say that the group is achieved 100% but unfortunately it is not specific. The reality is different and the needs are different. It tells you that I prefer the child to learn to speak Greek than to hang out with the framework. The legislative framework will tell you that the child in the ZEP should learn Greek, not make friends. This is the goal of the ZEP. The goal of the ZEP is for the child to learn Greek, to learn language, to learn vocabulary, to help him learn. That is why it is integrated into the school framework. It is included in the school context to help in school as well. However, in the learning part, it is done. This learning part theoretically develops if the cultural identity of the children is also respected. But this is not possible. That is, in Greek reality it is not possible. No, because the cultural elements of the country in which they are located prevail. Some things will be respected. I mean, I remember now that we had children who did not come for some days because of Ramadan, they do not do some activities because they do not believe, let's say, they are not Christian or Orthodox. Therefore, they will not do the activities that the Greek children will do. We respect the cultural elements of their country. But the culture of the country in which they are located does not cease to apply. Therefore, the Greek element dominates everywhere. It is not easy to maintain their identity. Because it takes precedence, that is, I say it and emphasize it, because the learning part really takes precedence. When you have a child who doesn't speak Greek, it's more important to help them learn the letters, write five words, and learn a basic vocabulary than to maintain their identity. This will happen later, when a basic code of communication has already been mastered. When you can't communicate.

It's easy to put their element forward. They'll tell you that in groups and in seminars that will be held for ZEP. All this will be told to you by the experts that you should preserve its cultural element, put each country forward. Because such things haven't happened often, yes. But the reality is different. At least the reality is the reality that I have experienced. I sometimes think that maybe I am too demanding and have very high goals from children that I shouldn't. Just when you see a little child who finishes

first grade and can't write his name, you say now what cultural elements to put forward, when the child can't advance to second grade. When a child arrives in Greece at a Greek school, he should leave one grade to go to the next with some basics. When he can't leave, if I put the elements of music in, he can't talk to me. Use it from games. Anything we could use from the country each child comes from. When they can't communicate? We won't use it either.

- Yes, yes. So, because you said that in the ZEP, the first goal is to learn the language of the host country. Anyway, Greek for us. Do you allow them to use their own language so that fellow nationals can communicate with each other?

- Especially when they don't know English as an intermediate language.

- I don't know how you manage linguistic diversity? Because I, too, in my practice, was looking for ways, but it's very difficult.

- It's chaos. The truth is that I am the case of a teacher who doesn't want to use it at all, because both years... I had the same logic both years. I don't want to use any other language besides Greek at all. But... Because the goal is to learn. Now, I thought that I would prefer you to tell me even one word in Greek than to tell me everything in English, let's say. Of course, to kids who don't even speak English... And there is... There are definitions.

- Yes. Yes, yes.

- Now I remember, we have a person as an example at our school. A new kid came a month or two ago from Georgia who doesn't speak a word of Greek or a word of English. And necessarily, in order for there to be communication and for us to somehow be able to understand each other, I have put him in my classes from Georgia and we have this... do the translator, let's say.

- Yes, yes, essentially interpretation.

- Exactly, which is a very big waste of time. In a forty-minute teaching hour, there is also this transfer of knowledge. Because you don't even know what is being transferred. This is the... I mean, I don't know what they say. I don't know if it has been said. You just trust the child and say, no, I would take it. I don't want to use any other language

besides Greek at all. But... Because the goal is for us to learn..To understand that they know some words. For the children who don't speak at all, yes, I will allow it. Because I don't have any other way of communicating either. I will necessarily have to allow it. It's an intermediate language. We can't communicate otherwise, only with meanings. Which won't be possible.

- Or with pictures, which you use.

- And that, of course. With pictures. Below I try to write what each one is in the language they come from. That's a hat. But that takes a lot of work. This is something that takes a lot of effort. And a lot of work. And at home. Take all the children's notebooks and make notes underneath. I'll search Google Translate for the translation in their country. And now think that in a class of seven children there can be five different nationalities. This requires a lot of work. And besides giving so much time to myself because I don't have that much time to dedicate to my home either. I try to have classes have at least one or two children who speak the same language to help communication. In the whole process so that the children learn more easily, faster, etc.

- Do you involve members of their family, their community in some way? I don't mean for them to come to class. I mean, you know, will they somehow participate at home or is that not possible?

- The truth is that it is not possible, in the sense that at least the children in this particular school have families that are a bit, I can't characterize them, they are dysfunctional. Therefore, they cannot get involved very easily, because they are not in the mood, they do not have the will. For whatever reason, each family chooses not to be actively involved with their child. Many parents do not even know that their children are in the ZEP. Basically, they know it because they are forced to sign, but they haven't even understood what it is. They haven't understood the reason, that the ZEP helps children learn Greek in the sense that they should have learned it. Therefore, because I don't know the context of all the children 100%, I have some cases where I need to know, of course, and I know some things, but I can't go into more depth. That is, it's a bit risky to put family members in the school context, because you don't know where you'll end up. It's not the school context of one's learning process. It's at home. I don't know, exactly. Also, we don't give the children homework. First, because they don't do them,

very basic. And second, because they don't engage. That is, they lose notebooks. There is a general learning chaos, and rather than risk losing notebooks, losing material that may be more useful later, not being able to move on with the lesson and having to do this whole process again, I prefer to keep the notebooks myself, mainly in the younger classes. In the older classes, I give them and also give homework so that there is a connection with the lesson. But even there, the cases are infinitesimal. So, out of the 35 children that I have, the average is about 5-6, a matter of bringing me exercises. I also don't know the family situation, that is, the origins that I remember. Within the group, we had a lesson with older children, with fifth-graders I think, we started with 5-6 where you can work on speech production. And we did it for description. And I didn't dare to put "describe your mom to me", for example.

- Bravo. That's what I wanted now... Sorry to interrupt you. That's what I wanted to ask you. I also encountered it in my practice, as a difficulty and fear. But because these children are very likely to have mental trauma and some issues are very sensitive. If anything, you said "I didn't dare". If somehow a traumatic experience of theirs comes to the surface. What do you do? Because we are not psychologists.

- No, we are not. Precisely because we are not psychologists, I will try, the truth is, to skillfully avoid it. That is why I try not to open up. Because from there you do not know where you will end up. I would really like to help. In any way I could possibly help. But it is not easy. We are talking about children with very difficult family environments, most of them. Therefore, I also try not to bring up discussions on such issues. It has not happened to me, really. I do not know how I would act. I might have had a conversation. There will be conversations. The truth is that in consultation, especially this year when the general climate is very good and there is communication with the children's teachers. There will be communication. That is, if we see something strange, we will cooperate. That. But the children do not talk. That is, I remember recently, again within the last ten days, anyway, we had a concern about a child. When he was a little lost, he was forgetting his notebooks a little and we wanted to maybe extract something, to see if something was happening in the school environment, in the family context, we didn't manage to learn anything. Everything is fine. You can't say anything, nor get information about anything. Therefore, I don't know if there's any point in trying to help.

- I say, if something comes up, what do you do? But you told me that you avoid it and it hasn't come up.

- I mean, in this case I could put the topic describe your mom, your dad and get information about someone. You don't know what you'll hear. I wouldn't want to... Therefore, I put something more neutral. Describe your teacher to me, which is something that... More so, because... If you get into this process of getting some information that may not be very easy to handle, I will have to, after I open it, close the topic. And I don't... I don't know if it's my place. Then there are other things. I don't want to create an issue with the school and... Not just specifically, with all schools. Because I can tell you that it's not your place to do that. You do your job and that's it. It's just that the teaching text can cause something to arise.

- We are human beings, in that sense. Not that you should sculpt it, but that... Because student populations have a lot of trauma. That's why I'm asking, what does an educator do if something arises?

- I'm not their teacher. Their class teacher. But I'm a teacher who they see and say "Oh, Mrs. Chrysa with the long hair and that and let's go to the library". I feel like they have it a bit like a party. That's why they want all the kids to come to me. Which isn't just a party. Therefore, I feel like I won't be the first to say something that concerns them. Something serious that concerns them. We'll say it all every week. We don't have any issues. But I don't think they'll say something serious to me, I think they'll say it to their teachers. We see that they have a different weight. And well, they have a different weight.

- So, from the school where you teach, do you have help to manage a difficulty, a crisis from the Director or from other colleagues? Do you feel like you have support?

- Of course I do. The truth is that I was lucky enough to have some difficulties last year. But I had the same help last year. The ZEP is a branch, after all, it is a category that needs help. If you don't have the support and help from the teachers, especially from the teachers who come into daily contact with these children, it is not easy to get out. It will not get out. You will not be able to help. Those who know the children know the difficulties, you will talk. You will be able to exchange views on a strange behavior either learning or socially. Whatever we find. Sometimes I say that every time I see

someone in the club, in the office, I will definitely tell them something strange that I saw. It has nothing to do with good or bad. They want feedback. There should be communication between the ZEP teacher and the main teacher of the class anyway because these are the two teachers who have the children. If there is no communication, I don't think it can function smoothly and the year will end. It will end, but I don't think it will end for the benefit of the children. It will end simply to end.

- So, what would you like to happen more, to help you more in dealing with a multicultural class that is not easy? Is it a challenge?

- It is. To happen legislatively. To help me.

- How could it be better, that is, things that you have missed and you would like to have more help in this area.

- I think that if there were more teachers in the school, especially I think that what should be provided for, what I would say, would be ideal in a school like the center of Athens because we are now talking about a school that is in the center of Athens. It is true, if not 100%, 99% of the children are foreign. We are talking about completely intercultural schools. The number of teachers hired by the ZEP should be enormous. There should be a permanent teacher for special needs just as there are permanent teachers in the integration department. There should be a permanent teacher for special needs because he knows the children. You can't take a child in September, leave him in June, and the following September bring in another teacher who will take too much time to learn the child, to bond with the child.

The children have a tendency towards me, because it is also the young age of my age that draws them a little to bond with me, but again, I definitely needed a month just to get through the sections, that is, the practical, whereas if I were permanent or me or any other girl, all this would have been solved. You would know the children, you would know their level, you wouldn't have to do tests in the sections, whether the children fit or not, there are disagreements, it is good to avoid these. Now, I know that one child doesn't talk to the other, I won't put them in the same class, there's no reason for them to come and keep them from fighting, we'll go to a different section, while now when you don't know the children, this is very difficult because you're doing tests, you're wasting time and the school's time is very limited anyway, no more lies, Easter,

Christmas, holidays, Halloween, holidays anyway, the time is very limited to work on the learning and to be able to organize it. In terms of organization, there should definitely be at least one and then they should bring in a substitute, at least one should definitely be permanent, in every school at least in the center that has so many foreign children. It takes a year to a month to come up with a program. How much of a struggle the children have gone through. I mean, we've come a long way. Sometimes I think about it now, even now. I get their names mixed up and they call me "ma'am." I get my names mixed up and I say, "I really have," because there are so many children. And from other nationalities, it's hard to remember names. If you suggest nationalities, I don't know if I know them all. I can't tell you about every child who is. Of course, there should be a permanent one, of course, and there should be more, that is, this thing that we are a ZEP for 40 children and in this particular school again. I mean, they felt sorry for me because if I had to take all the children who needed it, I would have that many more. That is, from the cases that are in serious need. Otherwise, if we wanted to open up a little, I would have 10 more children for sure.

- Let me tell you, Chryssa, one last question: Would you feel the need, if you had the time and of course if it were funded, for continuous training in methods?

- The truth is that I have. I mean, I'm one of those people who took a nine-month seminar on interculturalism before they took me to ZEP, because it was a part that really interested me. I don't know if the seminar I took is supposed to be at universities, that is, it's at the National University of Athens, which is a good university, it was quite expensive compared to what's out there and you would think, one would say that you would have gained some skills and some knowledge from it. No, as I think about it, I really wasn't helped at all by this seminar. But of all the seminars, while I blame them because I did that one because I'm really interested in interculturalism and if you ask me now after the seminar and after two years of ZEP, I don't even know if it makes sense to deal with interculturalism in Greece, because there is no help anywhere, no one will tell you what to do, there are some books that are circulating about ZEP that are poorly written without any coherence.

- You can't use various digital tools... I mean, do you have to follow the ministry's books?

- The truth is that last year the principal I was at school told me that I should do the school books and I was necessarily wasting too much time doing them. This year, fortunately, I had told Mr. Yiannis that I had worked on them, I don't like them as material. If it's not mandatory, I prefer it to take me two hours more than finding my own material than working on these books because I couldn't work on them either, there was no coherence at all and fortunately we agreed that there was no problem and that I would do my own material entirely.

- By the way, there are some very nice ones, like SIGNAL.

- There are but they are also isolated, that is, you can't set up an entire lesson, an entire school year from the books, you have to take excerpts which means your own material, it's not like anyone gives you a book, the ones given at school are the well-known "Hello" 1, 2, 3, 4 which I also have at home, I tried very hard to leaf through them and worked on them last year to give them a chance. They are books that for me should be rewritten, they are not books to be given, they are not books that you can, at least for me, they were very difficult for me. And so this year, since I am again in the ZEP and I did not have any issues with the Director, that is, the person did not really object to me, that for me it would have been easier to take the book, tell them do 5 exercises, do 1-2 exercises and that's it, than to search. And now think that for 35 children in 8 different groups which means 8 different speeds to find material, it is a huge book that I could have avoided by simply saying "Hi" to you. I couldn't work it out, they were making it very difficult for me in the books I'm still taking, that is, I'll get a book to photocopy some exercises but we're talking about 20 exercises now, the whole book isn't it, that is, the book needs to be changed and it also needs training

- So, do you think that everything you've heard, watched and so on up until now doesn't help because it's completely theoretical with no relation to reality?

- It's very theoretical, they'll tell you some methods you can use, which are very little practical, however.

#### **P4**

- What I would like you to describe to me first of all, as you have experienced it, is how in a class with students from many different nationalities, you build the feeling of the team, let's say, of the inclusion of the team. Because it seems very difficult to me, let's say, that.

- Look, in the years that I have been in Kypseli, I have been in Kypseli for several years, from what I have observed, because it has always been like this. That is, we always have refugees and we always have immigrants. The children are used to it now, that is, they are not surprised by the fact that they are with children from five different nationalities in the classroom. It does not impress them that much. In other words, it impresses us more, it may do so, than it does the children. The children accept it. I have not seen anything, maybe if you were to talk to someone who has been in Kypseli for 20 years, they would definitely have seen a difference. In the last decade that I have been in Kypseli, I have not seen children who do not include children from other nationalities. I have not noticed anything like that, because the children are used to it. They are familiar. The issue is how you create a group, when they are of different languages, different cultures, they usually form cliques, because they feel safe in their cliques. I always have the system, in whatever I do, beyond that, but here too it helps, I always have the system that I show interest first and the others usually follow me. I will discuss, let's say, for example, I have a student from Nigeria and I will discuss and I will say to him, "Wow, very nice country! Tell us a little about what you eat there, between serious and funny. What food is that. Oh, and what is it made of? Bur, bur, bur". And a conversation begins. That is, I usually start the conversation. I don't do it initially, I don't do it organized, I do it spontaneously. Spontaneously, because I usually take large classes, fifth, sixth, and we have endless conversations with the children.

- Oh, how nice.

- Infinite. I mean, I like this part a lot. I mean, if I see that they need to talk about something, we stop the lesson at that moment and we talk. So, in a spontaneous way I try to ask each one about their own country.

- And have you seen a difference in their desire to learn from you afterwards?

- Very big. Because when you include the child, when you include their culture, then they feel more familiar. More comfortable.

- Of course. Happier, I imagine.

- Of course, of course. And then, of course, they want to talk more and learn about both your own country and the other's country. That's how it goes. Of course, the classes are also very helpful. That is, the fifth and sixth grades have many such topics. They also have work on religions. Let's say about religions. They ask a lot. In history, we talk a lot. About cultures and so on. That is, the lessons also help a lot in this. This has helped me.

- So, you, your method for creating... If I don't help you, you interrupt me.

- Yes, yes, yes.

- So, you, your method for creating a group is spontaneously when your desire arises and so on. And books with the theme of the fifth grade also help a little...

- The books are often an excuse. And then the discussion in the class spontaneously. I show crazy interest and it sounds like my children are following.

- Very nice.

- It sounds very simple, but it works. I think it's very important if the other person feels that you mean it. Anyone else, not just the child.

- Let me ask you, Margarita. Of course, you said that you are taking fifth or sixth. So, language is not a big problem for you. I mean, if you have fifth or different languages, you allow the children to speak their own, so that they understand an exercise instruction.

- I will tell you, in the past, because during the great wave of refugees I was in this school, it was Mr. Yannis' first year, I think. If you ask, I will tell you many tragic stories from that year. So, in those years, '15, '16, '17, when the first refugees arrived, most of the children who came didn't know Greek, and no, they didn't know Greek, obviously they didn't know Greek, since they came from Afghanistan, from Syria, from Iraq, most of them didn't even know English. So, we had no way of communicating.

- In Greek?

- He didn't know English. It was very difficult. He had basic communication. That is, he played soccer, then other children would communicate, he would speak in class, he would say some basic words. They are very flexible. Children are very flexible. In other words, in a few months they would communicate.

- Would you forbid them from speaking their language in class, with the aim of learning only the Greek that lives here? That is, would you not want, say, two children who speak Urdu to speak?

- Let me tell you a big truth? Yes! Before I did my master's degree, I believed in all this nonsense that we used to say, that you should only speak Greek and speak Greek at home and all that nonsense. After I did my master's degree, I have changed my mind.

- Me too.

- I have changed my mind, because we did a unit on bilinguals and when I read the research, I was hitting my head and saying, "You idiot, you animal, what was I sitting there saying?" I couldn't imagine that you have to give so much importance to their own language, in order for them to learn Greek. I couldn't imagine it. Now that you ask me, I'll tell you the truth. If you had spoken to me the year before last, I would have told you something completely wrong. Now I allow it.

- Fine, fine.

- I used to be different, I was completely stupid. I believed that... Greek, Greek, Greek. No, speak Greek, speak Greek, which is ultimately completely wrong.

- Yes, yes, yes.

- Because logic, anyway, any logic tells us this. But the research shows otherwise.

- And have you ever involved, so that the children feel more accepted and therefore learn, I know, more easily, some members of their family or their community?

- Let's say, you mean having them come to class?

- Not necessarily. That is, a task that could also be done with the participation of a family member. If the parents come for information, because from what I have understood from the other interviews, that doesn't happen very often. To put them in the game of their children's learning. I don't know.

- Not anything more. I mean, nothing more than... Do you mean inviting them to school, to do a task together with the children, something like that?

- Yes, or a task at home, in which you will know that a grandmother, if she is alive, let's say now, can tell a story that the child will record so that they can learn the adjectives. I don't know now.

- Yes, I understand. I understand what you are saying. No, I've never done that. It's just that it's usually... We're talking about refugees, right?

- Yes. Or immigrants, but you know, mainly refugees.

- I've noticed that because they're usually painful stories, they don't want to communicate them. In other words, they're closed off in that regard. They say very little about the past, very little about relatives, with exceptions of course, but most of them don't say, they don't mention. So, I'm not getting into that.

- Okay. And since you mentioned that, has it ever happened to surface, my child, a child's psychological trauma, that is, if they're a refugee child, a reference to a dead parent, war, I don't know.

- Not in my case specifically. I'm one of the few cases though. I haven't had the chance to mention it. I understand when a child has been through a very difficult time, but they haven't had the chance to discuss it. Maybe because I work with older children, the younger ones are more spontaneous. That is, in conversations we have, because from time to time there have been issues where we say how we are going to do this, how we are going to manage this, the younger ones are much more spontaneous. The older ones in the fifth and sixth grades are not so spontaneous, at least what has happened to me, in mentioning something so serious. So, they hide it. While the younger ones have happened to my mom and make a move. In a second grader, this is not the specific thing that I have heard. The older ones, no, it has not happened to me. It has happened to

moms themselves to tell us. Their own personal experiences. The mom in a class I had had to show us photos of what it looked like from the shrapnel from a bomb on her face, planed and showing them to us. It has happened. No. But the children do not. At least the older ones hide it.

- In general, let's say at school, I know the school too, of course, at school do you feel that you have support for managing crises that arise mainly in such classes?

- Do you mean from the authorities in general, from the Ministry? No.

- From the educational institution? That is, in this particular school, let's say, do you feel that you have support or are you a teacher who feels alone in the face of difficult management?

- I feel that we are permanently like a club.

- As a school, that is?

- As a school, yes. Specifically. As a teachers' club, we are alone. That is, we and the principal are trying to manage the situation as best we can. But there is nothing organized. To turn to somewhere. Yes. Like you turn to for administrative matters, let's say, in primary school. There is nothing like that. But fortunately, we are... Complete. A good team. We are a good team, fortunately. That is, one helps the other. Yes, yes.

- So, you Margarita, based on what you said, do you consider the training of teachers who deal with immigrants and refugees to be very important. Why do you find that the approach has suddenly changed, I know, on the issue of language, my child.

- Yes, the truth is that it would help, I think. A proper training on practical issues, right? That is, not the ones that, like we do in seminars, that we listen to, listen to, listen to, blah, blah, blah, blah. Theoretical utopias and so on. Yes, utopian things in reality

- Yes.

- In practice. Yes, I think it would be useful. But, of course, usually the teacher has to pay for it.

- Like everything, yes.

- Like everything, yes, yes. Ok, and one last question. What would you suggest, that is, and what would you like to see taken as a measure, to meet the needs of these students? That is, some things that you have thought would be useful to do, for the Greek School to meet the needs of these students?

- Certainly, one hundred percent, we would like many more reception classes. Certainly. Because we have one girl, this year for example, one girl for... it could be three, four. To tell you the truth, I haven't asked the number. Too many children.

- And I spoke to this girl, Chrysa.

- Did you speak to Chrysa?

- Yes, that she is alone.

- She is alone and excellent and despite all the work she is trying to do, no matter how hard you try, you can't have that many children. It is not possible, in other words, to do a proper job. There should definitely be more. The most that has happened to us is three integration classes, which were five years ago. This would definitely be needed. Psychological support would definitely be needed. Both for teachers and students. The rest of the children here need psychological support. But that's another discussion. In my opinion, there should be a psychologist as an organic position in the school.

- Of course, of course.

- In every school. Just like there should be a nurse. Generally, there should be two things in every school, on a permanent basis. These children who come from war, who have crossed seas and waves, would definitely want psychological support. And not just psychological support, the structure that welcomes them. That's the first shock. Then it's another shock that you'll come to school.

- Of course, of course.

- Definitely psychological support, definitely more reception classes, definitely training seminars that you mentioned. One hundred percent. From there, if these three were done well... It would be perfect. What can I say next. Now, asking for their own teachers to give the first lessons, I find it very difficult.

- Interpreters, you mean?
- Interpreters, I find it very difficult. But I think these three are my main ones.
- Yes. Great. Those are the ones I had to ask.
- Only. No way. No way, I was stressed with Nikos.
- There are basically ten questions. But in the context of the discussion, they came up... you were giving me answers, that is, about...
- I talk a lot. Great, great. Yes. Ok.
- Great. Great, don't delay you any longer.
- I was very, very pleased. I hope we can meet in person at some point. I came in the summer... They didn't come in the summer.
- Yes, and I had seen EL SYSTEMA. And I had Suna in the structure.
- Really?
- Yes, I taught her.
- Suna, I mean, an incredible creature. Extremely intelligent. She's fantastic. Suna was one of those child prodigies.
- Yes, Giannis used to tell me that too. He tells me, are you okay with Suna? He tells me, she's incredible. She's a star, she's a star, really.
- Do you live in Athens?
- Yes, yes.
- And are you a teacher too?
- I'm a philologist. Yes, tutoring in particular, etc. And I'm doing this master's degree because I'd like to work in an integration class. And as an hourly wage, my dear, I don't care. But I would like this part to... It makes sense to me, let's say. It gives me meaning.

And only in the structure did I understand that it's difficult. But then it made a lot of sense to me, my dear. We'll see, we'll see.

- It's very difficult. We have left school crying several times. -Yes, Giannis told me that too. He tells me, you know, you'll have failure as your company.

- Yes, yes.

- I was impressed that he had told me that.

- Yes.

- To comfort me, that is, at the beginning when I felt completely incapable. He tells me, you'll have failure as your company. That's a given. But also, something you'll give them, for them it's a treasure. That. So, I have that in mind and we'll see now.

- I hope you finish...

## **P5**

- You have years of experience in multicultural education. Great experience. And what I would like to ask you is how in a multicultural classroom and with many students...

- Usually there are many students, around twenty, maybe, yes. Twenty and more than twenty. Yes.

- How do you manage to slowly build a feeling for everyone if it becomes the students that they are members of a group? Is there a possibility for inclusion?

- Now this is not always easy to achieve. I have an image of students who were quite a few from Poland, quite a few from Albania, very many. But they can work as a team, only through teamwork, that is, we work in groups. And from there and then other techniques that I have seen other teachers do in the field are to organize some events with food from the places where each student is from. Let's say this event has bread as its theme. So everyone will bring either bread or puff pastry from their place. It can be done by either the class teacher or the English teacher, who I have seen do it. When I was working, I might have promoted healthy eating, but this one within the context of Greece, fruits and vegetables. But we worked in groups and somewhere food is a good basis for... To enjoy, to participate. To enjoy and to unite under something very specific, a basic need that we all have in all cultures. Nutrition.

- And did you notice who it was... If you have noticed, in the case that you allow their cultural identity to be projected, that is, to know that I am from Poland, you said, he is from Albania, another from Afghanistan, etc. If by projecting, highlighting their identity, if you have found that they learn more easily, they develop more socially and psychologically that they feel better. If you have noticed something like that.

- That's true. It may not be something permanent. But once this whole process is done, the children are very happy, of course, and they function better. As a group, socially, friendly, in all respects. They are calmer. They cooperate. Of course, this may not be permanent.

- I noticed that, that you said that it may not be permanent.

- Because of the subject matter that is being taught, let's say also because of the origins of the children and their families. Now here, let's say, in this school, we see that the

black children are closer to the black children. They will hang out they will talk about their place and they will feel like brothers among themselves. The Albanians also have their own part. Their own company. I observe in all the classes. That is, the children are closer when they belong to the same nationality. They tell me, he is an Albanian. We are friends. The same goes for the refugee children. That in a class, for a teaching hour or two, or a few, they can exchange and collaborate, exchange their cultural heritage, in short, their habits, share them, accept them. This is true, but it is not something permanent. At some point they may come to a rift with each other and the country to which each one belongs will come to the fore. Take advantage of it. So, you, whenever the opportunity arises, will highlight their cultural identity as a group. Now me, in the integration department, what can I do for the integration department, I have three or four children, two or three, I don't have more, but we can go, as we did, to Google and search to find the place they come from. I had three students in particular on Thursday. One was from Albania, the other was from Central Africa and the third was from Syria. My problem with Google Earth was that while we could enter Central Africa, not everywhere, we could enter Albania, we couldn't enter Syria. It was in a state of war, they wouldn't let us in. We managed to enter somewhere, we were going to a driving school, they kept crashing into a driving school. But we made this effort and all the students showed interest in showing off their place.

- And let me ask you, when you enter a class that has five different languages, six-seven different languages, do you allow the children to use, if they are from the same place, their language to understand an instruction, to help each other and then learn Greek?

- Of course, many times it is necessary. Usually most of them know English. This is a good thing. Because there is a language that almost all of us know and some basic things we can share. But there are others who don't know any language at all. So it's important that other children from the same country act as interpreters. Of course, it's necessary.

- Have you ever involved family members of the students or their community in the whole process?

- Yes. We had a student from Afghanistan. It was very difficult to communicate with this little child, because he had mental retardation. On top of that, he has to go to a special school, but his mother didn't want to bring him to the special school. In order to

communicate with us, his mother brought an interpreter and a social worker. So at every meeting we were a very large group, which was always the mother, the interpreter and the social worker. The class teacher, the integration teacher, which was me, and at that time the principal was also many times. We were all present and we all talked together. It was very difficult to communicate with the little child, because he couldn't speak any language well. Not Afghan, not English, and of course not Greek. He couldn't pronounce more than two syllables. Despite all this, we managed and communicated. It was a whole year, then he left. I don't know where he went. They all have the same problem. I would add that one year we could be in one school and the next year we could change schools. Whatever communication the children had made would be lost. It would be lost completely. This is difficult for the teacher. This particular child was in fifth grade. He was in fifth grade. And it was his first time going to school. He had never been to school before. He had intellectual disabilities. The teacher managed it. It was a masterpiece. She brought all the toys she had from her home for kindergarten. I brought an abacus that he could work on and play with all the time. He was in fifth grade. It was a very large class for the child to be able to work. He managed that. He participated in the meal that the teacher had prepared. He had brought food.

- If it arises due to the mental trauma that these children usually carry, if some mental trauma comes to the surface from the interaction, has it happened to you and how have you managed to manage it? Because they are vulnerable, traumatized children.

- It had happened, not to me, to another teacher. But now I don't know if I can talk about her. However, what had happened had nothing to do with his move. I haven't heard anything about his move. It has happened to him here, in Greece, in Athens, in the neighborhood, with fellow countrymen. So, I don't have an experience in mind right now that... It doesn't come to mind right now. You have a lot of experience and you don't have...

- Well, I imagine this was mainly with refugee children.

- Yes, with refugee children. They have experienced war. I don't know if I could talk about you with teachers from the school I'm at now. I also have teachers in mind. We have two reception classes at our school. And all the teachers, everyone, at the school have experience of such situations. All the teachers. I can communicate, that is... I was

writing it since Monday. Yes, if you can like that... If someone wants to ask him these questions... And you don't care if he will be a permanent teacher or a substitute... That is, if he has a lot of experience or little.

- No, no. His experience from a multicultural class... with refugees and immigrants, etc.

- Ok.

- I wish. I would be very interested. So, to collect more information about Greece and what is happening. Now, I would like to ask you three more things. If they received quick and effective support from the school, the administration, etc. when problems arose. From the management of multiculturalism, multilingualism. That is, if the school was supportive. You have changed various schools.

- School, administration, etc. It was all the schools. What can I say in 2021. Amazing. And they also do many Erasmus programs. Another school I was looking at, they hadn't started yet. But the principal... I was with the first principal for many years, she wasn't doing well. But when the principal changed and several years later there was a principal... she gave her soul. She knew where she was working, she gave her soul. So, she did everything to upgrade the school... so that the children felt good about being in this place. Not in a school that they were ashamed of... or in a degraded school, she upgraded it a lot. And the principal I was... I can't say that he did many programs... but he was very supportive of all the children. And with everything we decided to do. And our new principal.

- Do you think it would be useful for the teachers to be trained... who often deal with immigrants, refugees?

- What you said before and to be fed... certainly they also need appropriate books, materials. There are none. There is NGO support, mainly METADRASI for the language. I see the teachers from the reception classes... who have a lot of material to find. And some of the books that exist, that I had too... are ancient, they are very old books. There is a great difficulty with the material.

- Yes. So, you believe that the school community... could help in other ways... the needs of the children? The families?

- The families will need a lot of help. And to learn the language. And they need support from social workers. How can we help... we try to direct them... to whatever structures there are, public... or to go and get diagnosed. Because in integration, it is essential that they go... to a public structure. However, they don't know how to fill out... the necessary application documents at all. We do it for them. A very recent example is a family... of Africans. It's the mom, the dad with two little girls. One little girl is in first grade... and has to go to a special school. We have suffered a lot with this child... and with communicating with the family. We would really like there to be a social worker... who could direct them and help them and show them... that things are a little different here. You can't use a stick... and threaten the little child... because that was the dad's suggestion. To take a stick and threaten it. From another century.

- Yes.

- But this is a culture of their own. In their schools, as mom tells us... they use the stick and the stick. Even today. It is not foreign to them. And they use it at home. To convince the little girl to come to class... they beat her very often. We come to the position, because it is difficult to tell her no... she is misunderstood. She will not tell me what I will do with my child. So it is difficult to manage... Of course. And for mom and dad. We also know this from the kindergarten where the little girl came. From another kindergarten, not ours. That they were facing this serious problem. In the middle of the year, she should have been transferred to a special kindergarten. They never did. They should have gone to a public facility, to a child psychiatrist. Finally, they brought us a private psychiatrist. Something they should have done a year ago. They did it this year. They were too late and preferred to bring the private one. Even though they had also gone to the CHILDREN'S Psychiatry. They don't want him to go to a special school at all. Apparently, they consider it shameful.

- Stigmatization?

- Yes. To be stigmatized. But their practice is this rod. The rod, the beating.

And we really regret that. It's not for our school. So the school community, the educational community... must solve such things with the parents mainly and with the family. Only with the children, with the family.

- Yes. Indeed.
  
- Okay. That's what I wanted. These are essentially ten questions that I wanted to see... what is the reality that you have faced as a teacher for so many years.
  
- Great. Thank you very much, Maria. Thank you very much for your time too. And I'm very glad we met.
  
- I was happy too and I'll talk.
  
- Yes, if possible, I'd really like to... A foursome, that is. Let's talk a little and record your experience, let's say.
  
- So, in case they agree... I'm sending you their phone number. What's the procedure.
  
- Yes, so that I can send them a message like I sent you... let's see how we can communicate. Thank you very much. Your work will go as you want.
  
- It's interesting to me. I'm very interested. And problems will be solved with all this because... I think that's the ultimate goal.
  
- To help the children. To solve whatever problems there are. As much as we can. As much as we can
  
- Thank you very much, my Maria. Thank you very much. Be well.
  
- Good evening.
  
- Good evening.
  
- Hello joy, hello!
  
- Hello!

## **P6**

- Well, the first thing... What I wanted to ask you is how in a multicultural classroom... with students who speak different languages... have different cultural identities, etc... how do you manage to build a sense of team spirit, a sense of belonging... and inclusion when it's all so multicultural?

- Now, that's a bit... Many times, there was also a problem in that there was no intermediate language... so in general it was quite difficult on the one hand. On the other hand, I think the way I was trying to do it... is in a way to create a climate of communication... of safety initially. Where I worked, I also had the opportunity sometimes to have an interpreter for a while. So, we might have had a discussion in the initial lessons. Of course, because you couldn't always have an interpreter... I think it was built slowly... and without being in a very specific, structured way. I mean, we were in the same place... they were all kind of together... they had some things in common in the situation they were living in. Now, with the adults this happened and they would come. Then they also had a... they could ask an interpreter about anything. So somehow and slowly... with the children on the other hand in the hostel... because all of them and everyone lived in the same place... maybe this thing had already been created somehow. But in general, the truth is that I didn't have a very specific way either. Because we didn't have a language to communicate.

- So somehow completely human and... spontaneously mainly.

- Yes, and spontaneously and slowly... and then when the topic got to the learning aspect... I know, learning the language... maybe each one felt the need to help the other in some way. Some spoke some languages... and from the refugee journey, let's say, some people learn some things differently. Yes, English, Arabic speakers usually find it easy to learn. I was observing, evaluating, another language that they had no business learning. Yes, and something like that.

- Ok. Yes, that's very nice. Now, you have realized from your experience that their cultural identity plays an important role in their cognitive and psychosocial development... and especially its emergence, if that is possible of course.

- Surely, in general, the issue of identity and, okay, cultural, now that you mention it... plays a huge role in this whole thing. Also, I know, I remember that I could learn one,

two, three phrases, I'm telling you, in their language... and that directly changed their entire psychology. First, what you say about highlighting, even in a very simple way... or, let's say, you've been a little busy knowing some things as an educator... saying a couple of phrases in their language, showing them something or somehow telling them to bring something. This completely changed the motivation, in general, in all of this. They themselves felt that they had an identity. Because in general, let's say, as refugees they felt completely lost in a foreign country... where they didn't know anything, where they couldn't communicate, if they didn't know English... where in general, my boy, their image is... that they're on the edge.-Invisible.

- Invisible, well done. Invisible, to the point of being annoying. Exactly. Either invisible, or we don't want them at all. So, if this thing is highlighted, it's very important. Because they feel there, in the classroom, that now I exist here. I have a presence. Yes, I have a presence, I have an identity. And not only that. And that, let's say, counts here. Yes, yes. That is, and all of this certainly created a motivation. I don't necessarily know, because that depends on so many factors, whether they want to learn Greek, but coming and being there as a group. That is, because I saw many times that the reason they come to the class may not be to learn Greek, but because they feel good here, that it is time for themselves and here they exist and we are all together and we do something nice together and there is respect, let's say.

- So, this also contributes to their integration, in some way additionally to Greek society, let's say.

- Exactly because they then felt comfortable asking you something more about what is happening around them, which they might have been ashamed of, I know. Okay, of course, on the other hand, because I had worked with so many people, both teenagers and adults, who were with one foot in Greece and the other foot ready to leave, the issue over there is that I don't really care about learning Greek now, because I won't stay here.

- Yes, yes, yes.

- That's why I'm telling you that if they wanted to stay, of course, that was certainly very important, very intense, but that's why I put it this way, that I don't know if it was a motivation for learning, because many people may not have had the motivation for learning anyway. If nothing else, it was for psychosocial development.

- Exactly, that's for sure. Whether in this country or elsewhere, so that's also learning. But okay, it's not cognitive. And in general, when you learn, anyway when you learn a foreign language, you also learn its cultural part and at the same time you start to wonder and recognize and understand your own more. Whether you are a refugee and an immigrant, or you are not. Through the different, you realize what you took for granted, let's say. Oh, we do that too.

- Right, right. Very interesting what you say. So, do you highlight their cultural identity with specific methods? Which spontaneously as you said, you asked them, I know, or you said that you made sure to learn or you knew some words? So it was a channel of communication, I know.

- Yes, well, look, little by little now I can't say that I had a very specific method and I was very involved. What I did, let's say, and I saw that it worked, so I used it later, is definitely this, that I was a little involved in seeing what was happening in each country, to know two things. I think this is very important, for the teacher to be involved and to know that I have a section where one is from Syria, from Afghanistan, from Iran, I know, from I don't know and from Africa sometimes, from Mali and also very important to know what is happening with some countries, that is, let's say with Afghanistan and Iran there was a conflict. You will pay attention to this a little there how you will manage it. One was that I should sit down and do some work, learn five basic things about history or what languages they speak and so on, because for example, I know, in Afghanistan they speak 15,000 different languages. So, someone might be offended if you tell them that you know their language, that word is like that.

- Yes, yes, yes.

- You have to know first. I was asking them. I know, now Afghanistan came to mind. I know, you speak Pashto or Farsi, for example. And they told me that everything you know is important.

- Well done, exactly, exactly.

- Then definitely a few words, let's say phrases, because they were saying them too, I had learned them. Very simple, a little in Farsi, a little in Arabic. Okay, there might have been some words that I didn't know, but I was asking, I was saying what it's like in that

language. So the other person was over there and was telling the group that I was also saying my part.

- So, you were highlighting elements of their linguistic identity?

- Yes, yes, exactly. Then if we were talking, I know, because now being in Athens, I know, there might have been holidays, celebrations, etc. We might have said some things, we might have had an interpreter there, and they might have said some things about their own celebrations. Let's say when the period we had was Ramadan. This was very important, because people were in a period of usually summer in Athens when it was hot, they hadn't eaten. So this was also very important to take into account in the educational process, because it was a melting pot. Yes, and to say, let's say, the wish for their celebration.

- You mean their celebration, you mean Ramadan?

- Yes, whatever you said. Then many times the classic thing was to cook something, each one different from our country.

- Did you do that?

- Sometimes, yes, I have. It was a bit of a convention, because if the other person stayed in the camp... To cook, he didn't have the ingredients... Oh, I remember, for example, in Eleonas, all the women had cooked once and they had brought a bunch of really nice food. And all together, all of us had told them to do it and they would tell you with great pride that this is it, I know, the names of the dishes. Food is a great thing, in general. It's fantastic. It awakens memories, senses, that is, you participate. Exactly, it's a celebration, it's sharing. It's a vital need. Exactly. And the other person there, my boy, brings you his own, which he has cooked and maybe he has made it really nice.

- Yes, yes.

- And the dance, let's say, can come at that stage. And the dance.

- Yes. Great. Yes. Now, the linguistic diversity, let's say, specifically, you said that in some cases you had interpreters, let's say, but they weren't there very often, right?

- Yes, yes, yes.

- And you, having as your goal to teach them, my child, any Greek, you allowed the use of their own languages, possibly between people who speak the same language or...

- Yes. Of course. Of course. I generally think that it is very important and, indeed, because it is not possible, let's say, what will... how will it be done otherwise. That is, to prohibit the use of their language, from the very moment that it usually happened, because someone didn't understand something or someone took the role of explaining something to someone else.

- And that was very important educationally. Because even this role of me taking on the role of co-teacher, very important, that we are a group here and when someone understood something, they can convey it in a better way than I could, which might not have been the case with English. So, I definitely left that out. And that was also something that... that it exists in the group and is acceptable and permissible. Also, it was somehow important for their identity.

- Why don't you forbid it, that well this shouldn't happen here now.

- No. This is also part of it and it's here and together we find a way to communicate and learn.

- Great. Because generally the monolingual approach prevails in our beautiful country.

- Yes. You've seen it by trying it

- You know, I already think that I couldn't do anything else. Because the monolingual thing you're talking about, for example, could be on another level. I remember, that is, first of all, having some common ground in education. That is, I have a degree, I know how we learn. As an adult, I went to learn Italian at the Italian Institute, beginner level, and she was Italian and she only spoke Italian. Okay, yes, but I might have a hearing for Italian or we know how the system works.

- Yes.

- You can't do that over there. There, the other person might not know how to write in their language. I think we're all experimenting to find a way to first feel good as a group and free and then move on to learning.

- Okay, I wish this were the dominant approach.
- Yes, but I don't think it can be done any other way.
- I don't know. Yes. You know, now I'm also noticing other mentalities, my child.
- Yes. Of course, it is true that by necessity, but it is interesting that the mentality, however, what you describe, is perhaps different from some others. Because there is a monolingual mentality.
- This experience changed my mentality for me. Because I was going to take a course with educational learning goals. Now I am going to take a Greek course.
- And this whole thing collapsed, of course. I have also had a terrible disappointment we have had education on it. Because I realized at some point that what I am doing does not make sense. That is, I have to change my goals and do it in parallel. That is, the goals from a certain point onward could not have been higher than the learning goal. Because I understood this thing that the other person comes here not only necessarily to learn Greek. And so that's where I went that, sit down, we have to create a good climate. The goal is for everyone to be well here. For everyone to feel comfortable and good. Because we're also talking about people with trauma, let's say.
- That's the next question, yes.
- Yes, yes.
- It changed my mind a little. Because I also felt frustrated. That I want to go there to teach them Greek and they don't learn. And I know what I'm doing wrong. Yes, so the learning process acquires a deeper level perhaps. Which is first the psychosocial and then the cognitive.
- Bravo, exactly. Usually, we're not trained like that either.
- Bravo, exactly, not at all. And we realize it in practice.
- Yes, right. It was fortunate that you included, of course, you said something about cooking and so on, to include members of the students' families or even their community in the learning process? So, through cooking, through a story that a

grandfather or grandmother who might have lived and been in the camp would tell? I don't know.

- You mean in class?

- Not that. So, my child, you could have assigned them something to learn and so on. And the mother, the father, whoever lived and was with them, could have told them something, a story or a song.

- I'm not very consistent. No, you know what, I understand a little bit of what you're saying, but I don't remember assigning, let's say, this kind of work. Now what you're telling me about including family members. Many times, we had mothers with babies, but that's different.

- Isn't that what you're asking me?

- That they were students. Yes, or that they were students and they had nowhere else to take their baby and they had it with them.

- Now that's different of course, it's not that.

- Yes, yes, yes. I remembered one time when we went to the camp, but that wasn't part of the learning process. And they had set the table for us now and we were talking there with a man who knows English well and he was telling us various stories about Afghanistan.

- Yes, it's a little more specific. More specific, yes. That is, wanting, I say now randomly, to teach some basic expressions in Greek and the child to ask the father, the mother about some expressions in their language or some family history that could be used to learn corresponding words in Greek. What I was talking about would be Identity Texts, let's say, which seem very interesting to me.

- I think now, it might have been my own inexperience, but because I usually taught from scratch, that is, to learn the alphabet, I know, to read. I had never reached a point where we could... Yes, it could be a little more of a story, I know, that was connected, that was also related to the language. Or later, I remember when we had a more

advanced section, for adults. They were adults and they would give exams. I mean, the truth is that... I don't think I've done that, no.

- Okay, okay. Because the truth is that it needs something specific, I guess. It was very nice, anyway.

- That's very interesting. I mean, I've done it, not with refugees and immigrants. I've done it with people who were at a more advanced level. And we were collecting, I know, proverbs. How can I tell you.

- Yes, yes.

- The language level is higher.

- Yes, yes, yes. And the educational one and we had and... That is, we could use either Greek or English, to say what we were doing.

- That. Yes, that's essentially what I meant. That is, that you could ask them, through English, to write a story of their country and learn some words from this story that a grandmother, a grandfather, a mother, a father would play. To strengthen the motivation to learn the host language. In any case.

- Yes, okay.

- Now, what you mentioned earlier. Refugee children in particular definitely have mental trauma. Isn't that right? If, let's say, some mental trauma emerges in the context of the learning process and because we are not psychologists, has something like that happened? How have you managed it and what are the obstacles to managing it, let's say, if it has happened, effectively?

- Well, I'll tell you. When I was in the hostel because this was their home and because we had social workers and psychologists there and generally I had a relationship outside of class that was somewhat good, I didn't have any great knowledge, that is, all of this you go and see and depending on the case, they tried to manage various things, nothing extreme had happened to me during the educational process, but maybe something had happened during the day in the hostel, because the hostel was the house that was the kitchen, the dining room, we played and so on, so there was a whole group over there

that I had support from, but what I always had was very intense, I was a little on the alert all the time and I was very careful about what we were talking about and how we were proceeding and just in case I felt that we all knew each other here now, I had told them once again at a beginner level, it was just for each of us to say a few very simple words about the refugee journey, how he moved but very simply, that he went from there to there by car, from there to there by ship, from there to there by plane, I know, but in order to do this I was sure that this group, which again is only that but you don't know what can come out, knew them and they knew me and they knew each other, so there was trust

- Yes

- Now this in general anyway, because it is very sensitive and special precisely because these groups are vulnerable and wounded and you are there with them, you definitely need to have psychological support. Because I remember a psychologist who told us something nice, that when you interact with people with trauma, the trauma comes upon you, it's, she says, like sitting somewhere, a bottle breaks next to you and the fragments come upon you, you may not have experienced it but a lot of things come, so first you have to be able to manage some things, I mean even tell a story, because maybe at that moment someone in the group tells a story or goes into shock. And you have to manage it, because the other person needs you.

- Yes

- Or, for example, someone can say something and the other person can get a shock, that requires special management and attention. Now I'm telling you all this from a very empirical perspective, that is, I went there without anything, no idea, I went to take Greek lessons and I started, so I came into very close contact with trauma. Of course, I was lucky because in this program we also had a psychologist in the hostel and we had some meetings with psychiatrists from Merimna, I think, as I mentioned to you.

- Yes, yes. And somehow, my dear, you have to form groups, you have to be well, when you have to take care of someone, you have to have a caring framework behind you, because a lot of people have suffered burnout, because we didn't have the knowledge in general and everyone was busy, everyone to help. Neither the knowledge nor the support.

- Bravo exactly.

- At that moment. Look, the other thing that is important is to have support from behind, to be able to ask and see what you are doing. Be very careful, but not to the point of not mentioning things, because these people in all that we are saying should also be vulnerable and a lot has happened to them. They also have an amazing resilience. In other words, these people have lived this and are here and continue to live and try and we must not forget that. Because we say the poor, but they are here and they are struggling and sometimes they are very open to sharing their trauma. Not always, everyone. Depending on the trauma. So that... Okay, of course, then... the experience, the group plays a role. But it takes sensitivity and attention, but that does not mean that we will not mention some things. That is, as in any group, it progresses and creates...

- So, you talked about the psychological trauma now.

- You said that the camp mainly where you worked and the rest and you taught and the structure, that you had support, my child, from social workers, psychologists, but in general the difficulty in teaching such populations, which is difficult, did you have support from the Foundation where you worked?

- In Eleonas we didn't, but it was a different case. Yes, I had it now, if you don't have it. It's very difficult. Because these experiences are not common. I mean, we don't have them in our everyday lives. That is, there is indeed a great difficulty. And the other thing I wanted to say about trauma is that... Now I had read it somewhere, I don't remember this now, and I had already seen it, that many times trauma can block the learning part. That is, the other person doesn't learn anything.

- Yes, of course. It has closed its doors.

- Yes, exactly. And this is a practical difficulty. Let's say, not a psychological one.

- Yes, yes, yes, yes. That blocks your communication and learning channels, my child. Yes. So, do you think that teachers in multicultural education should be systematically trained, so that they acquire tools for managing the difficulties that arise?

- Yes, definitely. Well, I believe this in general for all of us. But, in the multicultural environment, which has to do with refugees and trauma, something that helps a lot is

the groups that are formed with people who do the same, to discuss and share their experiences and how everyone on all this, in practice, has come up with an idea, something has happened, all this sharing does me a lot of good. I say this whether with very big difficulties or even smaller ones. When there are groups but they are, let's say, stable, where you share various experiences on the practice that the person himself does and understands, because many times they say a lot of things theoretically and in practice it is very difficult that they cannot be applied, that is, it doesn't work.

- So, in addition to mutual support, does the teacher also need training?

- Yes, training of course. Because many times some training from someone, either a psychologist, for example, I don't know, or someone who has more experience, somehow tells you something and suddenly unblocks everything. Yes, that is, and you say, "Oh, okay, my child." Or many times the teacher himself may feel that he is not doing something well and may be ashamed to say something, I know. So, in all this, things come out. You are already relieved that, "Oh, okay, it's not just me", or "I'm not the only one having this difficulty". Because some things are really very difficult in practice. Those who have these theories of learning... if you can't meet the other person, if the other person is depressed, I know. That is, you find a middle ground, so all of this always helps for these reasons, not to feel frustrated. Because at this moment you have too much frustration. At least in Greece. I don't know elsewhere. Things are better. Probably.

- But the number is also smaller in the class.

- Yes.

- So, do you think that there would be many ways, if the state and the educational community wanted to cover, to meet the needs of these students?

- There would be many ways to achieve this. It just doesn't happen. Right. There are many ways and there is knowledge. Knowledge from a point of view... It is in books, let's say. There are ways to deal with some things and we know them. And also, now that we are reaching about the tenth year with the refugee crisis, we know very well what can happen. There are so many people who have to propose and do, to implement things, but there is no... Let's go backwards. That is, exactly the opposite is happening.

There is no political will, basically. Because political will would affect the educational system and so on.

- Exactly, exactly.

- And it's like we're trying to get rid of them, to get them out of here.

## P7

- How in a very cultural class, where you have children from different nationalities, I don't know how much it can be each time, how can you create team spirit and inclusion?

- I have seven different countries in Africa, two or three from Asia and the others are European countries. Balkans and two Greek children. Well, eleven different countries. What I see is that among Africans there is a tendency to hang out, that is, they feel more familiar with the same race. Yes, it is the same continent, but they are different countries. I say white race, it is probably not the same continent. I see this in Africans, while the white race and Asians are more flexible.

- Yes

- Now, in the end, children do not choose the one who has the same color or is from the same country. They choose the one who fits them best, who suits them in the game, who helps them a little in their studies or who they themselves help. I mean, I have a Greek girl and a Cameroonian girl who are best friends. They have completely different social backgrounds. They are best friends, though, and they adore each other. She is the top student in the class and the kid with the parallel who makes it more difficult for us than anything else. I mean, the problem is the school, how can I tell you, the other kid. They are best friends. The kids ultimately choose the one who suits them better than themselves as characters. I mean, what I did in my school, where we were all Greek, that's how you chose, the one who goes with your style best. The kids do the same. I don't do anything special, because in this school here, in 133, I had such spirits. In other schools, things were a little clearer. There were one or two Albanians, let's say, if you happened to have one. I didn't have any more variety from other countries. So here, where it is a fact that there are 10 countries in one class, 10-15 kids. If it's not 19, it's not less. This happens effortlessly. This is the natural choice how can I tell you? But if you want to create a sense of order, let's say. Because the order between them... Yes. In general, there was no problem, that is. Children who are strong personalities hang out with similar ones, because they want to do business in the same category. Also, some people want to manipulate them, to have them as orderlies.

- Yes, yes.

- But this happens to all children, regardless, I'm telling you, of nationality. What I see is that when I go to make groups, the way I judge, so that they are approximately similar abilities, so that they function approximately the same, they grumble, because they still want their company, nothing else. That is, I don't do anything very special.

- Yes.

- It happens automatically. And our school is mainly like that.

- Yes, yes

- Mine is a group that, while having as much variety as they have the most variety in my class, is perhaps the most favorite section among them.

- What class is it?

- It's Monday.

- Monday, indeed.

- They are also the most favorite, huh. Very favorite. Don't you dare tease one of our classes. The other 14 would eat you up. Very favorite. Two spoke this year. It's Monday in elementary school. Last year they didn't communicate at all. They go up close and flank them. So it's the little African, let's say, and he helps the little Ukrainian, who is very timid, to speak and stand up on the board. And he explains to him how to open the marker. So, it just happens very nicely. Completely effortlessly.

- Let's assume that there was some common language. So, they speak some Greek.

- A little Greek, a few words. I mean, now there are kids with a vocabulary of 100 words in second grade Greek, like that. And the kids who are from Africa and Asia, they speak English a lot. English a lot. I can tell you it's like a second mother tongue. Many times, in recent years, I want to explain a word to them. I tell them in Greek. I say it again, I find a synonym, maybe we can achieve it. And finally, I say it in English. So that more people understand. Because it's a language that they also speak at home. And not French. Their African, like that. I have a kid who is... I have two, probably, Ivory Coast and Congo, who speak English. And I say it in English, if that's something special.

Those two girls are very low there. I mean, even speaking to them in their language is lower.

- Yes. And have you noticed if you highlight something of their identity in the lesson, either linguistic or of their country, cultural and so on. If this works positively and as a motivation for them to learn Greek or anyway that.

- They are excited to recognize something of their own, something of their culture. That is, specifically I will tell you that at Christmas we had a celebration, , Santa Claus' Laundry, and we chose it precisely because the following Monday is also heterogeneous, not as much as mine. But children from five continents who have to help Santa Claus build a new school because the old one was washed in the washing machine and broke, came in.

- How nice!

- So, Africa offers everything it can, America offers everything it can, that's what I say, everything it can. So, we chose children to play the roles. In other words, in Africa we taught African dance and the children came out and did a dance like that. Tam-tom, like that.

- Very, very nice.

- The Americans danced Country. It was a very nice celebration. We asked them to wear their traditional costumes. We have Ukrainians and they came in the Ukrainian costume with flowers, girls on their heads, something so beautiful. The Africans had excellent costumes. We dressed the Asians, the Chinese and the rest. This had a very big response for both the parents and the children. And for the children mainly because they enjoyed it, because they recognized, identified, how can I tell you. My Homeland, like me, I hear a clarinet and I say, "Oh, my homeland, I want to go to the Panigyri in the summer." That's what they felt.

- Yes.

- We did another time, I know, recipes from the homeland, they brought us photos, they told us how they make them and so on. Again, they were very happy, because they feel like they are in another country. They are abroad, you know. And they feel accepted.

- Yes, yes, yes. So, they use their own language in the classroom as an intermediary for understanding the new language or for understanding an instruction with a fellow language speaker. You allow that.

- Of course. Simply. In my own class. The 7 Africans are, as we said, 7 different countries. They can't speak the language of the country. They can speak English or French. Like that? I have 3 Ukrainians, one of whom speaks Ukrainian and French very well.

- Yes, yes. Yes, yes. Ok. Great. That's what I wanted to ask. Okay. Very useful. Let me stop the recording for a moment. One moment.

## **P8**

- Well, of course it's all anonymous, as you know very well. And I wanted your insights from the rich experience you have in this field. So, the first thing I wanted to ask you is how in a multicultural classroom you can create a feeling that the children belong to a group and that inclusion is present, let's say, it exists.

- Good. First of all, let me say that my experience so far has to do with classes in Greek schools, where children with different nationalities are not many in number anyway. That is, there would be two or three in each class. So interculturality, the intercultural class is not the one where we mean that everyone is from somewhere else. This raises some issues that we will talk about later. Nevertheless, whenever I had such classes, I tried to create this feeling first of all from the first days, by doing some familiarization games, which could also be theatrical games, that is, they didn't require such a good knowledge of Greek or English, they could be more physical games, experiential games, etc., or painting, presenting something through painting. Then, the class contract helps a lot, because the children can work in groups, discuss, sit in groups at first and think about how exactly they should function as a group. The class contract creates for them the concept of a group. And also, throughout the year, I do a lot of Projects, that is, I have work groups, I try to have the children work in groups and not alone. This is good in general, not only for the intercultural part. In familiarization games, many times there are games with which... Games, not games, sorry. I let the kids... I use Identity Texts too, that is, I let the kids write or draw or present something about themselves. So, to create, to get to know each other. Then, the team spirit comes out of what they mentioned above.

- So, you have established a relationship between cultural identity and their cognitive, mental and social development, that is, the role of their identity and its emergence, of course, in their psycho-spiritual and social development.

- Yes, it's what you just said. Its emergence. Clearly the relationship. First of all, it's very important for the group to feel acceptance. Acceptance of this identity. To be able to express it. If they don't feel that, I think it really sucks, let's just say it, it has a bad impact on their cognitive development. If a student cannot feel free within their group, within the classroom, to feel that they can express themselves and that they are accepted, they cannot learn. They are not free.

- So, as a practitioner up to this point, you have the Identity Texts to project your cultural identity mainly.

- At the beginning of the year, at the beginning, this usually happens. That is, the first month is about getting to know each other. Even if the children know each other, of course there are always new things. Okay, there may be something new. But it is important to start it again and for everyone to introduce themselves in some way. We have been doing this for a long time. It is nothing new. It is just that with my children of different origins, we can obviously have language issues. That is where you increase multimodality even more. You can use drawings, you can use collages, you can use whatever this child can apply to be able to express who they are. This.

- So, based on what you said, because language is a part of cultural identity, beyond multimodality, you allow them to speak their languages so that people with the same language can possibly understand each other or I don't know.

- No, I just allow it. I also create it as a condition in the classroom. I mean, I now teach English, it's a foreign language anyway. So, I'm much more open to the issue of expression in another language. Many times, to give examples, very many times in the past, when we were learning new words, I would ask the children what it is like in the language, to tell us theirs. We would discuss if we found any similarities. In the past with Albanian students, for example, out of all the words, they would remind us of English, because they remind us of them, because they come from Latin. That is, we found similarities, but new ones. Or if we really like a word, for example in the language we hear, it may be African, and it may be something more strange for the rest of us. We were discussing it how does this word sound? This issue of expression, and for me as a teacher to learn their words. So, it says, how do you say it? Come tell me. In English it's good morning. How is it in yours? Come let's all say good morning together in the language. So, this thing opens up, and now a multilingual environment is created. And it's very helpful, both for children from other countries, and for Greeks. Very helpful. Also, many times we use a lingua franca. I mean, I remember once, I had three little kids from Congo, who didn't speak English at all, but they spoke French. And the kids at school that year, were taught French. And I told them that it's a very good opportunity, what you're taught, even though it's, you know, it was at a lower level. It was still in the second grade of elementary school, let's say, first grade French. But it's good to use it

now, with the children from Congo, to communicate. And indeed, we had French as a lingua franca. You can do things like that, yes. Play with many languages. And you should!

- Have you ever had the opportunity to involve members of their family or their cultural community in some way, let's say, I don't know, in events?

- Yes, that would be very good to do. It would be. Nevertheless, there are basic difficulties. First of all, it takes some preparation and a lot of work for the parent, from what I understand, to be able to enter the school community. Many times, he feels a... He has a reservation towards it. Okay, while he respects the teacher that he will learn Greek and so on, but to enter the school, if the school doesn't take the first step, if it doesn't open the doors, it's difficult. And the school, on the other hand, doesn't always open these doors, because it's very closed, because of my personal opinions. There's such a workload at school, such pressing times, that you don't have the opportunity... Yes, I mean, you have to get a subject out, for example. You have to go on trips, have meetings with parents. And at the same time, you run to maybe two or three schools. The club is rarely all together to make some decisions and organize something together. Also, the bell rings at a quarter past one, two o'clock... You can't have frequent meetings. There aren't even pedagogical meetings. There's no time. And whatever is going to be done, needs, as I said, a preparation and an involvement, a job. So, I didn't have the pleasure of... No, I confess that until now, apart from the relationship I had with the parent as an educator, talking to him, informing him, etc., we didn't have anything more there.

- Have you ever had a student, a refugee or even an immigrant, express psychological trauma?

- Not exactly, but it happened to me, again with a little girl from Congo that I had, in the first lessons I had told them to tell us... We did a presentation of our country, in a way, or a country that we would like. I have left it a little open. The topic was to present a country. And I had also told the children from Africa that you can bring pictures, or a map to show us where the country is, tell us if there is a river, etc. So, there was a little girl who refused to talk to me about her country. She did not want to talk about Congo at all, but she wanted to talk about Angola. It impressed me, personally. Of course, I did

not pressure her at all. I told her, of course, you can talk to me about any country you want. I did not ask why. In general, I tried to be tactful, because I do not know why the girl did not want to talk about Congo. In general, nothing else has happened to me. What has happened to me a lot, for many years, is the story of the children from Albania, who, okay, even now, but in the past more intensely, carried this whole feeling of prejudice against Albanians. That is, when something happened, you would immediately see a reaction. No, I didn't do it, I didn't steal, because I'm not a thief. That is, you would see a hypersensitivity towards such possible accusations. One time, you know, a child might say, "Oh, he stole it from me." You would see a hypersensitivity. This is also a kind of trauma, when you hear it for many years. Whenever there was such an issue, especially with the Albanian community, whenever there was such an issue, I personally would open it up. In class, we would discuss it and talk about stereotypes, about prejudices. That is, in addition to teaching English, I would say that today would be dedicated to this issue. And so, we talked about the issues together and brought up issues of justice. Anyway, our discussions were nice and, in the end I think we all felt better afterwards.

- So, there were no particular obstacles in dealing with it. Of course, you told me that nothing terrible or terrible emerged.

- Yes, I didn't have any intense case. With war experiences, I didn't have anything like that. Of course, I have to say that in general schools lack the issue of psychological support. I see a big gap there and not only for these children. Because even now with the war in Ukraine, for example, I had children, I had two students who were from Moldova and their grandmother and grandfather were there and they were very afraid that the war would break out in Moldova. I remember one time when there was a bang, something had happened inside the school, I don't remember what now. You just hear a noise and the little girl starts crying because she thought something... that it's a bomb, that it's I don't know. I mean, children express fear, whether they've experienced it, or sometimes even if they recreate it with their imagination, they have a lot of life. And there's no psychologist every day. There's a psychologist who comes back from the schools and comes once a week, so this person has a lot of children to see and doesn't have the time to connect with the school community, with the daily life of the school

and the children. So, it's superficial. I mean, if I were faced with something like that, I think I would need the help of specialized personnel.

- Yes, yes.

- ZEP doesn't even exist. I mean, ZEP requires 7 people, a lower number. If I had it like when we had the three children from Congo, these children couldn't speak. Yes, those are the issues

- Did you receive help from the school, the educational institution where you are, for various problems that arose or did you feel alone?

- No, look. We had communication. I had communication first with the teacher. As a specialty, I have communication with the teacher. And I can say that the teachers, even with some remedial lessons, we tried a little to help the children. At least on the cognitive level, with their Greek and so on, we tried. And even during the break, even in the hallways, there was communication to discuss some problems. But there was nothing organized. And something that would bind the school community more. I, again, believe that six hours... School is so full of subjects, such a heavy program, especially elementary school, that there should be time to do other things.

- Yes.

- The social development of children.

- Do you consider training in multicultural education necessary for a teacher, in order to cope with the challenges of a multicultural classroom, we are saying now?

- Yes. Training is necessary. But it is not enough. And also, when we say training, sometimes it is done simply for the sake of it. To get a piece of paper. The point is to have something more stable. And I think that there should be some... The pedagogical meetings that I mentioned before are very important. And the pedagogical meetings between schools. To form groups, to be able to discuss among ourselves. I think that this is missing. This is missing in teachers. And for our own empowerment. Because all of this requires your own empowerment. It is not just training that we hear in every seminar. There is also repetition. That is, if someone takes three seminars, they hear almost the same things.

- Yes, I was saying new methods.

- New methods. Yes. If there really are some new methods. Not just recycling. Just to do it. Training too. Because sometimes we hear very nice things about new methods. And about differentiated learning, let's say. But there must also be the conditions to do it.

- Yes, yes, yes.

- Because then you feel even worse. So, you know it and you can't do it. The theory is great. But in practice... And because of the lack of even logistical infrastructure. So, we need to see more of it.

- And I would like to ask something else. Ideally, what would you suggest to be taken as a measure-measures... to more fully satisfy the needs of these students? That is, if you could propose measures and they were implemented tomorrow. What would you suggest, what are the most important ones in your opinion that are missing?

- As I said before... First of all, I think that schools should have a logistical infrastructure. And they should also have the staff needed to support these students. And all students ultimately. That is, a psychologist and social workers. On a permanent basis. To be part of the school community. The second is to review the curriculum a little. And to relieve it. In other words, it is not possible to have six hours of such a dense cognitive lesson. The books are too heavy for elementary school. I am now talking about elementary school mainly. And there should be no time for extracurricular activities. In which the whole community can be involved.

The teachers, the students, their parents. The way the school operates, to a large extent it is... suffocating for everyone. And even more so for children who come... from another country who do not speak the language. In other words, we see the whole mountain. Particular emphasis has been placed on cognitive... and not on the rest.

- Yes. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for your experience. Please wait a moment while I stop recording.

## **P9**

- So, I wanted to ask how you manage to create a team spirit in a class that consists of students from different countries, who speak different languages, etc.

- Team spirit is needed in the class anyway, that is, even with Greek children, let's say, if we considered that we only have Greek children. Other countries manage it, I personally do, and others do not. Anyway, this has to do with the children, I think. Because some children who are from other countries, some refugees, some immigrants are much more closed. And some others are more open, that is, they want it, they want to integrate, while some others are quite closed and take a lot of their time in order to integrate into the class, even to say, that is, you can ask them various things. Now, how do I do it. Usually there is some reason. Holidays, for example, are a very big reason to ask about the customs and traditions that other countries have, even if it concerns another religion. Let's say what's happening here or if the children celebrate a specific time period, a religious holiday of their own, let's explain how it happens, why these things happen too. Regarding the diversity of the other nationality now. This is mainly what I do with the holidays, the customs, the traditions. The games, we talk a lot about the games, if they are common. What else can I think of. Maybe through some videos it takes time for some of the children, not all. It takes time for them to integrate and open up, to say, even these simple things. I mean, this year I have children who have taken a long time to integrate into the classroom.

- Do you have children who have some level of knowledge of Greek or do you speak English? How is this done in sign language, body language, a little English, how is it done?

- I have children who are from classes at school where half of the children are Greek. Their mother tongue is Greek. Despite all this, I will tell you that they do not have a particularly developed vocabulary. And that they do not have a terrible level in Greek as they understand each other in Greek. In my class, everyone understands each other in Greek. That is, even the foreigners and the refugees that I have. I do not have any refugees this year. I mainly have immigrants.

- Well, and from the experience of previous years. It is not just for this year.

- In previous years, they mainly spoke English. Or those who had identical languages. Let's say Kamal now who helped Suna's brother. We had a Syrian student. They spoke Arabic. Which were not the same. But some basics.

- And have you noticed if when they decide to speak, they show something of their identity. Have you noticed if this activates them? So that they want to learn Greek as well. Or learn different things about the host country, let's say. That is, as if it gives them a boost. A boost is that their identity is respected. In whatever form, for whatever reason. Have you noticed anything, any correlation?

- They have. I have noticed. Generally, the children who are more open. Because I always see categories of children. They are children who are more closed. They don't want to talk. But the children who are quite social. They want to showcase their diversity. And what they do in their country. What are their habits. How do they perceive certain things, etc. And I think that the others want to learn too. Children are now very receptive to diversity. At least as far as ethnicity is concerned. For us, this has become a norm. I don't think that children are like we used to be. Where we considered different. They like different things. And they only seek information. Many times, they also raise the same questions. Yes. And we want to know what they do there and how things are there, etc.

- But these children who share with the other elements of their identity. Have you noticed whether their desire to learn something from the host country increases or not?

- No. I wouldn't say so particularly. No. I don't think that's what makes them want to learn. Because they share what I will learn too. I've noticed that too. I think they want to learn. Some are also in denial. Of course, very few are in denial. But I don't think that's what makes them want to learn.

- Okay. Great, great, great, yes. Now, I'm not talking about this year when you said that half the class speaks Greek. From your previous experience, do you allow the children to speak whatever language they want in class with the aim, for example, of learning Greek? That is, when I say what language, an instruction, to say it in English or another child who knows Arabic because he is from a similar host country to explain it to another child who does not know English at all. That is, to have a multilingual model with the aim of learning a specific thing that day.

- Yes, yes. I allow it because there is no other way of communicating in this case. So, of course it is helpful for us to have a child who speaks the same language. Many times, we also call from other classes. Children that we know speak the language, Farsi, for example. We knew that a child speaks Farsi and they also speak Greek well. He understands at least, we want to say. And if we wanted to give him a specific instruction, we would call another child to say it. Of course, it is very important for us to have an interpreter, so to speak, who will explain exactly what we are saying to the child. Because the child is often speechless, he does not understand what we are saying. Uninvolved. And that makes it uninvolved and different. In the end, what can the child do?

- Yes, I mean he understands.

- I just avoid it. I tell them that I would like not to stay, because sometimes they only speak their language. We are trying to get used to Greek a little, we have to slowly say some words in Greek.

- I mean, you don't speak that much.

- Yes, but I want to say that the approach is not monolingual, that here to learn Greek we only speak Greek. Which you say wouldn't be possible, but it's not ideologically forbidden either.

- That's what I want to say. Alas. Here, many of us already learn words and phrases from the languages of other children. Alas, let it not be ideologically forbidden, it doesn't exist. Now even in the schools we work in, which are multilingual, in the center. I don't know now, and for the rest I imagine it will be more or less, anyway. You want the child to understand what you're saying.

- Yes, yes

- Because you want to have a response. And they respond. That is, when they understand, they start to respond. When you explain to them. When you explain in their language or in English, if they understand English anyway. What you teach anyway, you say. Then there is a response. Little by little. So, in this part, yes, it helps the child learn. Yes, yes.

- Have you ever involved members of their family or their community? In some way in... In their course, let's say. Cognitive, student.

- To choose as what?

- To involve. What to... To choose as what? Yes, yes, yes

- To involve.

- To involve me. No. It has not happened to me so far to involve anyone, either from the family, time, something else... Working with... Mainly with refugee children... It is a given that these children have hidden psychological trauma. Right?

- And obvious, very much so.

- And obvious. Great. So, to put it as obvious, it often means that perhaps something has happened, something has... A teacher who is not a psychologist, therefore does not know and is not his role to psychologically manage and help the child, etc. What do you do? Because he can say in the lesson, in the classroom, I know the child, they killed my father in front of my eyes, I don't know what he could do now. How does a teacher, that is, you for example, handle it?

- I usually follow my instinct and the duration of the class. Usually, the class wants to discuss it. So, I follow the class, the group. Wherever it wants to go. Of course, keeping the boundaries, whatever boundaries I can keep, etc. And we talk about this, the traumatic experience. Of course, most children do not mention traumatic experiences. They come out of other things. And there has been a time when I have mentioned it to the children myself. When their classmates who have experienced these traumatic experiences are not present, of course. And we have discussed it as a group among ourselves, about how this child might feel and what reaction he might have and what reaction we might have. As for this part now, if something is too far-fetched, that has not happened to me, we turn to experts, namely the school psychologist.

- Does the school have a psychologist?

- It has one once a week. It does. We have one who can help us and see if any of these children need it. Or a social worker, we said social worker. We turn to them. If we can

no longer manage it within our classroom, that is, it is no longer out of our hands and limits, there is nothing you can do. And in general, we discussed it with the school community. That is, I want to say while with the teaching community. That is, I will go and discuss my concerns with colleagues. Colleagues will come to tell me about their concerns. That is, it is something that concerns us and we discuss it. It is not something that stays within the classroom.

- So that is the next question I wanted to ask you. If you feel that from the teaching community, this specific school unit I imagine, you have support in any difficulties that may arise.

- I personally have a lot of support. And I think that some of my colleagues have a lot of support. Because I will tell you every concern I have, everything that has happened in the classroom. I really think that it has troubled me or affected me. I don't know how to handle it. I will always ask the opinion of Yiannis, who is the leader, but also of my colleagues, people I trust and know that we are more compatible in ideas and are closer anyway. But in general, and closer than we may be, I always think that my community at school is interested. In somehow dealing with such issues. And they will always tell you things that you haven't thought of. That is, they will suggest solutions, they will suggest ideas, they will say some other arguments, they will say from a different perspective. Where you are at the critical moment, because the community does not always have the composure and readiness to manage a situation, they will tell you how, and even more calmly, external observers themselves, will tell you how you could manage a situation.

- Would you feel the desire, if the state provided it for free, in such schools, in such a context, with many difficulties, for there to be frequent training in methods, in new tools, how to manage the multicultural classroom or not?

- Yes, I would like there to be training, but it should be in essence.

-Yes, yes, yes, of course, of course. I mean that trainings are done of this kind, but they do not give you the right things, because they are done theoretically. They do not give you the right tools, the practical ones, that is, the practical ones are the issue, not the theory.

- Of course, of course, yes, yes, yes.

- You'll tell me, if you pull out a slide and start telling me things, I don't need to sit and listen to this for three hours. I want to tell you my problems, to tell you very truly, for the group to tell its problems anyway and for the other person to provide practical solutions to these practical problems and professional solutions and solutions from people who... You know, what you said, that we don't have the knowledge and training in this area to deal with everything. That is, I think that my sensor has been good so far, but what I consider correct and what it means in reality, let's say, is very relative.

- The state, you think that from the state there is... Rather, what would you suggest, if it could be implemented, what would you suggest as a change on the part of the state, what do you think should change for these children, for these schools?

- I haven't come to a specific logic. One suggestion, one thought was indeed, that is, I think so, because I had large classes until now, they were for many years fifth and sixth, sixth graders mainly. Children who, no, didn't know how to read, didn't know basic things, but they were progressing very quickly and mastering all this and more, complied. Okay, the little kids couldn't, it's logical. I would like there to be a preparatory class, by age, so that the children enter the class that belongs to them by age. But it should exist, so that they also feel ready to cope. So that they can collaborate with their students, make friends. So, for me, I believe that if there was a preparatory class, they could integrate better. But children manage to do this.

- Doesn't the ZEP help with this?

- The ZEP helps a lot. But there are very few people who staff it now. So, we used to have three people in the ZEP, now we have one. And it takes too much history from the children. And it doesn't know what the ZEP can do. It helps a lot, it's very helpful. But maybe for children who had mastered a part of the language. I don't know to what extent, that is, for children who haven't mastered the language at all. At least the spoken language. Because our system is also structured in the first, let's say. Formed on the phonological awareness of children. That is, on how they hear the words. And they know the words phonologically and can combine them later. I think there should be another special climate. Which should be at all times. It should not be just that they take you for a two-hour period. And if it is that two-hour period every day. Because when

the needs are too many. The ZEP necessarily in collaboration of course with the teachers and the principal. It will make a choice. It cannot exceed its teaching hours. So, what should the ZEP do first?

- Ok, ok. Great. That's what I wanted to ask you about the experience. Fantastic experience. Amazing. Thank you very much.