



«LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS»

Dissertation

«The significance of critical pedagogy within intercultural
education»

A small-scale case study about the implementation of critical pedagogy in
secondary education, in Arta.

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Abstract

The purpose of this small-scale case study is to investigate if any methods of critical and intercultural pedagogy are implemented within three different high schools of a small town in Greece, named Arta. By examining the opinions of five bilingual high school students about intercultural education, this study aspires to indicate how those students perceive intercultural and critical education regarding the teaching methods, the institutional settings of Greek formal schooling, the Greek textbooks, and the school curriculum. Afterwards, a connection between cultural education and critical pedagogy will be created, in order to conclude if those educational conditions meet the needs of multicultural population, nowadays. In order to respond to the aim of the study by examining if any practices of critical pedagogy are implemented within Greek schooling and eventually for answering to the research's questions regarding the opinions of the participants for the existing educational strategies and the practical implementation of critical pedagogy within those certain educational settings, the researcher collected her data through a qualitative research methodology, based on semi-structured interviews with five bilingual students who attend formal education within three different high schools of Arta. By interviewing those children, aspired to investigate how pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds perceive the existing educational methods, if that kind of education keeps up with the realistic needs of the citizens nowadays and if school supports reciprocal cultural exchanges, inclusivity, and diversity. The findings indicate that, regarding secondary education, the educational approaches, the school textbooks and the analytical curriculum are oriented mostly on traditional perceptions and methods related to standardized tests and assessment by leaving little room on emancipatory practices such as critical thinking skills, alternative teaching-learning procedures and culturally responsive environments.

key words: interculturalism, Greek education, emancipation, social transformation,

critical pedagogy, school reality, bilingual students, small-scale case study,
bilingualism, immigrants

Περίληψη

Στόχος της συγκεκριμένης έρευνας πεδίου είναι να εξετάσει αν εφαρμόζονται μέθοδοι διαπολιτισμικής εκπαίδευσης και κριτικής παιδαγωγικής σε τρία διαφορετικά λύκεια σε μια μικρή πόλη της Ελλάδας, την Άρτα. Εξετάζοντας τις γνώμες πέντε δίγλωσσων μαθητών λυκείου, σχετικά με τη διαπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση, η έρευνα αυτή φιλοδοξεί να καταδείξει πως αυτοί οι μαθητές αντιλαμβάνονται την διαπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση και την κριτική παιδαγωγική, μέσα από τις διδακτικές μεθόδους, το θεσμό του ελληνικού σχολείου, τα σχολικά εγχειρίδια και το αναλυτικό πρόγραμμα. Έπειτα, στοχεύει να δημιουργήσει σύνδεση μεταξύ της διαπολιτισμικής εκπαίδευσης και της κριτικής παιδαγωγικής, προκειμένου να εξεταστεί αν οι συγκεκριμένες εκπαιδευτικές συνθήκες ανταποκρίνονται στις ανάγκες ενός πολυπολιτισμικού πληθυσμού, στις μέρες μας. Προκειμένου να απαντηθεί το βασικό ερώτημα σχετικά με το αν εφαρμόζονται διδακτικές πρακτικές κριτικής παιδαγωγικής στο ελληνικό σχολείο, και μετέπειτα να απαντηθούν οι ερευνητικές ερωτήσεις σχετικά με τις αντιλήψεις που έχουν οι συμμετέχοντες για τις διδακτικές μεθόδους που χρησιμοποιούν οι καθηγητές τους, καθώς επίσης για το αν θεωρούν εφικτή την εφαρμογή μια κριτικής παιδαγωγικής προσέγγισης στις υφιστάμενες σχολικές συνθήκες, η ερευνήτρια συνέλεξε τα δεδομένα της χρησιμοποιώντας ποιοτική μεθοδολογία, βασισμένη σε ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις με πέντε δίγλωσσους μαθητές που φοιτούν σε δημόσια σχολεία τυπικής εκπαίδευσης, σε τρία διαφορετικά λύκεια της Άρτας. Κάνοντας συνεντεύξεις με αυτά τα παιδιά η ερευνήτρια φιλοδοξεί να ανακαλύψει πως οι μαθητές από διαφορετικά πολιτισμικά περιβάλλοντα αντιλαμβάνονται τις υπάρχουσες εκπαιδευτικές μεθόδους, πως το υπάρχον εκπαιδευτικό μοντέλο ανταποκρίνεται στις πραγματικές ανάγκες των μαθητών στην ελληνική κοινωνία, καθώς επίσης αν ο θεσμός του σχολείου υποστηρίζει τις πολιτισμικές ανταλλαγές, την συμπερίληψη και την διαφορετικότητα.

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Ωστόσο, τα ευρήματα ανέδειξαν ότι στην δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση οι εκπαιδευτικές πρακτικές, τα σχολικά βιβλία και το αναλυτικό σχολικό πρόγραμμα είναι κυρίως προσανατολισμένα σε παραδοσιακές αντιλήψεις και πρακτικές, που σχετίζονται με εξεταστικές διαδικασίες και αξιολογήσεις, αφήνοντας με αυτόν τον τρόπο μικρό περιθώριο για την πραγματοποίηση πραγματικά χειραφετητικών πρακτικών, όπως είναι η καλλιέργεια της κριτικής σκέψης, η υιοθέτηση εναλλακτικών μεθόδων διδασκαλίας και εκμάθησης, καθώς επίσης η δημιουργία πολιτισμικά ανταποκρινόμενων περιβαλλόντων.

λέξεις κλειδιά: διαπολιτισμικότητα, ελληνική εκπαίδευση, χειραφέτηση, κοινωνική αναμόρφωση, κριτική παιδαγωγική, σχολική πραγματικότητα, δίγλωσσοι μαθητές, έρευνα πεδίου μικρής κλίμακας

Introduction

The particular study aims to examine if any intercultural and critical educational methods are implemented on secondary education, regarding the opinions of five bilingual students who attend Greek public school in Arta, a small town in Greece. Through the implementation of five semi-structured interviews with five high school students, the researcher collected her qualitative data regarding the didactic methods, the institution of school, the school textbooks and curriculum, in order to conduct a thematic analysis and answer to the main research's question, which are what are the students' opinions regarding the existing educational methods and in what extent they believe that the implementation of critical pedagogy within Greek formal schooling is feasible. After answering those questions some conclusions will be made considering if contemporary education meets the needs of a more culturally diverse population, by incorporating intercultural and critical principles within the school settings.

This topic is remarkably interesting to investigate, because the school landscape is in an on-going transformation, due to various social conditions, such as the increased

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mobility of the current world and the evolution of technology. Therefore, it would be useful to have insights about whether the Greek educational system adapts and evolves, in order to fulfil the needs of a culturally respond school context. Another interesting aspect of the topic is the fact that the study concerns a small district town in Greece, Arta, which is a city with an adequate amount of culturally diverse people and therefore, it would be fruitful to examine how school respond to the students’ divergent needs, in a context where those needs, may be hidden.

Key terms of the study are critical pedagogy and intercultural education, which are crucial approaches for structuring an interactive and inclusive educational environment. Equally important as practices, are teacher training, school culture and educational policies, which are factors that deeply influence the structure of the school system, as well as the efficiency of the Greek education, in general. Diversity and inclusivity are integral parts of critical and intercultural pedagogy, as they support the structuring of a school environment, which is culturally aware and promote equality and equity. To continue, intercultural education and critical pedagogy are interrelated educational approaches that challenge power structures, promote inclusivity, and highlight social justice within educational landscapes. On the one hand, critical pedagogy underlines the necessity of questioning dominant narratives and indicating systemic inequalities, as it is rooted in the belief that education should be a transformative and emancipatory process, that empowering learners to critically analyze and challenge social injustices (Freire, 1970). From the other hand, intercultural education places emphasis on promoting understanding and equitable interaction among students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Banks, 2015). Therefore, both approaches support students’ empowerment through critically analyzing societal norms and engaging in fruitful dialogue across cultural boundaries (Giroux, 2001).

Critical pedagogy is related with various values and principles such as emancipation, equality, equity, and human rights in general, as well as social transformation and sociopolitical acts. Regarding education, critical pedagogy is a teaching approach that aspires to empower students which will help them become conscious citizens and critical thinkers. Moreover, critical pedagogy considers the active interactions between people as meaningful practices within different spheres of people’s lives, such as political, social, economic, and cultural and it seeks to

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reconstruct and transform a multidimensional and inclusive society through education.

According to the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, some key principles of his work are dialogue and participation, social justice and equity, reflection, and action, as well as problem-posing and humanization of the education (Freire, 1970/2000). All these factors are particularly important pillars for constructing a self-governed, conscious, aware, and emancipated personality. They are also essential elements for structuring an educational environment which will promote an inclusive space used by learners and teachers in order to learn experientially about democracy, equality, and solidarity (Giroux, 2001) Although, considering the social reality nowadays, we understand that there is an urgent need for humanitarian and emancipatory practices within the school life. For example, the increasing mobility of the current world (Canagarajah, 2017), the modern multicultural and multilingual societies (Palaiologou & Kostoulas, 2024), the technological evolution, and the immersion of humanity into a deeply individualistic model of living and thinking insist to understand the social reality and try to structure a collective and inclusive society, which explores and interprets new ideas and cultures while simultaneously challenging or rejects the dominant and conservative ones (Edge, 2006). As such, they can be considered the teacher-centered practices of content coverage and standardized tests, that are widely used within the Greek secondary education. Moreover, the Greek school system seems to be quite “closed,” regarding the widespread adoption of alternative and student-centered methods, as they are experiential or cooperative strategies (Palaiologou and Faas, 2012). It seems that school fails to integrate or adapt to modern technological tools for teaching and learning, as well as ignores cultural diversity and the incorporation of culturally relevant content.

However, there is need to further examine what happening within the Greek intercultural education nowadays and how the above principles influence Greek schooling and specifically Greek intercultural schooling in a small district town, as it can be prove very interesting to investigate a different case, as it is Arta, which may be not as culturally diverse as other cities in Greece, but there are students who are from culturally diverse backgrounds and have increased educational and socioemotional needs. Furthermore, in many cases it is quite challenging to observe and evaluate those needs, as they may be well hidden, due to the children’ effort to

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fit in the norm, and eventually lose their personal characteristics. Therefore, it is meaningful to focus on these aspects in order to make some conclusions about the significance of intercultural and critical pedagogy within education. Taking into account that the provided sample is limited, some safe conclusions were made, through the students' lens, regarding the existing teaching methods, the educational policies, the school textbooks and the school curriculum, in order to answer to the aim of the study which is in what extent intercultural and critical educational methods are implemented within three different high schools in a district town.

Regarding the structure of the research, the first chapter aspires to describe the main key terms and theories regarding intercultural education and critical pedagogy, how those strategies complement each other and how important is for the educators to incorporate such approaches within the school process, in order the reader to acquire a better understanding about those terms and engage to the procedure. Moreover, the second section includes and describes the implementation of a series of Innovative Educational Programs in Greece, so the reader can have a better understanding about the practical implementation of critical and intercultural principles within educational settings but also for examining the adoption of emancipatory processes within the Greek educational system in a bigger scale.

Additionally, the next chapter is about the methodology that was used, in order the researcher to collect, analyze and present her findings. The qualitative research's method and the conduction of semi-structured interviews, aspire to make an in-depth exploration of the students' answers regarding various educational matters, as they are the existing didactic methods and the teachers' training, the school as an institution, the school's analytical curriculum and the school's textbooks, in order to answer to the research's questions but also to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative method used. Considering, the particular subject, the researcher aimed to investigate in what extent are implemented intercultural and critical strategies within secondary education, in order to address the educational and social needs of a culturally diverse population but also to collect and analyze the students' perceptions regarding the existing educational methods and the practical implementation of critical pedagogy within specific school settings.

The data analysis conducted by categorizing the students' answers regarding four thematic units such as: teaching methods, the school as an institution, the school

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textbooks, and the school curriculum. To continue, the researcher implemented data codification using additional categories and creating two tables, where the students' answers presented and further categorized. The relevant excerpts categorized according to the units of teacher's training on intercultural issues, the communication and collaboration between the class's members, the promotion of the pupils' autonomy and involvement, the utilization of alternative methods and resources and the promotion of diversity and inclusivity within the particular school context.

In the end, the researcher merged the categories to more general and representative ones, which are inclusivity and diversity, critical thinking and reflection, equity and social justice, teachers' reflection as well as collaborative learning, in order to conclude if those five significant pillars of critical pedagogy are influence those certain educational contexts. Overall, after the findings' presentation, some conclusions were made, regarding the research's findings and implications, the limitations, and constraints during the procedure, as well as some suggestions for improvement and further empirical study.

1. Literature Review

Considering the international literature regarding critical and intercultural pedagogy, it is essential to underline that the synthesis of those two approaches could be prove truly meaningful in fostering inclusive and equitable educational environments, especially for refugee and migrant populations. As Abdi and Shultz (2008) state, critical intercultural pedagogy provides practical strategies for implementing transformative education in diverse settings. Indicatively, some of those strategies are experiential learning, such as field trips and communities' engagement projects for exposing students to diverse cultures or multilingual approaches by valuing students' home languages, as well as encouraging them to use multiple languages during the lessons. Furthermore, other important practices which support the intersection of critical pedagogy and intercultural education is critical reflection, as it is for example the incorporation of reflective procedures, so the pupils to critically examine their own cultural assumptions and biases, or complementary the utilization of flexible teaching strategies, where the educators adopt teaching methods for responding to

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diverse learning styles and cultural backgrounds and for valuing the learners’ linguistic and cultural capitals. (Abdi and Shultz, 2008).

Furthermore, regarding the implementation of critical and intercultural pedagogy in refugee and migrant settings, Cummins (2001) emphasized on the empowerment of migrant children through culturally responsive practices. Intercultural competence and critical pedagogy can be proven particularly useful to address the unique needs of refugee and migrant learners. More precisely, there is need the educators to empower vulnerable groups, in order the students to become active participants and agents of their own knowledge and meanings by advocating for social justice and equity. Though language support, critical literacy, cultural sensitivity and resilience building, the teachers can create a supportive and safe space for cultivating literacy skills in both the students’ native languages and language of instruction, as well as for encouraging critical analysis, open discussion, self-expression, creativity and for fostering children’s self-esteem and cultural identities, during and through the educational procedure (Cummins, 2001), (Kano and Norton, 2003).

1.1 Intercultural Pedagogy in Multilingual Settings

Regarding the implementation of intercultural education in Greece, it is commonly accepted that the education field is one of the most politically charged areas of public policy (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012) and thus it has a profound impact on the socio-cultural structure of a country. Specifically, in Greece, whereas Palaiologou and Evangelou (2011, as cited in Palaiologou & Faas, 2012, p. 568) reported that “in 2007–8 there were 138,193 migrant and repatriated Greek students, which corresponded the 10% of the school population”. These numbers reveal that the population of Greece is diverse and that its educational system should promote interculturalism, as well. However, “the predominant attitude towards diversity is one of tolerance that goes hand in hand with the unquestioned acceptance of the majority religion, the majority language, the majority ethnicity in Greek school life. This is well in line with the dominant discourses on national identity in Greece and the dominant tradition of only accommodating diversity, if at all, at the individual but not

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at the collective level” (Triantafyllidou, 2011, as cited in Palaiologou & Faas, 2012, p. 575).

Some indicative examples regarding the implementation of intercultural teaching methods and approaches for promoting understanding, respect and appreciation for diverse cultures within the school environment are the utilization of the students’ first languages, the exploration of their cultural and linguistic capitals through artifacts, traditional clothing, or personal narratives, the introduction of alternative sciences, such as art, music, or literature (especially if the students do not speak the host language) within the school curriculum, as well as the enrichment of the mainstream school with various creative and interactive activities (Tsaliki, 2017). Additional educational activities are the organization of multicultural events or festivals where students can showcase aspects of their cultures through music, dance, food, and traditional attire or the arrangement of storytelling sessions where students or community members share traditional stories, folktales, or personal narratives that reflect their cultural heritage. Furthermore, it would be equally beneficial the school administrators in cooperation with the educators and the students to conduct workshops or seminars on cultural competence, in order to help the students to understand and appreciate cultural differences, by also including discussions on stereotypes, biases, and ways to overcome cultural misunderstandings and promote mutual respect and appreciation. Last but not least, multicultural content fosters empathy by helping students understand the experiences and perspectives of others as well as their cognitive skills, by contributing to the development of their social and emotional abilities, as well as of their intellectual ones.

It seems though, that in Greece, there isn’t a systematic effort neither from universities, nor from the state, in order to further educate the teachers and the wider school community upon intercultural issues. For example, as Palaiologou (2020) reported the school does not use all the necessary means for including all its members. Instead of trying to integrate all the students within the formal schooling by using instructions in English or to hire bilingual teachers, as the Law suggests, it abolishes these practices as very radical for the country. Overall, it is of great importance even for the content teachers and not only for the ESL ones to be systematically educated

in critical pedagogy and intercultural issues in order all the students to have equal opportunities to knowledge.

1.2 Critical Pedagogy in Multilingual Settings

Regarding the implementation of critical pedagogy in Greek school settings the resources available are quite limited. However, after examining the existing bibliography there have been valuable insights about its theoretical foundations, challenges, and potential applications within the Greek educational context. More precisely, the last decades many efforts have been seen, although not universally integrated (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). That could be explained, due to the existing educational policies, which mostly promote traditional methods of teaching with standardized tests, rote memorization, and content coverage. As Palaiologou, and Faas, (2012) mentioned formal education is designed hierarchically. The adults'/ teachers' perspectives are in the center while the children/students who deviate from the “ideal model” are ignored, most of the times. In contrast, as Pantazidis (2020) also proposes critical pedagogy promotes an educational model of “peer-learning” and “co-creation of knowledge” where formal teaching is structured from below by giving to student's opportunities for self-organization, exploration, collaboration, sharing and harmonious coexistence. So, the main stake is not changing the content of knowledge but approach knowledge in divergent and alternative ways (Pantazidis, 2020).

To provide an example, Lange and Sletten, 2002 (as cited in Akidou, et al. 2015) argued that alternative schools are considered as those with a small number of students, dialogical and interactive relations between educators and learners, supporting environment, promoting students' empowerment with initiatives and providing them stimuli for developing social consciousness and a sense of agency and belonging. Those schools also, specializing in democratic education accessible to all, which is the main feature of critical pedagogy, as well.

Regarding the implementation of alternative educational structures in Greece, the last decades, there have been several attempts for evolving the dominant educational system, by constructing a more inclusive, diverse and emancipatory school

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landscape, so the Greek school could respond to the increased educational needs of a more culturally diverse population, with multidimensional characteristics. So, according to Spyropoulou et al. (2008, as cited in Akidou, et al. 2015) Greece introduced and implemented a series of Innovative Educational Programs, which aimed to put the learners and their individual needs to the center of the teaching process, in a general framework of promoting new educational approaches. Although most of those programs were applied mostly optionally and had not widespread implementation, as they were institutionally imposed from above without involving the educators themselves in the planning process (Zazani, 2014, as cited in Akidou et al. 2015). Therefore, it was impossible for the educators to adopt innovative practices or structure their lesson by giving emphasis to the students’ social and cultural capital, due to the lack of their personal involvement, as well as the autonomy of the school unit itself.

Admittedly, factors like resources, administrative support, and school culture play a significant role in adopting new pedagogical approaches and enhancing the quality of the Greek educational system in general. Precisely, a crucial factor for the proper implementation of new pedagogies are human resources, as well-trained and motivated educators with opportunities for professional development are main preconditions for a quality education. Equally essential are the financial and technological resources for facilitating the implementation of innovative teaching programs. Indicatively, financial resources include teachers’ training, acquiring technology and new instructional material, while technological resources offer a wide range of modern technologies, such as tablets, computers, or whiteboards, which can evolve the educational procedure (Darling et al., 2020).

Administrative matters, policy support, professional development and time allocation are very important factors which also should be improved. For example, the Greek educational structure should be reinforced by new administrative policies, which will promote experimentation and flexibility and support the adoption of new, modernized pedagogies. Also, allocating time within the school schedule for collaborative learning, reflection, and critical thinking skills, can contribute to integrate innovative practices, more effectively (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Overall, it would be extremely beneficial to transform the existing school culture to a more positive one, where there will be a supportive leadership for valuing the

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continuous improvement both of teachers and students, as well as the actual collaboration between the teachers, for structuring a conducive environment for innovation. Also, to promote a student-centered school model, where pupils’ needs and aspirations will be in priority for actively engaging and empowering them (Louis et al., 2010).

On the contrary, insufficient teacher training, curriculum constraints, material and technical infrastructure of schools, cannot offer opportunities to educators to implement innovative educational approaches and inclusive initiatives, such as those of critical and intercultural pedagogy, in a bigger scale, resulting a rigid, monotonous and anachronistic educational context. Through bibliographic research regarding the implementation of Innovative Educational Programs in Greek schooling several attempts and initiatives were found in various sections, which try to promote and integrate the main principles of critical and intercultural pedagogy within the Greek school landscape. For example, some schools in Greece adopted the “Open Schools” initiative, which is a program initiated in 2015 by the Municipality of Athens in order for school buildings to be used in afternoons for the local community. Specifically, this initiative aimed to create inclusive and democratic educational environments that allow vulnerable social groups to have access to various educational activities and eventually to become engaged citizens through active participation and collaboration (Open Society Foundation (n. d.). Another indicative example is that several schools in Greece adopt the *Project-Based Learning (PBL) Programs*, where students involve in real-life projects and learn how to solve problems, think critically and actively cooperate with each other by addressing social issues and community challenges. These programs are part of the Erasmus+ program in Greece and have a variety of different educational activities regarding project-based learning (Erasmus+ Greece. (n.d.). Furthermore, there are also some *Civic Education Programs* which promote active citizenship and critical awareness among students. However, those initiatives are still quite rudimentary and based upon the discretion of the educator, as well as the student’s personal interests.

Secondly, in some schools in Greece some further intercultural programs are implemented, aiming to promote cultural diversity and inclusivity within the school settings. According to the Law 2413/1996 (1996) obligates Greece to establish intercultural schools in areas across Greece with a multicultural student population.

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Hypothetically, those schools have a certain degree of autonomy for addressing the divergent educational needs of their students but in most of the cases they did not operate as supposed to (Palaiologou and Faas, 2012). Nevertheless, regarding the teachers’ training on intercultural matters, there are some initiatives, such as *Collaborative learning Communities*, where efforts are made for the collaboration of educators and students on reconstructing alternative and inclusive educational models. An indicative example is the so-called *Intercultural Cities Program* demonstrated by the Council of Europe. During that program, 250 prospective teachers (undergraduate students) of the University of Patras, participated in a collaboration project, in order to be involved in instructional design for students from diverse cultural backgrounds, so they can actively communicate with diverse audiences and negotiate cultural differences through compacting prejudices and stereotypes (Council of Europe, (n.d).

Another interesting initiative is the program “*Teach4integration*”, which is a free training program for educators, who are involved in the education of children with migrant and refugee background. The particular initiative, it is a collaboration between the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the University of Thessaly, the University of Ioannina, and the University of Crete, in partnership with the UNICEF Office in Greece. The program is supported by the Ministry of Education, Religion, and Sports and is under the supervision of the Institute of Educational Policy. In detail, the particular program aims to enhance the skills and capabilities of educators in areas such as teaching Greek as a second language, psychosocial support, inclusion of refugee students, and differentiated instruction (Teach4integration, 2024).

Of course, another valuable initiative for enhancing teachers’ education regarding refugee and migrants’ issues is the postgraduate program of the HOU’s, entitled as “*Language Education for Refugees and Migrants*”. The objective of the program is to offer teachers at both primary and secondary levels, as well as tertiary graduates aspiring to become educators, and those involved in adult education within refugee or migrant environments, specialized pedagogical expertise. The program is designed to equip both Greek and international students with the ability to articulate and address essential inquiries in applied linguistics and the acquisition of second languages within the varied and multilingual global settings (Hellenic Open

University, 2024; Kitsiou et al. 2019).

However, from the other hand, despite the multicultural synthesis of the contemporary Greek classrooms, the most systematic efforts are made within the primary school education, as there are the highest number of culturally diverse students (Palaiologou & Evangelou, 2015, as cited in Sotiropoulou, 2020), resulting the secondary education to be left in the second place. Therefore, we understand, that the initiatives and alternative practices that are referred above, are applied mostly individually. Even after the large migration waves in 1990s and more recently in 2015s and the establishment of the law 2413/1996, which acknowledged the culturally diverse population within the Greek educational landscape, the policy and the Greek curriculum prioritizes the content coverage and the standardized tests and eventually leave little room for the incorporation of critical pedagogy, in general (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). Last but not least, the lack of necessary material and institutional resources and the insufficient teachers’ training on intercultural matters, combined with the cultural resistance of the Greek state, which is mostly oriented on traditional educational practices, lead to systematic inequalities, that are mostly affect the vulnerable social groups, in our case, the immigrant and refugee population (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). Therefore, the issue that arises here, is in what extent all the above influence the implementation of critical pedagogy within intercultural education in a rural area such as Arta.

2. Methodology

Taking into consideration the complexity of the main subject itself, the researcher chose to conduct a small-scale case study, in order to investigate and understand in what extent intercultural and critical practices are implemented within the secondary education in a rural area, which has not a negligible number of culturally diverse students. However, their educational needs may be latent or degraded, due to the focusing of high school to the national exams at the end of the year and also the children’s effort to fit in the norm by abolishing their personal characteristics. The concept is that through the honest opinions and authentic perceptions of the students, the researcher will have a better understanding about their various educational needs,

their sentiments about the mainstream schooling and the teaching methods that promote or prevent their fully integration within the Greek school system. For that reason, the researcher used the qualitative method of semi structured interviews for collecting data and answering to the research’s question, which are firstly what the opinions of students regarding the existing educational methods are and secondly in what extent they believe that the implementation of critical pedagogy within secondary education is feasible. The interviews were conducted live on a local cafe and the researcher used a mobile phone for recording and a laptop for transcribing them.

2.1 Research Sample and Criteria of Inclusion

To continue with, the sample were five bilingual students, who attend the third grade of high school, within three different high schools in Arta. There are three female and two male students. Three of the students are from Albania, one from the Philippines and one from Palestine. The Albanian and the Palestinian ones are immigrant children, who came in Greece with their parents at a young age. The other three, two of them are half-Greek half-Albanian and one of them half-Greek half-Philippine, respectively. All of them attend Greek public school and have excellent language proficiency in Greek. Therefore, the criteria of inclusion were the students to attend public high school, have a diverse cultural background, be bilingual and have good language proficiency in Greek, so they can understand and answer to the interview’s questions. However, the students, who met those specifications were limited and considering the small period of time for conducting the study, the busy children’s schedule in high school and sometimes the suspiciousness or maybe indifference of some pupils, it became truly challenging to find more than five interviewees. Indicatively, during my study, I have found a group of students who were Albanian and attended a technological high school in Arta, but they were not interested in participating. So, I had to reduce the number of the interviews to meet the time constraints of the study. Regarding the ethical considerations of the particular research, the researcher informed the students about the survey’s purposes, their voluntary participation and

asked for their consent. As minors, their parents came to my workplace, as I am working on a café, we met each other and after I explained the purpose of my study, they gave me their consent in a written form. Of course, the researcher highlighted also, that their anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy would be secured.

2.2 Research Method

Regarding the methodology for collecting data, semi-structured interviews considered as a clearer and more simplified way, so the students could understand and answer the research questions. Moreover, it would be useful to mention that, as a research methodology has many advantages, because it gives to the researcher the possibility for a detailed exploration of participants’ perspectives and experiences, offers flexibility in questioning as the researcher can adapt the interview guide based on the interviewees responses, facilitates the understanding of the context surroundings participants’ experiences, which is also crucial for interpreting and analyzing data, as well as offers qualitative data, that is detailed, descriptive and contextually rich. Furthermore, such a research method offers a more conversational and open atmosphere with the students, where potentially participants can give more honest responses, while simultaneously is a method, which is more appropriate for an exploratory research purpose, because it can allow the researcher to uncover issues that may not have been anticipated. However, of course there are also disadvantages, as semi-structured interviews are usually time consuming and of course merely subjective, as there is a risk the findings to be influenced by the researcher’s bias or interpretation. Overall, the findings of a research may have limited generalizability, due to the small sample sizes, and also data analysis can be proven overly complex and time-consuming. (Creswell, & Creswell, 2017).

Subsequently, the interview’s questions were categorized regarding four basic units of the main schooling, which are the teaching methods and practices, the institution of the Greek school itself, the school textbooks, and the school analytical curriculum. By examining those four pillars, there was an in-depth exploration of the issue which offered a structure for maintaining focus on the research areas of the existing teaching methods and the implementation of critical pedagogy within secondary education

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(Tsiolis, 2018). Subsequently, the researcher further categorized the students' answers, according to the basic principles of critical and intercultural pedagogy, in order to make some conclusions about their significance within the Greek educational system, nowadays. The categories used for an in-depth analysis of the subject and are as follows: teachers' training, the implementation of alternative teaching methods, the inclusivity and diversity of the school experience, the utilization of various and divergent resources of knowledge, the students' possibility for autonomy and active involvement, and the open communication and collaboration among students and educators. Overall, after the thematic analysis (Tsiolis, 2018) there was a comparison between the students' answers and the main principles of intercultural and critical pedagogy, in order safe and valid conclusions to be made.

Of course, considering the research's limitations it is important to highlight the fact that the research's sample is limited, as in Arta there was not easy access to students from culturally diverse backgrounds who could participate to the study, either because they did not have adequate language competence, or because it was challenging to get them to participate. Also, due to the complexity of the subject, the sample needed to have excellent language proficiency in Greek, so it is obvious that the interviewees may be bilingual, but they merely integrated within the Greek school reality, as they live in Greece from a young age and for a long period of time.

2.3 Data Analysis

Within the first stage, the researcher conducted a categorization of the students' answers regarding four basic units of the interview, which are the students' opinions about the teaching methods, the school as an institution, the school textbooks, and the analytical curriculum. The particular categorization aimed to indicate the basic thematic units of the research, which are the school's dominant model of teaching, how educators address the students' diverse educational needs, if there are appropriate teachers' training regarding intercultural issues, as well as if the school textbooks and analytical curriculum support diversity, critical literacy, and inclusivity. This stage is essential in order to conduct a further thematic analysis regarding those answers for investigating if any critical and intercultural practices are

implemented within these certain educational settings.

After analyzing the collected data, according to the thematic units above, the researcher proceeded to a data codification regarding the given answers (Tsiolis, 2018), in order to indicate the connection between the theoretical frame of the subject and the research's findings. Regarding the theoretical background of the study, it became clear that critical and intercultural pedagogy are interrelated educational approaches with main values and principles. Specifically, for a proper implementation of a critical and intercultural pedagogy, there is need for systematic teachers' training, open communication and collaboration between the class's members, promotion of inclusivity and diversity, support of pupils' autonomy and involvement, as well as utilization of alternative methods and various resources during the educational procedure. Therefore, was held a further categorization of the students' answers according to those five principles.

3.Findings

In this chapter, the research's findings are presented, according to the students' answers and they are described according to the thematic analysis that has been conducted. The findings categorized regarding the main thematic units of the interview's protocol and the basic principles of intercultural and critical pedagogy, in order to conclude if any of those practices are implemented within the specific educational settings of the research. In a summary according to the principles of critical pedagogy, it became clear that the teachers' training is still quite rudimentary, the school curriculum and the school textbooks do not offer a variety of different and multidimensional resources, and the dominant educational model is monolingual and ethnocentric (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). Furthermore, the school unit itself, does not use any extracurricular activity or means to support differentiated or transformative education, based on the pupils' needs and in cooperation with the educators.

Regarding intercultural education, the school seems to not value the cultural or linguistic capital of its students. Language support is poor, and the teachers' cultural awareness depends on their personal interest or sensitivity. There are not activities or events for promoting cultural awareness or engaging and empowering the school's

community upon such issues. Last but not least, the educational system as described below, is mostly oriented on a traditional educational model, based on standardized tests, content coverage and degree hunting for succeeding to the national exams at the end of high school. Therefore, there is little room for emancipatory and experiential teaching and learning strategies, within a school environment where there are not active engagement and collaboration among teachers and learners.

3.1 Teaching Methods and Education

By examining the interviewees' answers about the teaching methods and the teachers' training regarding intercultural matters, it is clear that there is certain unanimity. All of the students mentioned that their teachers have not the proper training to address the educational needs of a bilingual population. [*“Even in primary school, I remember that our teachers had no training. (S1)”*] This might happen due to the teacher's age, or his/her personal interest about those matters. However, it seems that there is a sense of disappointment or indifference from the educators. As, the students argued most teachers are indifferent about their cultural backgrounds. For example, a student mentioned that educators do not seem to integrate intercultural practices within their teaching methods resulting some of them to not even heard the term “intercultural education” until recently. [*“No, I don't believe anyone has such training...so I believe they had no education on cultural matters...” (S2)”*], [*“No one has ever mentioned anything about intercultural education, nor have we ever discussed such a topic.”(S5)”*] Especially, in high school the educators' efforts for adopting an inclusive and intercultural educational approach are quite limited, while in primary school the students reported some teachers' attempts for integrating and assimilating the culturally diverse audience. Of course, those attempts were optional and did not operate as a systematic effort by the school, but as a teacher's initiative.

Subsequently, when the students were questioned about the teaching practices that educators use, in case that a student needs help during the lesson, due to inadequate proficiency in the Greek language, the students reported that those efforts were mainly made in a younger age, specifically in primary education. The teaching practices that were used for helping a child, who faced difficulties during the lesson,

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were in some cases, cooperative learning, or alternatively some more simple methods, such as personalized clarifications to the student in need. [*Many times, some teachers choose to divide us into groups. So that we are not stuck, and whoever is struggling doesn't 'get lost,' "They did it based on how well the more communicative students got along with the others. They always put a 'strong' student who got along better with most kids in a group, and that way, he would try to pull the others along. It was also easier for the teacher to manage us that way." (S1)*]. However, these practices are quite rudimentary, and do not indicate an appropriate way to deal with learning difficulties or to plan a lesson with culturally diverse population. As a result, a pupil who faces linguistic difficulties it is unlikely to keep up with the mainstream schooling, while in the same time the teachers' pressure to the pupils only to use the Greek language within the classroom and abolish their heritage languages and cultural identities are in contrast with the main principles and values of critical and intercultural pedagogies, which promote polyphony, self-expression and coexistence of diverse and multicultural elements within the school. To continue with the students' answers, they also reported that the school lessons are mostly based on content coverage and that a high number of teachers do not use alternative ways or resources in order to conduct a lesson. [*"In most cases, I think everyone is limited to the simple delivery of the lesson because they are under time pressure to cover the curriculum." (S1)*], [*"I believe that the teacher's goal is simply to finish the material, regardless of whether the student understands or not." (S3)*], [*"I feel that some teachers are in a rush to cover the material and ensure that we don't fall behind in the curriculum. That's why very rarely, if ever, do they seek to do something different that would bring us closer to the lesson." (S4)*]. Such educational practices do not promote active participation or pupils' engagement within the school curriculum and are against to what critical pedagogy indicates, resulting a sterile way of teaching, which do not take into consideration the linguistic and cultural capital of the pupils. It also impedes the development of critical thinking skills and consciousness, as it does not offer opportunities for reflective practices among a class's members, nor cultivates the ability to question the societal structures and norms. Only few cases mentioned, where the educator used further resources for teaching a subject but the fact that those cases depend on the teacher's personal interest and willingness, are quite problematic, as they are the exception and not the rule.

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However, a student mentioned that sometimes the lessons are more interactive, as some teachers use further educational material for discussing a topic. Precisely, the student reported that, during the first and second grade of high school, they used to watch movies, in order to better understand and further analyze a subject, which seemed to be really interesting and helpful for the class. Actually, those are indications, that the students can evaluate their increased and multidimensional educational needs, as they refer that more interactive and creative educational materials could be more helpful and interesting, for integrating them within the school curriculum and also for providing them various stimuli for interpreting and questioning what they are learning. [*“There were cases where, let's say, teachers would have us watch a movie to understand a topic or wouldn't just lecture. I mean, they would ask questions... the lesson was more interactive. We might watch a documentary and then discuss what we understood, etc.” (S2)*]

Last but not least, regarding the answers about the promotion of inclusivity and diversity within the classroom, the teachers' attempts to integrate, empower, and familiarize students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds seem to be quite optional and rudimentary. [*“No one ever asked us about customs or traditions from our country.” (S3)*] Moreover, all the students argued that even if the class is a safe space, which make them feel free to express themselves and to make questions to the teacher, only few teachers seem to actively try to engage those students to the educational procedure and it is still depending on the teacher's empathy or sensitivity. Subsequently, the strong emphasis, which is given on standardized testing and assessment may lead educators to prioritize exam preparation over the development of critical thinking skills or intercultural understanding. Furthermore, it could be proven incredibly stressful for an educator to try to elaborate and assimilate the students' divergent educational and linguistic needs, while he/she may does not have the adequate language training on English for example, or the appropriate multicultural educational means and resources for structuring a culturally respond environment. Therefore, all those factors can hinder the teachers' ability to properly incorporate emancipatory and innovative practices, and in the same time learners' needs remain neglected.

Finally, the researcher asked the students if they have ever experienced marginalization due to some different characteristic of theirs in order to have further

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insights about teachers’ training regarding cultural awareness. Indeed, most of students had stories, where a teacher excluded them from congregation, or from national anniversaries and manifestations, due to prejudices and stereotypes. [*“I have felt marginalized during national holidays. In some cases, there were teachers who didn't want me to participate. For example, the gym teacher didn't tell me to join the parade, or the philologist didn't invite me to join the choir. I also remember a fine arts teacher in the first high school who would give us a theme for the class, like drawing something related to Easter, and she would ask questions like 'how do you even know about Easter?' or 'do they dye eggs in your village?' ignoring, for example, that I am Orthodox. I mean, the lady was clueless, supposedly being a more open-minded and liberated art teacher.” (S1)】 Those cases explicitly highlight the educators’ inadequate information about intercultural matters, as in the first case a teacher excluded two Palestinians brother and sister from congregation, because she thought that the children were Muslim and therefore it was unacceptable to participate. [*“Oh, but I remember a tragic incident in elementary school. A dreadful teacher wouldn't let us enter the church because my father was a Muslim! She was a religious teacher and had told the priest not to allow these kids (referring to me and my sister) to enter, they are not from here. It didn't bother me, but my sister was very upset about being singled out. Even though we were baptized!” (S3)】. While in the second one, the excessive pressure on an Albanian student, to participate in a national anniversary, by telling a poem about the Albanian resistance also produced the opposite results, resulting the student to feel separated and uncomfortable. [*“However, a philologist whom I felt quite liked me kept asking me constantly about my village in Albania, about my family's personal matters, but to an excessive degree. This made me feel extremely uncomfortable several times. It even got on my nerves because she was overly involved in my personal life. I remember on a specific celebration last year; she even wanted me to read a poem about the Albanian front!” (S1)】 That kind of incidents, indicate the inadequate teachers’ training on intercultural matters, as well as the cultivation of misconceptions and prejudices, which lead to the exclusion of culturally diverse students, while simultaneously pressure them to fit in the norm and abolish their personal characteristics.***

3.2 The School as an Institution

Considering the school as an institution, the students argued that the school itself does not offer opportunities for children from divergent cultural backgrounds to assimilate within the Greek schooling. For example, there is no provision in case a child has linguistic difficulties, except from some complementary means, such as support classes, which is also quite degraded. [*“There is remedial teaching for both Greeks and especially for children from elsewhere. However, because teachers were forced to do it, they don't invest much effort. It was like saying it's the child's time. So, neither the children who really struggled attended, nor did the teachers provide motivation for the other kids to participate more. It was difficult for someone to stay for an extra 2 hours. It was too burdensome.” (S1)*]. Moreover, the school does not have a systematic program for supporting intercultural education, as there are not any extracurricular activities or events, in order to better inform both the educators and the students about inclusivity and diversity issues or regarding language support classes. The only thing, that some of the interviewees reported, as a more systematic form of cultural familiarization with different cultures, is student exchange programs, such as “Comenius,” which however usually was applied in younger classes and depended on some teachers’ initiatives. [*“...we had student exchange programs that I believe helped us see another culture up close. Of course, even this was mainly for cultures of Western Europe.” (S2)*], [*“Usually, in school, we organize trips, the typical celebrations for the 28th of October, and such. Oh, and in high school, I participated in the 'Comenius' program... in Turkey! That was a fantastic experience because we stayed for a week in the homes of Turkish students and truly saw their life and culture. The experience stayed with me, and I think it was a great example of how to get closer to others and get to know them better.” (S5)*]. Eventually the lack of creative and interactive teaching practices and activities, perpetuate the existence of a rigid, monotonous school curriculum, which deprives educational system of every means to adopt new innovative practices, intensifying the gap between teachers and students, and not allowing space for embracing practices of critical and intercultural education.

Moreover, regarding some teachers’ initiatives, even if the intentions of their actions

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were good, the implementation was quite patchy, resulting sometimes to perpetuate discrimination by pushing the non-native students to fit in the norm, instead of embracing their divergent characteristics and smoothly integrate them within the Greek reality. [*"I believe more that it tries forcefully to assimilate you. To make you like him. It gives more importance to making you feel more 'Greek' rather than integrating you. It feels like it's trying to change your culture."*(S1)], [*"He doesn't pay any attention to a child who doesn't belong to the majority. I don't think he does anything to integrate a child from elsewhere. However, maybe it's also because there are few kids in our school who are from elsewhere."* (S3)]

In some cases, the inappropriate practices which some educators use, results the segregation of the native and the non-native students. [*"I remember, of course, in the first year of high school, a philologist asked us to bring a dish from our country because we had a lesson about Greek traditional cuisine... and I brought a Filipino dish..."* (S3) *"Did they bring dishes from all the kids in the class?"* (E) *"We brought only the kids who were from elsewhere..."* (S3)]. Therefore, it is clear that the educators' deformed biases and assumptions, as well as the poor care of the school unit itself regarding inclusivity and diversity matters, hinder the proper integration of the culturally diverse people within the school unit.

3.3 School Textbooks

According to the students' answers, there is absolute unanimity, regarding the Greek textbooks, which are used within the mainstream Greek schooling. The interviewees observed that there is lack of polyphony and different resources during the lessons, and that the main textbooks are strictly oriented on the Greek reality and Greek history or literature without adopting any alternative resource or giving any opportunity for further research about a certain subject. However, this contradicts basic principles of critical education, such as the utility of various and divergent educational resources and aspects regarding a subject, so the students can evolve their critical thinking and perceiving skills. Each country authors its books based on the mainstream national history, but particularly in Greek schooling the students support

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that the textbooks are quite second and restrictive. *[I believe that especially when it comes to the homeland and the nation, there is no other source. I can't think of any book that talks about another people or culture. Not even a little story. We only study Greek history and the Asia Minor Catastrophe." (S1)], ["History, for example, is one-sided. They teach you things in a certain way, and that's it. The texts, let's say, are mainly from Greeks, all oriented toward the Greek narrative." (S3)]* Furthermore, the lack of students' possibility to question the existing educational structure and the provided knowledge, arises another significant infringement, regarding the implementation of critical didactic methods within the school landscape. Specifically, some students noted the fact that they do not have the actual opportunity to question what they are learning, nor they have a trigger to make further research about a topic. Additionally, the absence of active collaboration, and discussion between teachers and students, impedes the actual adoption of critical pedagogical practices within the school landscape. *["They don't even give you the opportunity to question anything in school... all these things are considered as given, just the way teachers present them." (S3)]* *["They present everything a bit one-sided, and it's then up to the teacher whether we should explore further or question a source, for example." (S3)]*

3.4 School Curriculum

Finally, regarding the interview' forth unit about the school curriculum, the researcher asked the students if they believe that the school's analytical program supports the integration of multicultural population by promoting diversity and cultural awareness. Also, asked them if the school address the educational needs of bilingual students in practice, and with which means, as well as some further suggestions in order the mainstream school to upgrade, so it can meet the various educational, linguistic, and socioemotional needs of its pupils, nowadays.

According to the children' answers, Greek school curriculum does not provide any systematic support to its bilingual or non-native students, as there are not courses that promote intercultural matters and the teachers' initiatives are quite limited, even if

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the pupils' educational needs are increased. [*“I don't think there is any effort. It's somehow taken for granted that you know Greek to be in a Greek school.” (S3)*], [*“I don't think a child who doesn't know any Greek at all can easily participate in such a school program... because the school doesn't have programs for children who need help, it's a bit unfortunate all this.” (S4)*]. In particular, even if the students seem to perceive the value of intercultural education, and they are interested in acquiring knowledge about other cultures and languages, there are not a lot of opportunities within the mainstream educational curriculum for this to actually happen. There is not a systematic provision from the state nor the school unit itself for supporting students who face difficulties on assimilating within the school context, resulting many of them to attend private classes or become indifferent for the school. Additionally, those omissions cause the exclusion of the vulnerable students, which is also opposed to the critical and intercultural pedagogies' values. Nevertheless, the interviewees suggested some further educational activities, courses, and ideas, in order the school curriculum to become more inclusive and multicolor.

The researcher, asked from them to propose some ideas regarding the transformation and reinforcement of the school curriculum in order it can actively embrace the bilingual and non-native population within the Greek schooling. This question aimed to investigate the students' perceptions on educational matters and on structuring a student-centered teaching environment based on their needs. Indicatively, pupils suggested the active and systematic students' support for learning the target language, the introduction within the analytical program of language support classes for the students who face linguistic difficulties, so they can have equal opportunities of involvement and success within the classroom. [*“serious reinforcement teaching... done correctly. Learning essential things about the everyday life of both Greek and other cultures present in the school. Perhaps through documentaries or art, which can be very helpful.” (S3)*] proper teachers' training regarding intercultural matters, proper introduction of systematic teaching of foreign languages, [*“We could have more options in the foreign languages we learn. But I think that teachers need to be better informed. It's not possible for only one out of all the philologists I had in school to be knowledgeable about my country.” (S2)*] Another pupil's suggestion is the implementation of students exchanges programs, as well as the introduction of

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courses related with the global reality, regarding different cultures, languages, and people. They also stated that it would be useful some interactive and multicultural activities to be included to the mainstream curriculum in order to raise the awareness about intercultural matters within the school community [*“having lessons or assignments focusing on other cultures and countries to learn new things. Giving more importance to foreign languages, especially English, as knowing additional languages can provide a better understanding of many things. Additionally, watching movies from other countries and discussing them could be beneficial.”* (S5)] Moreover, the promotion of the emotional and psychosocial support for children who are immigrants should not be overlooked, as those children have usually increased psychological needs, which require further support both from the school and the family environment. [*“I think the perception of the teachers and how informed they are about such issues plays the most significant role. They, I believe, influence the way the lesson is conducted at school. Also, psychological support is crucial. I consider that the school should be able to provide psychological support to the children... it would be very good if there was a program that would help children manage their traumas because more or less, all the children who come from elsewhere have some traumas that affect them a lot.”* (S1)]

It is also remarkably interesting to take a look at the pupils’ answers about whether Greek school influences their personal growth and educational success and in what extent, in order to better understand how helpful or meaningless some educational strategies could be, depending on the way that they operate. For example, some of the students pointed out that the school is degraded due to the students’ excessive pressure on attending private courses for succeeding to the final exams in high school. Another student emphasized on the higher quality of Greek education compared to that in Albania, but he also reported that the institution of school should be democratized, so all the students to have equal opportunities on participating, which is another very important value of critical pedagogy, related to the general promotion of social justice and equity within the school culture. [*Personally, it motivated me to try harder and prove that I am just as good as the others. Also, I consider that the Greek school provided me with a very good level of education. For example, if I had stayed in Albania, I don't think I would have even finished high school.* (S1)] Furthermore, some students pointed out the lack of motivation for participating and

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engaging within the school curriculum, while others also mentioned the indifferent attitude both of the teachers and the students, especially within the last grades of high school, which can be considered as a consequence of the sterile and anachronistic way of transmitting knowledge to the learners, instead of making them active agents within the school procedure. *[It disappointed me that despite being half-Greek, no one really paid attention. There were very few who showed interest throughout the years. So, I also stopped caring about school after a certain point. (S2)], ["Generally, school doesn't make you want to engage with reading and learning. It doesn't make you enjoy reading and knowledge. Personally, it makes me not want to participate." (S3)]*

, *[I believe that if there was more information on certain topics, beyond the curriculum, and if teachers gave us the opportunity to think, perhaps I would have developed critical thinking skills earlier. Because our teachers always presented the right information." (S4)].* Overall, it is especially important to take all these aspects into consideration for understanding the great impact that education have on peoples live and progress and for structuring a multidimensional and inclusive education, which responds to the increased needs of culturally diverse people, as well as to how those needs could and should be addressed. Below there is a table where all the participants’ answers regarding the main four units of the interview are presented and categorized in order to be more explicit and apparent.

TABLE 1: STUDENTS’ ANSWERS REGARDING FOUR MAIN UNITS OF FORMAL SHCOOLING (DIDACTING METHODS & TEACHER TRAINING, THE SCHOOL AS AN INSTITUTION, THE SCHOOL’S TEXTBOOKS, THE SCHOOL’S ANALYTICAL CURRICULUM)

	Students’ answers
Teaching methods and teachers’ training on intercultural matters	<i>"Even in primary school, I remember that our teachers had no training. (S1)/ In most cases, I think everyone is limited to the simple delivery of the lesson because they are under time pressure to cover the curriculum." (S1)</i>

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	<p><i>"No, I don't believe anyone has such training...so I believe they had no education on cultural matters..." (S2) / There were cases where, let's say, teachers would have us watch a movie to understand a topic or wouldn't just lecture. I mean, they would ask questions... the lesson was more interactive. We might watch a documentary and then discuss what we understood, etc." (S2)]</i></p> <p><i>"No one has ever mentioned anything about intercultural education, nor have we ever discussed such a topic."(S5)</i></p> <p><i>"I believe that the teacher's goal is simply to finish the material, regardless of whether the student understands or not." (S3)/ "No one ever asked us about customs or traditions of our country" (S3)</i></p> <p><i>"I feel that some teachers are in a rush to cover the material and ensure that we don't fall behind in the curriculum. That's why very rarely, if ever, do they seek to do something different that would bring us closer to the lesson." (S4)</i></p>
<p>The school as an institution (means that the school uses to respond to the learners' divergent needs)</p>	<p><i>«There is remedial teaching for both Greeks and especially for children from elsewhere. However, because teachers were forced to do it, they don't invest much effort.... It was difficult for someone to stay for an extra 2 hours. It was too burdensome. » (S1)/ "I believe more that school tries forcefully to assimilate you. To make you like it. It gives more importance to making you feel more 'Greek' rather than integrating you. It feels like it's trying to change your culture. »(S1)</i></p> <p><i>"...we had student exchange programs that I believe helped us see another culture up close. Of course, even this was mainly for cultures of Western Europe." (S2)</i></p>

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	<p><i>“He doesn't pay any attention to a child who doesn't belong to the majority. I don't think he does anything to integrate a child from elsewhere. However, maybe it's also because there are few kids in our school who are from elsewhere.” (S3)</i></p>
<p>School Textbooks</p>	<p><i>“I believe that especially when it comes to the homeland and the nation, there is no other source. I can't think of any book that talks about another people or culture. Not even a little story. We only study Greek history and the Asia Minor Catastrophe.” (S1)</i></p>
	<p><i>They present everything a bit one-sided, and it's then up to the teacher whether we should explore further or question a source, for example.” (S3)</i></p>
	<p><i>“History, for example, is one-sided. They teach you things in a certain way, and that's it. The texts, let's say, are mainly from Greeks, all oriented toward the Greek narrative.” (S3)/ “They don't even give you the opportunity to question anything in school... all these things are considered as given, just the way teachers present them.” (S3)</i></p>
<p>School Curriculum</p>	<p><i>I don't think a child who doesn't know any Greek at all can easily participate in such a school program... because the school doesn't have programs for children who need help, it's a bit unfortunate all this.” (S4)</i></p>
	<p><i>Generally, school doesn't make you want to engage with reading and learning. It doesn't make you enjoy reading and knowledge. Personally, it makes me not want to participate.” (S3)</i></p>
	<p><i>“I believe that if there was more information on certain topics, beyond the curriculum, and if teachers gave us the opportunity to think, perhaps I would have developed critical thinking skills earlier. Because our teachers always presented the right information.” (S4)</i></p>

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In summary, in order to proceed to a further categorization of the students' answers and analyzing the collected data, there have been structured a table below where the participants' answers are grouped together according to some basic principles of the critical pedagogy. Specifically, those categories are as follows the teachers' training on intercultural matters, the open communication and collaboration between the class's members, the actual promotion of pupils' autonomy and involvement, the utilization of alternative didactic methods and divergent resources and the promotion of inclusivity and diversity within the school community. After categorizing the data according to those sections, some further conclusions were made. Taking into consideration the first category of the table, it is clear that the teachers' training regarding intercultural matters are quite inadequate, despite the increased learning needs of the culturally diverse pupils. It seems that there is no systematic effort from the state nor the school itself to support language learning or remedial teaching for bilingual or non-native children and the most efforts are made individually, according each educator and mainly in primary and not in secondary education, where most pupils either attend private courses or drop off school, due to the strictly orientation of the mainstream schooling to standardized tests and the national exams. In fact, this is also where the issue of socioeconomic disparities arises, as many children, may have not the possibility to attend private courses to pass the exams, resulting their exclusion from higher education and the perpetuation of systemic inequalities, within the school system (Giroux, 2001).

Furthermore, according to pupils' answers there is not active involvement among educators and students for structuring an interactive and collaborative educational environment. Both sides seem quite indifferent within the classroom, as there are few opportunities for active participation and interaction between the class's members. Students reports that there is a strong focus on predetermined educational objectives, which lead both teachers and students to overlook the fact that learning occurs as a result of interactions with each other. Especially, in high school the teachers do not use any alternative method or resource in order to actively engage students within the procedure, as there are not adequate intercultural books or materials, which an educator could use in mainstream schooling and in such cases. Moreover, regarding

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the promotion of inclusivity and diversity within the school settings, there is no provision from the school itself for actively embracing diversity. Instead, school seems to not value the prior cultural and linguistic capital of its population, as it is mostly oriented to an ethnocentric and monolingual model (Palaiologou and Faas, 2012), (Gkaintartzi, Kiliari & Tsokalidou, 2015, 2016). There are not systematic efforts for rising cultural awareness within the school community, nor complementary activities, projects, or support classes for children, who do not have good language competence in the Greek language.

TABLE 2: CODES AND THE RELEVANT EXCPERTS

Teachers’ training on intercultural issues	Communication and collaboration between the class’s members	Promotion of pupils’ autonomy and involvement
"If I remember, even in primary school, the educators we had didn't have any training. Now, in high school, perhaps they were a bit more relevant and informed about such topics. In high school, maybe the literature teachers were more trained, but still, with some reservation. (S1)	I was disappointed that, despite being half-Greek, no one really cared. There were very few who showed interest all those years. So, at some point, I also lost interest in school. (S2)	I think they don't try as hard as they used to in the lower grades because we rely a lot on private tutoring, and we believe that we'll be better explained there anyway. (S4)
“I don't believe anyone has such training. Specifically, most, let me tell you about literature teachers, had no idea about Asian countries in general. So, I believe they had no education on cultural issues. Only a history teacher knew some things about my country because I spent some years in Panormou, and he had come into contact with Filipinos. (S2)	In general, school doesn't make you want to engage in reading and knowledge. It doesn't make you enjoy reading and gaining knowledge. Personally, it makes me not want to participate. (S3)	It may help in smaller classes, but now, in high school, most of us are focused on private tutoring and the national exams, so we don't pay much attention to school lessons. (S5)"

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<p>“Most of the teachers we have in school are quite old, and there isn't much diversity in the curriculum... Anyway, nothing has ever been mentioned about intercultural education, nor have we ever talked about such a topic. (S5)”</p>	<p>“... I don't know if the school, in general, has a way to help students who don't know the language, or if they have to do it on their own. (S5)”</p>	
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<p>Utilization of alternative methods and resources</p>	<p>Promotion of inclusivity and diversity within the school</p>
<p>Many times, some teachers choose to divide us into groups, separating those who struggle. They would always include a 'strong' student who got along well with most kids in a group, and that student would try to help the others. It was also easier for the teacher to manage us this way. In most cases, I think they limit themselves to the simple delivery of the lesson because of time pressure to cover the curriculum. (S1)</p>	<p>"Many teachers, for example, used to ask children from different countries about how they celebrate various festivals in their home countries, what differences there are. There was a kind of sensitivity to these issues from several teachers who tried to make us feel more... let's say, at home. However, the personal sensitivities of each teacher play a significant role in how they approach the topic and each child. (S1)</p>
<p>Those who were truly interested in helping someone struggling in the subject would treat the lesson as 'private tutoring.' They would invite the student to the teacher's desk and explain things more thoroughly, trying to assist them in different ways. It depended on the teacher's interest in the subject. There were cases where teachers would show us a movie to help us understand a topic, or they wouldn't just monologue. It made the lesson more interactive. (S2)</p>	<p>Some teachers did this... some didn't at all. We had some kids from Poland, for example, but no one cared to learn what and how they celebrate. There were also quite a few teachers who touched on certain topics and tried to explain how there are many different people in the world and how someone might end up in a country for economic reasons or for other reasons. (S2)</p>
<p>I believe that teachers aim to simply finish the material, regardless of whether the student understands. So many chapters this week, so many the next. It depends on the student if they'll understand, if they attend private tutoring, if they go to additional lessons, etc. (S3)</p>	<p>No, no one ever asked me anything about my country. Apart from where I'm from, no one ever asked about our differences, about how we were doing there. Now that I think about it, maybe they did it so as not to separate us, or maybe they just</p>

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<p>I feel that some teachers rush too much to deliver the lesson and make sure we keep up with the material. That's why very rarely, if ever, they seek to do something different that could bring us closer to the lesson. (S4)"</p>	<p>didn't care at all. (S3)</p> <p>I have never noticed any special handling for people from other countries in the lesson. Personally, no one has ever asked me, for example, about the culture in Albania or the differences we had in everyday life with my family there. (S4)</p> <p>That is, there are relatively few of us who speak another language, but in my class, no issue has ever been raised. In history, for example, we might say something about another culture, or the teacher might explain something to us, but... we won't go into great detail. (S5)"</p>
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3.5 Thematic Analysis

During the last stage of the thematic analysis, an attempt will be made to merge the five categories above into some main thematic units, which compose critical pedagogy and intercultural education, in order to conclude if any of those practices are implemented within the specific educational settings of the research. To begin with, critical and intercultural pedagogy in schools involves several foundational principles. First of all, main thematic units are inclusivity and diversity, which secure an educational environment which incorporates varied cultural content, perspectives, and histories within the school curriculum (Banks, 2015). The second thematic unit is critical thinking and reflection, which according to Freire (1970) encourages students to evolve critical thinking skills, in order to question societal norms and stereotypes. Another important pillar for critical pedagogy and intercultural education is equity and social justice, that empower students to become conscious

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citizens and address systemic inequalities (Giroux, 2001), as well as collaborative learning that encourage active collaboration between educators and students, but also students from diverse cultural backgrounds themselves, in order to foster dialogues and mutual respect and understanding, within the school context, as Nieto (2010) referred. Last but not least, another significant aspect of critical pedagogy is teacher’s self-reflection (Gay, 2018), because as basic communicator of knowledge, it is crucial to continuously identify and address his/her own biases and assumptions, in order to create a truly inclusive and culturally respond learning environment.

Regarding the unit of inclusivity and diversity, as already mentioned, high schools in Arta, do not seem to incorporate different activities or courses within the school curriculum or the school textbooks. According to the students’ answers, especially within the last grades of high school, the school’s analytical curriculum is oriented to standardized tests and assessment resulting the class to be indifferent for the mainstream schooling. [*“I believe that it is done quite superficially because the state doesn't want to appear as 'racist.' It seems like an effort made just for the sake of it, I think.” (S1)*], [*“I don't believe it. It doesn't deal with such issues at all. Only with how to cover the material and exams in the end. It doesn't help at all, if anything.” (S3)*]

Regarding the encouragement of critical thinking and reflection during the mainstream schooling, pupils highlighted the fact that the school textbooks and the school curriculum have an ethnocentric and monolingual orientation. Moreover, due to the inadequate teachers’ training regarding intercultural matters, as well as the small number of bilingual or non-native students in the city of Arta, the teaching practices and didactic methods are limited to content coverage and reproduction of mainstream school patterns. Of course, private courses and the excessive pressure to pupils to pass the national exams at the end of the high school year play an essential role on undermining public education and eventually alleviating socioeconomic disparities. Many children who have not the possibility to pay about private courses, are excluded from higher education, because Greek schools are not capable to compete them. From here, arises the third presupposition for implementing critical and intercultural pedagogy, which is equity and social justice. From excluding vulnerable social groups, such as immigrants or children from lower socioeconomic layers, the state perpetuates discrimination and deprive those people from their basic

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rights. [*"They didn't pay much attention to those who didn't understand things immediately. They were somewhat limited in giving a few examples, and that's it. At that time, I remember feeling quite bad because it seemed like they didn't expect much from me due to my background."* (S4)], [*"Usually, if a child is struggling, they go to private lessons."* (S5)].

To continue, another significant aspect of critical pedagogy is collaborative learning. As it is obvious from the students' answers, educators mostly use a conventional teaching, where the knowledge is simply presented or imposed to learners and not equally produced or structured from both sides (Grollios et al. 2015). As Freire (2000) also argued, the essence of education as a practice of freedom is a simulation of a dialogical action and its characteristics, such as unity, cooperation, and cultural synthesis. Unfortunately, the research's findings indicate that there is not an actual cooperation among the school's members either on co-structing or on co-organizing the produce of knowledge. On the contrary, the existing educational and material resources are restrictive, and the utilization of alternative or interactive didactic methods is upon the discretion and initiative of each educator, without any systematic effort from the school itself.

Overall, teachers' self-reflection is also a necessary part for structuring an inclusive educational environment, but still there is no provision for such a thing. Learners highlighted the crucial role of the educator as the main communicator of knowledge, who should encourage them to be agents of their own meaning, to express themselves in different and divergent ways, regarding their cultural capitals, and to support them to cooperate and to reflect with each other, by building common interests and creating reciprocal cultural exchanges. [*"I think the perception of teachers and how informed they are about such issues plays a significant role. They, I believe, greatly influence the way the lesson is conducted in school."* (S1)], [*"I believe it would be good for educators to be more informed about the cultures of other people. Not only the theoretical aspects but everyone in general."* (S2)]. [*"It would help a lot if there were discussions, if teachers showed interest in learning about other cultures, understanding if all students comprehend the way the lesson is taught, if we need different methods of explanation, and so on."*(S4)], [*"In general, if we could talk about what really worries and concerns us, about what is happening around us. It would be easier if our teachers also provided that platform, and if we didn't only*

*focus on lessons and exams.” (S5)]. In the end another interesting aspect that should not be overlooked, as it highlights the increased educational needs of migrant children, is the reference of a learner about the influential role of parents both for a learner’s personal growth but also school progress, which is a topic that arises a further discussion regarding the more systematic parental involvement within the school procedure in order both educators and parents to actively and effectively support the students’ psychosocial and educational needs. [“*But I think it’s also a matter of parents. That they put a lot of pressure on you to succeed because you’re a child of immigrants.*” (S1)].*

4. Discussion

It would be beneficial to use some evidence from similar studies in order to examine in what extent this survey’s findings agree or disagree with them, as they may potentially stimulate further discussion and reflection regarding teacher training, teaching strategies, school curriculum and school’s textbooks. Taking into consideration Kefalaki’s (2023) study, which investigates the teachers’ attitudes towards second generation migrant students, a comparison will be made between the findings regarding the educators’ intercultural training and their general attitudes on these matters. As Kefalaki (2023) reported to her study, regarding the teachers’ attitudes towards intercultural education and diversity, educators seem to be oriented mostly on teaching to their students the Greek language and overlook important aspects of their educational needs, which can be interpreted as an effort to “Hellenize” students to become successful as pupils and also Greek citizens. However, the devaluation of the heritage languages and personal characteristics of the culturally diverse learners does not comply with the principles and values of a pluralistic multilingual and multicultural strategy of teaching and learning. Moreover, through this survey, it becomes obvious that some teachers have a distorted image for the culturally diverse learners’ needs, as they believe that their aspirations are to just fit in the norm by abolishing their cultural characteristics. As Kefalaki (2023) also

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observed, some teachers may be supportive with the learning difficulties of the migrant students, but in many cases, they seem to not be aware of the great difference between a student’s social language and academic language achievement, which is a really important precondition for actually helping migrant children to integrate within the educational but also the linguistic system. This might be happen due to the teachers’ inadequate training to estimate and elaborate intercultural and diversity matters more profoundly, as well as because there is not enough and appropriate material to support multicultural teaching environments within the Greek public schooling.

Considering the teachers’ ideas and attitudes about migrant children it seems that some teachers have already an oversimplified image about their students’ cultural identities and characteristics, resulting sometimes to underestimate signs or patterns that probably can change the particular picture about their pupil’s possibilities but also needs. Regarding the use of the students’ L1 inside the classroom, it is pointed out that in any case students use their L1s during the teaching process and that the main effort is given only to improve their competencies in the Greek language. However, even if the students’ heritage language is particularly important for their self-esteem and sense of identity, the teachers still strictly emphasize on how important and useful the Greek language for the personal and educational growth of migrant learners is, resulting to underestimate some crucial aspects regarding their well-being and psychosocial stability. Those insights come in line with the findings of the current study and reinforce the perception that many teachers have limited knowledge for incorporating intercultural methods within the teaching process. Furthermore, it also highlights that the Greek formal schooling does not make systematic efforts for integrating culturally diverse students, nor value their cultural and linguistic capitals, resulting the lesson planning to depends to the discretion of each educator. As Palaiologou, and Faas, (2012) also referred the adults’/ teachers’ perspectives are in the center of Greek formal education, while the children/students who deviate from the “ideal model” are ignored, most of the times. Moreover, Greek formal schooling does not use any extracurricular resources or culturally respond means or strategies to assimilate the migrant and refugee population within the educational procedure, which is well in line with the dominant discourses on national identity in Greece and the dominant tradition of only accommodating diversity, at the

individual but not at the collective level” (Triantafyllidou, 2011, as cited in Palaiologou & Faas, 2012, p.575). Last but not least regarding the school curriculum and the school’s textbooks, it is evident from the interviewee’s responses, as well as from the literature review that the existing educational materials, as well as the analytical curriculum of Greek formal schooling have a strictly ethnocentric and monolingual orientation (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012), findings that validate the participants’ perspectives regarding Greek secondary education, in general.

Conclusion

Overall, it is important to mention that there are educators and initiatives advocating for and implementing aspects of critical pedagogy and intercultural education within Greek schools. Certain schools as well as some educators may integrate elements of critical thinking, dialogue, and social justice into their teaching methods, albeit in a smaller scale. Of course, there is an ongoing contribution and also discussing regarding those significant issues. Although, the implementation of critical and intercultural pedagogy in Arta, seems to be quite limited, due to different and interrelated factors, such as the educational policies, the curriculum constraints, the inadequate teachers training and the school culture itself, which is considered as quite “close” in adopting innovative teaching methods. Particularly, regarding the interviewees’ answers it become clear that any critical or intercultural practice there is not implemented within those certain educational settings. To be more concise, regarding the didactic methods which teachers incorporate within the classroom, as well as their intercultural training, participants mentioned that teachers mostly adopt traditional teaching methods and do not use alternative means or strategies for actively engaging the learners. Regarding the institution of school, learners do not believe that school values their cultural and linguistic capitals, nor that there have been systematic efforts for an actual cooperation and involvement of the school’s members within the educational procedure. Considering the school’s analytical curriculum, students pointed out that the mainstream school program is mostly

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monotonous, ethnocentric, and monolingual, and does not offer opportunities for interaction among the students or more personalized directions or lessons according to the increased educational needs of the children. Last but not least, school’s textbooks are in the same line, as they offer limited information about other cultures, and they mostly oriented on basic knowledge regarding the content coverage for the national exams at the end of the year. More precisely regarding the research’s questions the interviewees mentioned that the existing didactic methods are quite restrictive and anachronistic and do not give them enough opportunities for actual collaboration and engagement within the school procedure. Therefore considering the second research’s question about in what extent the practical implementation of critical pedagogy within secondary education is feasible the answer is negative, as all of the students support that Greek education is mostly oriented on content coverage and degree hunting by leaving little room to more interactive and emancipatory practices, as critical pedagogy insists. Nevertheless, as educational systems evolve and adapt, there's potential for the further integration of critical pedagogy principles into Greek school life, but it might require systemic changes, support from educational authorities, and a shift in pedagogical paradigms. Therefore, the significance of the particular study lies in understanding and collecting more personalized data, about the implementation of critical and intercultural pedagogies on secondary education, as well as to gain valuable insights regarding the educational conditions in more decentralized places, such as Arta, in order to evaluate the needs of culturally diverse students and eventually to further modernize and democratize the Greek educational system. In a direction of the democratization of education, it is crucial to cultivate a different perception about divergent languages and cultures, not only for didactic benefits but also as a social transformation, beneficial both for children’s and adults’ personal and social lives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 168; Oikonomakou & Sofos, 2019), as cited in Maligkoudi et al., (2023).

Considering the implications within research areas, it would be beneficial to investigate the effectiveness of inclusive education practices and their impact on student outcomes, as well as further examining the specific needs and challenges faced by diverse student populations, including refugees and migrants within the Greek school settings. It would also be profoundly important for identifying effective

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strategies in order to create learning environments where all students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds or abilities, can thrive. Regarding the curriculum development, it would be meaningful to develop new material and resources for creating opportunities for integrating multicultural and multilingual perspectives within the curriculum. For example, by reclaiming useful sciences, such as poetry, literature and art or music, it could enhance the students’ engagement and learning outcomes, while simultaneously could offer them a variety of diverse and “multicolor” stimuli. Moreover, including multilingual perspectives within the school context can contribute to global awareness, as the students gain insights into different languages, cultures, and traditions, and they are well prepared to engage with a multicultural world.

Furthermore, as far as the teaching methods are concerned, it would be meaningful to explore the role of technology in supporting inclusive teaching practices, as it can offer endless possibilities on evolving multiliteracies pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Technology provides tools and resources that support differentiated instruction, allowing teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Digital platforms can be adapted for various skill levels and learning styles. Teachers can benefit from ongoing professional development as well, by integrating technology for inclusive practices. Such measures can ensure that teachers are well-equipped to leverage digital tools effectively and respond to the increased needs of their students, nowadays. Overall, regarding teacher’s education, it is essential to promote pre-service and in-service educational programs to address the continuously increasing educational needs in diverse classrooms, as well as how to effectively promote inclusive, culturally responsive, and critically engaging learning environments. Indicative examples are the programs, which can offer specialized training in areas such as special education, English language learning, and other fields to better equip teachers for the specific needs of diverse learners.

Limitations

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It is also important to understand and examine the limitations that emerge, in order to overcome the obstacles and fostering an inclusive and intercultural school environment. Indicatively, some of the main limitations on adopting critical and intercultural approaches within the main schooling can be the policy challenges, which may not fully support the critical and intercultural pedagogies’ integration within the Greek school culture. As an important limitation could also be considered, the insufficient financial resources that challenge the effectiveness of innovative educational programs, as well as the teacher training and professional development, which is mostly oriented on traditional teaching strategies, by leaving little room on adopting emancipatory and innovative ones. Moreover, significant role plays the rigid school curriculum because it lacks flexibility resulting to leave to second place the incorporation of diverse perspectives, cultures, and critical literacy skills within the school analytical program.

Other factors that may challenge the proper integration of critical and intercultural pedagogies within the school settings, are the deep-rooted societal attitudes and prejudices which can cause resistance to systemic changes and impede progress. Insufficient cultural sensitivity can preserve unintentional biases and misinterpretations among educators and education stakeholders, as well, resulting the perpetuation of discrimination and social disparities within the Greek school system. Of course, significant factors that undermine the quality level of intercultural pedagogy are language barriers that hinder effective communication and integration of diverse linguistic perspectives into the educational process. Further problems for an emancipatory education can cause the assessment practices that are based on rote memorization, resulting the exclusion of critical strategies, intercultural competencies, or tailored support services. Equally important, is the limited research resources within the Greek context regarding the implementation of critical pedagogy within the existing school settings, which may impede the evidence-based practices available for policymakers.

Suggestions for further empirical study

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Overall, taking the above into consideration, it would be fruitful to make some suggestions for further empirical work, in order to expand the awareness for a future implementation of critical and intercultural strategies, within the educational landscape. Some interesting research fields regarding those issues, are for example the investigation of the language acquisition processes of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It would be interesting and useful to examine which are the effective language teaching methods and which interventions could facilitate pupils' linguistic assimilation within the Greek instructional system, without abolishing the students' heritage languages. Valuable insights could offer the exploration of the role of parental involvement within the educational integration of refugee and migrant children. For example, it would be truly beneficial to enhance the collaboration and effective communication between the school administrators, educators, and the parents from culturally diverse environments in order to further support children's psychological and emotional needs.

Another interesting research field is to investigate the factors that contribute to a smooth social inclusion and integration of refugee and migrant children within the school community. For example, it would be helpful to investigate what challenges and opportunities fostering social cohesion and sense of belonging towards vulnerable social groups. Finally, a truly important empirical work, it would be a further examination of the well-being of teachers, who work in culturally diverse settings, in order to better understand and estimate their needs and perspectives. Indicatively, it would be useful to examine what challenges they may face and how supportive is the system regarding their professional development and job satisfaction. By providing robust support to the educators, there will be structured an environment, where teachers would feel valued, empowered, and motivated to deliver high-quality education that corresponds to the diverse needs of a multicultural population. Hopefully, these suggestions could offer a clearer view regarding the Greek educational context, while simultaneously could create more opportunities for structuring, promoting innovative educational practices, and informing evidence-based policy decisions. By combining all the above factors and evidence, Greece can lay the foundation for a pluralistic, democratized, and future-ready educational system that serves the diverse needs of its students and contributes to the country's social and economic development.

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Appendix A: Rules for Recording & Transcribing Interviews

1. The researcher is defined as 'E.'
2. The interviewees are denoted as 'S' with an index indicating the sequential number of the interview (S1, S2, etc.).
3. Comments are recorded within parentheses within the flow of the text, e.g., (laughter).
4. Non-verbal expressions such as "ααα" and "εεε" are retained within the flow of the text.
5. Pauses are noted with ellipses.
6. Only periods and question marks were used for punctuation where it was evident and necessary.
7. Intonational changes in voice tone were not transcribed, as they did not provide usable information within the scope of this research.

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8. The researcher's interpretive comments are recorded within square brackets.

Appendix B: Interviews Protocol

1st thematic unit: Teacher Behavior/Instruction

Do you believe that the teacher is trained in intercultural education issues? For example, can they identify and adapt the lesson according to the different needs of students in the classroom?

How does the teacher perceive cultural differences in the classroom, and how does he/she promote mutual respect and understanding among students from different cultural backgrounds?

When there is a need, for example, if a student struggles to understand the lesson, does the teacher find alternative ways to help? What are those?

Sub-questions:

Does the teacher limit instruction delivery, or does he/she find alternative ways/sources to teach the lesson?

Does the teacher support the expression of different opinions? Is there room for expressing a different opinion or culture?

Does the teacher provide opportunities for individuals from different countries to freely express different experiences, talk about their culture, language, or traditions?

Have you ever felt marginalized in the lesson because of some different characteristic of yours?

2nd thematic unit: Institutions

Is there any concern/help at school for children who do not know the language well or have difficulty adapting to the "dominant" model of the Greek school?

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Do you feel that the school, as an institution, respects and supports different languages, cultures, opinions, and cultures?

Are various activities or events organized by the school that promote and support multiculturalism? If yes, do you think they allow the participation of all students, or do you notice any discrimination?

Sub-questions:

Have you observed incidents of cultural exchanges and sharing of customs or traditions among students from different cultural backgrounds? Are students influenced by elements and behaviors of students from different cultural backgrounds?

3rd thematic unit: School Textbooks

Do you believe that school textbooks adequately express different perceptions and views? For example, is there diversity in the sources used to form a more comprehensive view of events?

Do you think school textbooks present one-sided and absolute views of a specific history? Or do they provide stimulus for further research and reflection?

Do school textbooks incorporate features of different cultures/languages?

4th thematic unit: Curriculum

Do you believe that through learning a language, it is easier for someone to understand and appreciate a different culture/another civilization?

In what ways do you think the school curriculum supports bilingual students?

What additional sources or lessons do you think would be useful in the school curriculum to better integrate bilingual students into the Greek education system?

Sub-questions:

“The significance of critical pedagogy within intercultural education”

Do you think the school curriculum adequately supports the promotion of cultural diversity and appreciation for different cultures/languages?

How has the overall school curriculum influenced your learning experience and development?

From your experience, what improvements would you suggest enhancing the effectiveness and inclusion of the school curriculum for bilingual students?

“The significance of critical pedagogy within intercultural education”