

Teachers' experiences of teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees on a Greek Island.

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ABSTRACT

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Recent global reports by UNHCR indicate that 65.6 million people around the world have been forced out of their homes and among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees; half of them are children. Greek islands serve as hotspots following the EU-Turkey deal of 2016, which meant that refugees entering EU through Greek islands could not move to the mainland without assessment of their situation. This presents several challenges to the education system of the country, especially the schools on the islands.

This study sought to explore the experiences of teachers teaching in multicultural classrooms with refugees on a Greek Island. A qualitative research method was employed wherein five teachers (two male and three female) were interviewed from a school on one of the islands for the realisation of the purpose of the study. The data was analysed through thematic analysis and the findings have been presented in a descriptive manner.

Teachers shared their experiences by presenting the challenges they face and the support they need in order to implement best practices in refugee education. Language needs, mental health support for students and teacher training needs for school staff were some of the identified requisites. Existing theories and policies on refugee education have been explored and compared to the experiences of the participants in this study.

Key words: refugee education, multicultural education, teacher training, systems approach.

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1 INTRODUCTION

According to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, a refugee is defined as a person who has fled his or her country of nationality and who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of a fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2010). 65.6 million people around the world have been forced out of their homes and among them are 22.5 million refugees; half of them are children (UNHCR, 2017). Children who come from refugee families have particular psychological, social and academic needs, and their successful development depends on the aid they receive from the host community (Tadesse, 2014). The environment of refugee children such as family, school, religious institution, neighborhood and peers, have a crucial role to play in the development and learning of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Refugee experiences such as separation from their homeland, several family losses contribute to social, psychological and emotional needs. In addition to these, transitions into the new culture maybe traumatic as they face language barrier and discrimination that affect their social and psychological development. Education is imperative in the integration of refugee communities, especially children into the host country. (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005.)

Language barrier, unwillingness of parents to disclose their history to teachers, identity issues, culture shock, discrimination and socio-economic conditions are some of the challenges in refugee education. Furthermore, refugee students have particular needs that result from possible trauma caused due to migration. The responsibility to identify these needs and provide necessary support in school lie with the teachers. (Strekalova & Hoot, 2008.)

A study by Nagasa (2014) revealed the importance of learning about refugee students' previous life and socio-economic background in order to support them better in schools. It is necessary for different actors in the field of

refugee rehabilitation such as academic institutions, NGOs and other social workers to collaborate in order to support their transition into the new community, argue Szente, Hoot and Taylor (2006). Schools, by incorporating essential elements such as language teaching strategies, gathering pre-migration information of students, understanding their cultural and religious backgrounds, and providing access to mental health services could aid the process of transition (Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006). This study furthers these findings by understanding teachers' experiences and support needs in teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees.

Greece faces pressing challenges in developing the education system due to the huge influx of refugees every year. Greek legislation promises schooling for all children from the age of 6 to 15 irrespective of citizenship (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs [MoE], 2017.) Children, as pointed out by Gropas and Triandafyllidou (2011) have the right to attend public schools regardless of their parents' residence status. This influx of refugees have put pressure on the system to build educational policies that ensure integration of refugee students into the country. Policies and resources need to be directed towards inclusive education in order to support refugee children academically, psychologically and emotionally. (OECD, 2009.)

Studies have identified challenges in refugee education and suggest best practices to ensure successful integration of the children into the host community (Dogutas, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Pastoor, 2017; Taylor & Sindhu, 2012). This study, by interviewing teachers in a school with refugees on a Greek Island, aims to understand teacher's experiences in multicultural classrooms with refugees.

Chapter 2 familiarizes the readers with the education of refugee children. It looks at international laws on the right to education of all children and of refugee children with a focus on conventions by United Nations. This chapter also discusses the European Union laws on migrant education in EU. Finally, it delves into Greek legislation concerning education of refugees.

Chapter 3 discusses the theories related to child development and the role of culture in education. It explores previous research done on challenges and best practices in refugee education thus setting the context for this study. Chapter 4 defines the research aims and objectives and states the research questions for the study. Chapter 5 elaborates on the methodology used to conduct this study and the ethical considerations.

Chapter 6 shares the findings of the study which is followed by reflections of the findings in chapter 7. Chapter 8 closes the study with discussions on the findings by exploring existing theories and policies, and their implementation in the schools on the island. It also looks at how the quality of education can be improved using a systems approach and finally discusses refugee education in other EU countries. This chapter also explores the trustworthiness of the study with a section on the researcher's personal interest and clarifies the limitation of the study and scope for further research in this field.

2 EDUCATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

2.1 Right to Education

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights proclaims that everyone has the right to education (United Nations [UN], 1948, art. 26). Various treaties supporting disadvantaged groups such as refugees, migrants, women and people with disabilities have adopted this right. The United Nations furthers the right in the Convention on the Rights of the Child to state the importance of understanding the cultural values of children for their protection and development (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 1989). Article 28 of the convention commands state parties to acknowledge the Right of the Child to education by providing free primary education to all children. Additionally, it prompts state parties to develop secondary and higher education and take measures to decrease dropout rates. (OHCHR, 1989, art. 28.)

According to article 29 of the convention, a child's mother tongue, cultural identity and values of the country of origin must be taken into account while structuring educational practices. Moreover, education should direct to the "preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin." (United Nations, 1989, art. 29, p. 9.)

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 recognizes the importance of education in emergencies and the need to address the educational requirements of children in conflict and crisis. By promoting equal access to primary, secondary and tertiary education for all children especially those affected by conflict, the SDG4 advances the Rights of a Child. Education thus, is a fundamental human right as enshrined in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the

1951 Refugee Convention and is given extreme importance as a development goal by the UN.

In a report by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017), it was noted that globally 91% of all children attend primary school whereas only 61% of refugees do so. In low-income countries, less than 50% of refugees attend primary school. School enrolment rates drop as refugee children get older with just 23% of adolescents enrolled in secondary school. In low-income countries, only 9% of refugees go to secondary school. Globally, 36% of students enrol into Universities whereas only 1% of refugees do so.

According to UNHCR (2010), refugees have the right to freedom of thought, movement, access to health care and education, and other social rights that are given to a legal resident. As per Turk and Garlick (2016), the core principle of shared responsibility enshrined in these convention has not been respected which led to the formation of Global Compact for Refugees. The Compact reinforces the importance of improving access to education and hold countries responsible in developing policies to support inclusion of refugees in the national education system.

The number of children migrating to the European Union has increased considerably in recent years. According to a report by the European Commission, in 2015 and 2016, around 30% of asylum applicants in the European Union were children. There are individual children that live through a range of traumatic experiences associated to migration. Migrant children are vulnerable owing to their age, distance from home, and sometimes separation from parents, and therefore require special protection. (European Commission, 2017.)

Human rights, solidarity and dignity are values upheld by the European Union which ensures protection of all children in migration regardless of status and at all stages of migration. The European Union Law states that members of the European Union need to provide free education which includes the teaching of the national language, and promote the teaching of the mother tongue and the culture of the country of origin of the children. (European Commission, 2017.)

The Council of the European Commission (2017) stresses on building a programme that supports multicultural education and integration of migrants in society because it is believed that early and effective access to inclusive, formal education could enhance language skills, help integration of children and lead to social cohesion.

Education guarantees that children with a migrant background can fulfil their potential to become well integrated members of the host community, and in building a society which is inclusive and compliments diversity. According to the Council of the European Commission (2009), the presence of racial and ethnic discrimination in many European countries is the cause of refugee and migrant children faring less well in academics. Moreover, teachers are seen to favour children from some cultures over others leading to poor outcomes of those children. The European Commission (2017) proposes that member states aim at providing training that prepares teachers to work with children of diverse backgrounds, and minimise their biases towards certain ethnic groups as it is a key factor for integration and inclusion.

2.2 Issues concerning refugee education

“There are 6.4 million refugees of school age amongst the 17.2 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate. In 2016, only 2.9 million were enrolled in primary or secondary education. More than half of them - 3.5 million - did not go to school.” (UNHCR, 2017, p. 8.) Even though there has been progress in enrolling refugees into schools in the host communities, the challenges faced by education systems in these nations remain unresolved. Refugee children are five times more inclined to be out of school than their non-refugee peers owing to the challenges faced by the national education system in the integration of refugees, and the issues surrounding migration. (UNHCR, 2017.)

Nusche (2009) point out existing gaps in educational outcomes of migrant students and native students. She concludes that poor social policies around housing and healthcare paired with a lack of access to education and work

opportunities put migrant and refugee children at a disadvantage. Educational structures such as selection mechanisms, tracking and resources inequalities add to this gap. A report by UNHCR (2017) reveals that on average, refugee children are likely to be out of school for at least three to four years, hindering the learning process, thereby increasing the dropout rates. Sometimes the host countries do not have the capacity or will to cater to a large number of refugees. Additionally, legal status, gender, ethnicity, age and class of the people seeking refuge have an influence on the support they receive (UNHCR, 2016.)

Right to education is denied to many refugee children around the world, argues Wessells (1998), which impacts children and their families negatively. Newly arrived children find it difficult to identify with the new community and its culture. Consequently, educational institutes such as schools could provide a safe place of belonging (Cassity & Gow, 2005). "The most therapeutic event for a refugee child can be to become part of the local school community", as stated by Burnett and Peel (2001, p. 547). By denying them the right to go to school, host countries deny them mental well-being and an opportunity to grow, develop and integrate into the host community.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (2004; 2010) set minimum standards on education in emergencies and education of refugees that are grounded in rights-based agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Education for All targets, Sustainable Development Goals, and Convention on Refugees. The purpose of the minimum standards is to ensure that quality education is provided within national education systems. It touches upon various aspects such as community participation, learning environment, education policies and more. Despite all the above mentioned mandates and conventions, refugees are still denied the right to education. A possible reason for this could be the host countries' inability to apply the universal standards on human rights due to differences in country context (INEE, 2004).

2.3 Education of refugee children in Greece

Under European and Greek law every child in Greece has the right to education including those from refugee backgrounds irrespective of their legal status. According to UNHCR (2016), 817,175 people crossed the Greek-Turkish border in 2015–2016. The influx of refugees since 2015–2016 has presented many challenges to the existing policies and resources in Greece especially on the islands. The refugee population entering the country is not homogenous as the population is inclusive of Syrians, Afghans, Pakistanis and Iranians. (UNHCR, 2016.) This generates multiple challenges within the education system on the islands as well as the mainland.

A deal between the EU and Turkey was established in March 2016 to curtail the arrival of refugees to Greece. The deal traps refugees on the islands of Chios, Samos and Lesbos on the Aegean Sea in distressful conditions. (Betts & Collier, 2017.) According to Greek government data, nearly 5,300 children under the age of 18 were stuck on the islands as of July 5, 2018. During 2017–2018, 1,118 asylum-seeking children enrolled in public schools on these islands. However, the deal has left the education system on these islands in shambles (Human Rights Watch, 2018.)

In March 2016, the Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs (MoE) of Greece prepared a plan for successful induction of refugee children into the national education system in order to support their integration into the society. This included providing preparatory classes for newly arriving refugees in order to support development of the Greek language. Reception facilities for Refugee Education (RFRE) are provided to refugees which facilitates learning of the language along with other subjects and extra-curricular activities. These activities were planned to promote integration as per MoE (2016).

However, according to reports by the Council of MoE, refugee children successfully integrated only in schools which had less number of refugee students (MoE, 2016). This could be indicative of issues with implementation of these programmes caused due to factors such as lack of trained teachers,

resources and structures. OECD (2011) concludes that problems in Greece's education system is intensified because it is centrally governed. Inefficient school networks (thousands of small schools in mountains and islands) take a toll on the resources and present inconsistent challenges to the education system. Moreover, major defects were noticed in the education system by MoE when evaluating the education of refugees in the country.

First, since Greek Islands serve as hotspots following the EU-turkey deal of 2016, it meant that the structure of schools have to be different on the islands from the mainland in response to the changing needs of the refugees (MoE, 2017). Second, there are no kindergartens operating in the camps where refugees live which means there is a lack of provision for early childhood education and care. This is due to the inability to create safe spaces for children due to continuous mobility of refugees. Third, reception or preparatory classes that were mandated by the government failed because some teachers and principals discouraged refugees from enrolling by inventing hindrances. Furthermore, MoE failed to ensure logical distribution of children in schools putting more pressure on some schools. (MoE, 2017.)

According to a MoE (2017) report, refugee education coordinators were appointed to act as a bridge between the school and society. Their role included conveying the terms of operation of Greek schools to refugee parents, coordination of the NGOs, communication with teachers and finding solutions to improve issues related to education. However, because these coordinators were not given proper benefits, and they faced multiple challenges dealing with NGOs, there was no motivation to do the job. Communication with parents was particularly difficult due to the language barrier which hindered them from performing their duties (MoE, 2017.)

Administrative issues such as registrations, transfers, correspondence, and other protocol that need attention remain a matter of concern owing to their ambiguity. Children are enrolled into grades that do not reflect their real age due to lack of documents and assessment structures (MoE, 2017). There is a continuous change of teachers as substitute teachers are hired on a voluntary

basis to teach classrooms with refugees. Students fail to build relationship with teachers which impedes learning. Moreover, these teachers have no training or experience in dealing with such classrooms leading to a crippled education system (Sparks, 1989).

In Greece, especially on the islands, lack of training and support to teachers makes the problem worse and instils a feeling of insecurity and incapability among them owing to the fact that they are not familiar with teaching Greek as a second language or with intercultural education. The good practices proposed by MoE (2017) to the teachers include educational visits and outings for the children, participation of students in arts, sports, discussion in schools with parents, teachers and local authorities. In addition, meeting the psychological needs of parents and students are some of suggested practices by MoE. Even though there have been attempts to create reforms that reflect best practices in education, there is a gap between policies and their implementation in Greece.

3 CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

3.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework

As argued by Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child finds himself entangled in different ecosystems, the interactions with which helps him grow and develop. School, home, society and culture, religious institutes and interactions with the surrounding influence the development of a child. Microsystems are the immediate settings such as schools, day care centres and home. In the mesosystem, different microsystems such as school, family and peer group interact with each other. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework can apply to refugee children and the role their surroundings such as family, neighbourhood and school can play in their rehabilitation and integration in the host country.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) furthers his theory by introducing the largest collection of people that influences child development - the macrosystem. A macrosystem comprises of people and places that are most distant to the child but has a considerable influence on him. It is inclusive of the child's cultural values, beliefs and ideas, as well as the political and economic systems of the state he grows up in. The government and its policies that affect integration, reception and living conditions and access to health care and education in the host country could be the macrosystem for refugee children. Finally, a chronosystem explains the influence of change and consistency in the development of children. Changes in family structure such as loss of parents, war and moving into a new country, and an array of uncertain experiences belong to the chronosystem of refugee children that impact their development.

According to Sam and Oppedal (2003), Bronfenbrenner's (1979) developmental theory lack information about the role culture plays in child development. They believe that education systems need to integrate theories of development within the cultural context. As countries become multicultural, education systems around the world need to ensure bicultural development of children, which is development in one's own culture and the culture of the host community. Through the teaching of the majority culture, a child may acquire skills and competencies necessary for successful integration in the society. (Sam & Oppedal, 2003.)

Both Maslow (1943) and LeVine (1974) suggest a hierarchy of needs for human development. They argue that only after basic needs of food, clothing and shelter are met can self-fulfillment occur. These needs can be placed within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Since the basic needs directly affect children's well-being, they reside within the microsystem. Education of refugee children in the host community can be effective if the basic needs are met. Therefore, easy access to food, shelter, clothing and health care is necessary for learning and development to occur in educational institutes.

3.2 The mental health perspective

Frightening experiences during war, fleeing and arriving to a new country may have a detrimental impact on refugee children's mental well-being. These experiences are varied and may include witnessing destruction, losing friends and family, being transported in closed over-crowded vehicles, witnessing conflict in camps post arrival. Children are sometimes separated from their parents and they arrive alone in a different country which puts them at risk. Children accompanied by parents may also not receive adequate care and psychological support as parents also suffer from trauma. (Yule, 2002.)

Fazel and Stein (2002) conclude that refugee children are exposed to trauma at three different stages. First, trauma in their country of origin which compels them to flee. Second, trauma during their exodus to safety and finally, trauma after arriving in their country of refuge. (Yule, 2002.) As a result, the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of these children are completely disrupted during mobility. Disruption in their education caused due to these incidents could add to the stress. As pointed out by Ogbu, Brady and Kinlen (2014), a lack of financial resources in addition to difficult living conditions makes it harder for parents to support the social, emotional and psychological well-being of their children. In the host country, they face difficulties with the asylum process. Language barrier makes it harder for them to navigate their needs which adds to the agony and impacts their well-being.

Mortimore (1995) points out the need to design and implement school-based interventions such as providing safe spaces to learn, and catering to mental health needs in order to minimise the impact of trauma on the development of refugee children. Refugee parents fail to establish successful relationships with the teachers in the school due lack of trust, cultural differences, language barrier, parents' schedules, and parents' education (Rutter, 1994). The onus then lies with the teachers and school structures to support healthy development and growth of refugee children. Yule (2002) holds schools and other public health services accountable in ensuring that proper monitoring procedures such as

consultations, and other mental health services are present to support these children. Moreover, teachers need to be trained to recognise learning and mental health needs of refugee children.

3.3 Culture and education

The developmental niche as explained by Super and Harkness (1986) include three subsystems that affect the development of a child. One, the physical and social setting in which the child lives. Two, the customs of childcare and child rearing and third, the mental make-up of the caretakers. The role of these three subsystems is to negotiate the individual's development experience within a cultural context. Whiting (1980) says that culture has a strong influence on child development in providing the setting for daily life. He argues that the people who control or create the setting determine the kind of interaction children have. Thus, societal institutes such as schools have influence over the type of social interactions students experience and determines how well they can integrate into the new society (Whiting, 1980). In the case of refugees, integration into the host community is dependent upon the schools and their ability to facilitate social interactions with other students.

Multicultural education should be basic, for all students, prevalent in the curriculum and instruction, based on social justice, and have elements of critical pedagogy (Nieto, 1992). Globalization, war, climate changes have and will continue to cause movement of people from one place to another (Betts & Collier, 2017). School systems across the globe must prepare themselves for this inevitable mobility and adapt to changes it will bring into societies and the culture of schools. Schools can ensure smooth transition and utilize this diversity to build global citizens that are tolerant and accepting of each other. Multicultural education has the power to manage world problems such as war, racism and climate change (Nieto, 2010).

Nieto (2010) highlights that culture and identity are elements that humans are surrounded with, and are extremely fluid. They argue that ethnicity and

nationality are static ideas of culture whereas the culture of families, organizations, schools and classrooms are dynamic. There are obvious differences between individuals, which are caused due to differences in routines, daily activities, family units and are grounded in one's' culture. Taking this into account, in the educational setting teachers need to develop cultural awareness and competence in order to meet the needs of students who come from different cultural backgrounds. School systems need to build a culture of acceptance and tolerance, which will then direct them to create inclusive curriculum and pedagogy (Sparks, 1989).

When people from different cultures interact with one another, some changes in the original culture of either or both groups can be observed. This phenomena is known as acculturation. (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936.) Acculturation can be group level or individual level, argues Berry (1992). Group level acculturation may affect housing, nutritional status, economic changes, whereas individual level acculturation could bring about behavioural changes leading to acculturative stress (Berry, 1974). For refugees and migrants, acculturation is at an individual level leading to changes in identity, values, habits and attitude. Acculturation directs towards adaptation, as pointed out by Sam and Oppedal (2003) which is to deal with the challenges that arises when growing up with two different cultures. Refugees and migrants may benefit if education systems support children to adapt to the new culture by creating inclusive structures within the school.

Marginalised children, especially refugees have a better chance of integrating into the new society and dealing with acculturative stress if they have access to good education. Therefore, greater efforts need to be made in host countries to improve the quality of education. This can be done by building inclusive strategies, training teachers and school staff on inclusive pedagogy, and to value diversity. By creating culturally aware school environment it is possible to provide quality education which has multiple benefits for refugees and the host community. (Moumne & Sakai, 2017.)

3.4 Best practices in refugee education

Rutter (2006) has identified three areas of good practice in refugee education. One, creating a welcoming and safe environment that promotes tolerance and equality. Two, meeting the psychosocial needs of children who have experienced trauma and third, meeting the linguistic needs of these children. Taylor and Sindhu (2012) add that designing targeted policies, adopting inclusive approaches, and collaborating with other stakeholders could help in minimising the effects of mobility on development of refugee children.

Curricula and textbooks can reduce prejudice among children and develop migrants' sense of belonging and therefore should reflect diversity that can assist teachers to adopt inclusive pedagogical strategies. (Van Briel, Darmody, & Kerzil, 2016). Taylor and Sindhu (2012) deduced that school leaders are responsible in creating inclusive school culture that also resonates in teaching practices consequently making migrants and refugees feel included and safe. Unfortunately, some school leaders lack the motivation, training and resources to lead development of multicultural practices and structures in the school (Malakolunthu, 2010).

Children's academic success is partially the result of their parent's involvement in their education. Parents contribute by keeping their children motivated to get good grades (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Parental involvement which includes supervising children's homework, creating spaces conducive for learning and doing homework, and meeting teachers have a positive influence on students' academic performance and behaviour in schools (Fan and Chen, 2001).

As per Winthrop and Kirk (2005), teachers have a crucial role to play in providing quality education to refugees and migrants by acting as a bridge between the children, their families and the community. Teacher training must include developing intercultural competence that will assist effective and appropriate communication with students from other cultures. Studies indicate

that learning together has positive effects on classroom interaction, in reducing prejudices and in facilitating integration in society. (Azoulay, 2018.)

Even though the above-mentioned studies suggest best practices to support refugee students in multicultural classrooms, there is little documentation on what teachers experience in the implementation of these best practices in the classroom. Thus, the aim of my study is to understand teachers' experiences in teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees and the support they need in order to foster learning and development of all children in multicultural classrooms with refugees who have varied needs.

4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A large number of refugees come to Greece every year. Greek Islands serve as hotspots following the EU-turkey deal of 2016, which meant that refugees entering EU through Greek Islands could not move to the mainland without assessment of their situation. Having been a teacher myself, I was curious about teachers' experiences particularly on the island and hence decided to conduct this study. The study provides an analysis of teachers' experiences of teaching in multicultural classrooms with refugees. I set a couple of general questions for the study which are as follows:

1. What kind of experiences do teachers have in teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees on the islands in Greece?
2. What kind of support do teachers need in teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees on the islands in Greece?

5 METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims at describing the development of the research study, the approach, the selection of participants and research methods. It also describes the method of analysis. Furthermore, it discusses the process of data analysis and gives a research timeline followed by a discussion on the ethics of this study

5.1 Approach

According to Creswell (2013), the researcher's beliefs and philosophical orientation guides the choices they make in determining the method of data collection and analysis. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) call these beliefs paradigm which they define as "the basic belief or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of methods but in ontologically and

epistemologically fundamental ways.” The paradigms consist of three philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology and methodology.

The nature of reality (subjective or objective) constitutes ontology. Diverse perspectives of participants can be obtained when qualitative researchers accept multiple subjective realities. Epistemology is the understanding of how one acquires knowledge. Qualitative researches interact with the participants to acquire this knowledge. Methodology is concerned with the research methods selected by the researcher. (Lincoln & Guba, 1994.) The research method adopted in this study aligns with my epistemological perspective that there is “no objective truth” but rather multiple realities that people may construct, even when they interact with the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Therefore, I was convinced that a qualitative approach involving interviews of participants would be the best way to understand their first-hand experiences in-depth.

This is a qualitative study and follows the norms of thematic analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as that which is concerned with collecting, analysing and interpreting empirical data through interviews and observations. It leads the researcher to understand the phenomenon under study. The idea behind qualitative research is to make the study realistic and convincing to the readers by gathering and interpreting experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012). In this study, I employed a case study strategy mostly due to the availability of participants. However, case studies are useful as they “allow investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events”. (Yin, 2009, p. 4, 17.) Like most research approaches, case study has its limitations which have been discussed in the last part of section 8.

In this study, I have described the experiences of teachers teaching in multicultural classrooms with refugees on a Greek Island based on interviews with five teachers. As per Braun and Clarke (2006) language and experiences have a unidirectional relationship. With this in mind I chose semi-structured interviews that enabled me to generate in depth understanding of participants’ lived experiences. I used an inductive analysis approach and discovered patterns, themes and categories from the data (Patton, 2002). I have presented the findings

of the study in a descriptive manner with ample direct quotations from the participants to enable the readers to make sense of these experiences without the biases and interpretations of the researcher.

5.2 Data and data collection

Data was collected during June and July 2018, and the interviews were conducted in the middle of July 2018. I used the time before the interviews to select my interviewees based on their experience and knowledge on the education of refugees. I also used this time to build trust and rapport with the interviewees. Immediately after conducting the interviews, I transcribed them and finished the task in August 2018. During the process of transcribing, I also started conducting first cycle coding on the data and spent the September of 2018 on second cycle coding and data analysis following which I reported the findings and wrote the rest of the research paper.

Patton (2002) identifies interviews, observations and documents as qualitative data. The main source of data in this study was interviews. Observation notes from these classrooms were not intended to be research data but analysis revealed the need for observation notes to enrich description and interpretation. Using open-ended questions and observations to gather data is a good practice in qualitative research, says Patton (2002). Smith (2011) also highlights that open-ended questions offer participants the opportunity to holistically express their views and experiences. Patton (2002) recognises various approaches to open-ended interviews. I employed the interview guide approach where I asked questions based on certain guiding questions prepared in advance. This approach is flexible and ensure systematic collection of information. The guiding questions were framed based on the research questions and the purpose of the study. However, I minimised the number of questions I asked to give the informants opportunity to express their views and experiences holistically.

Pilot interviews need to be conducted before the real interviews as they can offers an opportunity to refine the questions and prepare the researcher (Stake,

1995). I conducted one pilot interview with a friends at the University and one with a teacher in the school on the island in Greece. The pilot interviews revealed the need for minute adjustments to the interview questions.

This particular school was chosen because I knew the school principal, professionally, as I was interning in this school. This also gave me an opportunity to observe classrooms taught by the participants. After obtaining permission from the school principal, I reached out to the informants in person to invite them to be a part of this study. I followed this up by setting interview times. One-on-one interviews were conducted in the school post school hours. The atmosphere was informal as I had build rapport with the informants before the interviews were conducted. I gave verbal and written information about the objective of the study and collected written consent to their participation.

The interviews were audio taped and the participants gave verbal permission to use the data at the end of every interview. The interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and I transcribed them into a 117-page document using font size 12 and double line spacing. The documents are saved on my laptop and will be deleted after the thesis is formally published.

5.3 Participants

To address the research questions, five informants were purposefully sampled from a school to share their experiences in teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees on a Greek Island. The logic behind purposeful sampling was to obtain rich data from people with an awareness of the themes under study (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), two strategies fall under purposeful sampling. One is criterion purposeful sampling where participants are selected based on certain predetermined attributes and the other is random purposeful sampling which involves selecting the informants from a population without any predetermined characteristics. For this study, the informants were randomly selected to avoid biases.

The five samples consisted of three male and two female teachers. Both male and female informants were interviewed to avoid any gender biases towards the study. Informants have varied years of teaching experience in multicultural settings. For the convenience of the readers and to maintain anonymity, I have assigned names to the informants. Dimitris, Yannis and Adonis are male and Katie and Efi are female and all cater to primary school students on the island. Dimitris and Katie have been teachers for 10 years or more whereas Yannis, Adonis and Efi have been in-service for less than 3 years. The school has been described in details in chapter 6.

5.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was chosen to answer the research questions for its ability to produce in depth insights. Thematic analysis is concerned with identifying patterns and themes, analysing them and reporting these themes in a systematic manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involving identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying and labeling patterns in the data is called thematic analysis (Patton, 2002). As highlighted by Patton (2002), there is no clear time distinction between data collection and analysis and therefore, one can note down themes even during the data collection process. On this ground, the first interview was transcribed and coded immediately after the interview in order to reflect upon any necessary changes required for the forthcoming interviews. Through repeated listening of the recordings and reading of transcriptions, I immersed myself completely into the data.

5.4.1 Organising the data

The interviews were transcribed in August and September 2018. The data was transcribed immediately after the interview to ensure that the data set retained its true meaning. This included paying attention to punctuations and pauses so as to not alter the meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In all there were

117 pages of data that was transcribed in font size 12 and double line spacing. The informants were given pseudo names during the transcribing process. Any other information that could reveal the identity of the informants, such as name of the island or the school was changed. To ensure there was no loss of data, I reheard the audio interviews and matched them with the transcriptions. The transcriptions were saved on a word document on my laptop.

5.4.2 Identifying codes and themes

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) coding is the most essential part of analysis as it enables the researcher to make sense of the data. I applied open coding to the data in this study where I scrutinized every word and line (Strauss, 1989) and highlighted words and phrases relevant to the purpose of the study. During this process, I maintained a journal to jot down my thoughts about emerging themes and to keep my biases in check. In the primary coding cycle, I categorized the entire data set systematically within codes. The codes were developed through an analysis of the data set rather than my prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This is an inductive approach to thematic analysis as it does not apply a pre-existing coding frame to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 2000). I collated the codes into potential categories using the colour technique. This helped me link expressions and phrases to their appropriate categories. Ongoing analysis and second cycle coding helped me to establish the final categories as depicted in figure 1.

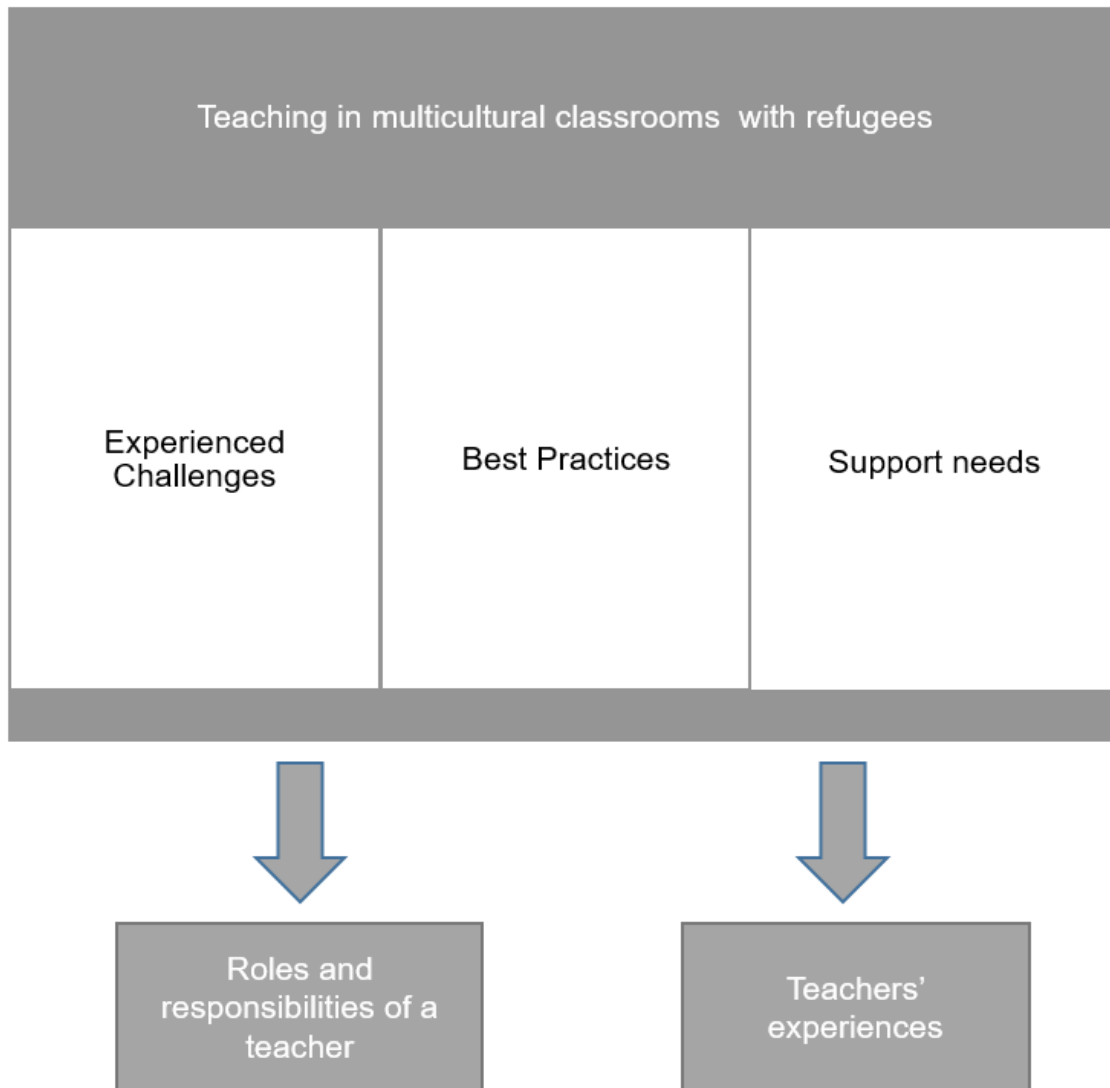


Figure 1. Categories that emerged from the data.

Teachers described their experiences in teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees. They spoke about the challenges they face in teaching multicultural classrooms and identified best practices that support learning in such classrooms. Furthermore, they emphasized on the support they need from different stakeholders to be able to provide holistic education to these students. All these elements of multicultural education helped the participants to articulate their roles and responsibilities as a teacher in such classrooms. The findings of this study have been reported in the next section in a descriptive manner with excessive quotations from the participants.

5.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are significant in qualitative research as it involves entering the privacy of the informants (Stake, 1995). I planned the ethical and legal requirements in advance to protect the rights of the informants. Moreover, the University's guidelines on the code of research ethics was taken into consideration. Hewitt (2007) considers six ethical components in qualitative research. These include acknowledging bias, rigor, rapport, respecting autonomy, avoiding exploitation and ensuring confidentiality.

Keeping these ethical issues in mind, prior to data collection, I obtained written permission from the school principal to conduct this study. I followed up by briefing the informants about the purpose of the study and other logistics such as date, time and place. To ensure confidentiality, I informed the participants that their identities will be completely concealed and no information presented will in anyway reveal it. For this reason pseudo names were given to the informants. Moreover, it was agreed that the audio tapes and transcriptions will be deleted after the thesis has been formally published.

Informants gave written consent to use the data for the purpose of this study before the interviews and verbal consent at the end of the interviews. The data was collected using two voice-recording devices. The autonomy of the informants were respected as participation was voluntary and it was possible to discontinue participation at any point of the study. The data was saved on my laptop and no one else had access to it. I engaged in the analysis of the data alone and maintained complete anonymity of the participants while getting support from my supervisor and peers.

I had the opportunity to spend 2 months in the field which helped me to build trust among the informants. Building rapport with them ensured that they believed that I would maintain confidentiality and anonymity, and gave them confidence to honestly share information and their experiences. My personal interest and potential biases emerging from it could be a cause of error and hence have been mentioned in the last section of this study. Throughout the research

process I kept myself aware of my biases by writing them down in my research journal. These steps have thus safeguarded the rights of the informants and decreased the scope for error in this study.

6 FINDINGS

The first subsection gives an overview of the context of the school in which the informants teach and some relevant details about refugee children's education on the island. The second subsection reports how teachers understand multicultural education and what it means for them to have refugee children in the classroom with Greek children. This is followed by the challenges teachers face in teaching such classroom and their support needs. The section after that reports what teachers consider best practice in multicultural education with refugees. Finally, the last subsection reveals how the teachers in this school view their roles and responsibilities based on their experiences of teaching in such setting.

6.1 Context of the school

Interviews were conducted with teachers in a primary school on an island in Greece. The school caters to primary school students between the age of 5 and 12. There are 15 students or more in each grade with 4-5 refugee students in each class. Every child has the right to go to school according to Greek laws (MoE, 2017). However, in order to enrol each child must have a guardian or parent and also undergo medical examinations. They are assigned a classroom based on their age and only after they have been vaccinated. The initial plan was to send all refugee children to the school located near the camp they live in, but teachers informed that Greek parents living in the area protested against it as they felt that the presence of so many refugees in one school will affect the quality of the school. Hence, headmasters of all schools decided to distribute these children in various schools on the island.

Teachers are recruited based on their interest to teach classrooms with refugees. If permanent teachers do not wish to work in these classrooms, substitute teachers are asked to step in. There is no additional training for these teachers yet. A report by the MoE (2017) revealed that preparatory classes should

be conducted for refugee students in schools to teach Greek and to provide teaching support in other subjects to make their integration smooth into the main school. These classes take place in the morning during regular school hours.

6.2 Views on multicultural schools and classrooms

Positive aspects. Teachers define multicultural classrooms as classrooms with students from different cultural backgrounds and countries. In their context, refugee students bring in multicultural elements into Greek schools and classrooms. Multiculturalism is a cause of diversity in classrooms. Every informant spoke about diversity in terms of language, ethnicity, religion, country of origin, experiences, and educational backgrounds. Efi described this religious, lingual and cultural diversity as,

“I have students from Iraq- they speak Arabic and Kurmanji and two students from Syria who speak Arabic and two students from Afghanistan who speak Farsi, one also speaks Pashto and another student from Haiti, who speaks French and Creole. There is also someone from Somalia and speaks Somali.”

Teachers see the importance of having a multicultural school setting. According to the teachers, multicultural classrooms are useful in teaching the students values and skills. There is also a lot of opportunity for cultural exchange in such classrooms. Katie said,

“...multicultural classrooms teach students to be tolerant and accepting of differences. Some students in other cultures are good at cooking, some good at art and crafts, and some know how to play musical instruments and do other things, and they bring so many kinds of skills to the class.”

Multicultural classrooms present learning opportunities for teachers as well. Teachers can grow and develop their skills in such a setting. As stated by Adonis,

“Teaching in a multicultural classroom makes you step back as a teacher and think how do I deliver this content, how do I make it accessible and how do I make it inclusive and I think as a teacher if you start questioning these things you will make a classroom more inclusive, more appreciative of the different cultures.”

Teachers put in effort to develop the classrooms own culture that becomes accessible to all the different cultures. Being a teacher in such settings is less about delivering content but creating a community within a classroom and that can be built through one's understanding of where the different students come from and then making a new culture within that. Yannis adds,

“When you are teaching in a very diverse and transient environment of people bringing such differences to the school it can really create very dynamic and engaging classrooms where students can really learn from each other, the diversity for sure is fascinating and enriching for both the teacher and the students.”

Negative aspects. Even though most teachers in this study viewed diversity as something positive and that which enhances learning in a classroom - “because the students are from different backgrounds and culture, they bring in different perspectives which makes learning fun”, some of them saw diversity as a reason for conflict in the classroom. Dimitris points out,

“When students are from different ethnic background and they sometimes express it in the classroom by disrespecting the other group through words and actions, it leads to conflict.”

The teacher gave an example of conflict in her classroom caused due to diversity of languages. She narrated the story of an incident when an Arabic speaking student orally translated a concept in Arabic to his peers and the Kurdish speaking students got offended because they thought that one foreign language was given more preference over others. This was a cause of hostility towards each other in and outside the classroom.

Teachers who view multicultural classroom settings positively, put in effort into their lessons by trying to give everyone an opportunity to participate. Others, who view multiculturalism negatively are constantly worried about minimizing conflict in the classroom. Even teachers who strive to include every student in the classroom, face multiple challenges due to the lack of support from the government and other stakeholders which deter most from taking up classrooms with refugees and demotivates them from putting in efforts to do their job.

6.3 Experienced challenges

6.3.1 With students

Student dropout and newly arriving students. Students' motivation to attend school is low in most cases because teachers believe that since Greece is a transit country for most refugee families, parents do not see the value in sending their children to the Greek schools or in learning the language. This in turn affects student attendance. Continuous mobility also makes it difficult for students to stay in the same school for very long. Katie feels that "the continuous dropout and registrations in the middle of the school year disrupt the learning environment of the school and the classrooms."

When new students arrive, teachers find it "burdensome" to create additional materials and lesson plans, as they are time consuming. Putting in extra hours to cater to the needs of new students leads to teacher "burnout". Yannis says, "when new students arrive in the middle of a year, the momentum of the classroom is lost which leads to the teachers feeling deflated and unsuccessful in their profession." Adonis gives an example of the challenges he faces when new students arrive.

"You might suddenly have someone completely new who is completely oblivious to the English or Greek language come in at any point in your curriculum and you will have to start at pretty much zero with him whereas the other students have already progressed. I would introduce a topic such as past tense then I would get quite far in that and I would like to progress, but I will have someone new join my class and I will have to reintroduce the concept again."

Observation revealed that managing classroom dynamics is extremely difficult when students are constantly leaving and new students are arriving. Some students already form their own groups based on the languages they speak and cultural similarities. When refugees arrive, students view them as "aliens" and hence stick to their own group that leaves the new students feeling excluded. The onus however, is on the teachers to engage students in activities that will promote inclusion and foster friendships cross culturally.

Language Barrier. Language barrier between teachers and students in multicultural classrooms with refugees is a threat to successful lesson delivery. If teachers fail to communicate in a common language with refugee students, they fail to build relationships that will foster learning in the classroom. Lack of a common language also leads to the students losing interest in the classroom. Adonis told me about the problems he faces due to language barrier.

"Sometimes it is very frustrating when you are trying to understand the student and why he or she is behaving in a certain way or you are trying to tell the student something but cannot..."

He justified his point by giving an example of a time when he made a child sit in the classroom for hours before she was allowed to go the toilet because she could not communicate what she wanted.

Language barrier also slows down student progress in the classroom. Some students who are affluent with the language of instruction, pick up concepts easier than students who are not. This often leads to teachers thinking students who cannot communicate are less intelligent and hence are not given enough attention. Yannis says,

"Some students that come to my class cannot answer my questions maybe because they are not as intelligent as the Greek students or maybe they are just too shy to answer. I don't know what kind of education they had in their previous school but mostly it is not at par with what we teach here, so I have to think of easy activities for them."

Teachers cope with this challenge by having low expectations of refugee students and so watering down the curriculum and the tasks for them seems like an easy way out. This leads to low achievement and high dropout rates of refugee students. Moreover, teachers develop a bias towards students who understand the language leading to neglect and differential treatment towards those who do not.

Students acting up in class. Teachers are faced with challenges related to students' well-being and the effects of it in the classroom. Students sometimes act up in the class due to existing mental health issues that are left unattended. Teachers did not name mental health problems as a reason for students acting up

which clearly means that they lack awareness and are not trained to deal with them. The school is supposed to have mental health experts but teachers have “never met them or know how to contact them”, says Katie. This leaves the teachers with the responsibility of having to manage classrooms with students who are tired, unfocused and constantly acting up in between lesson and disturbing classroom cohesion. As per Dimitris, “such behaviour can be attributed to their living conditions.” He adds,

“The camps are overcrowded and dirty, and students constantly have to be a part of conflicts in the camp. Lack of proper nutrition and a safe living space causes tiredness and lack of focus in the classroom”

Teachers do not blame the students or their parents but hold the government and its policies responsible for safeguarding their welfare. They point out that students have to “travel long distances to get to school” and “they do not get proper sleep in the camps due to lack of proper facilities” which lead them to act out in class.

Adonis states,

“There is so much overcrowding in the camps, people have to fight for things like water and food, how can you expect the students to learn and do their homework when they are fighting to meet basic needs.”

Because teachers pity the living conditions of refugee students, they refrain from giving them homework or burden them with too much work. When students act up in class, they are sent to the teachers’ lounge to relax or sleep so that the rest of the classroom is not disturbed.

6.3.2 With parents

Language barrier. Communicating with parents and involving them in the education of their children is a “monumental task” without a common language. There is no way of communicating with the parents to find out about the students’ situation or pre-arrival academic experiences or to inform them about their child’s progress due to language barrier. “The school does not provide an

interpreter to solve this issue” said Efi when asked if she can get external help to bridge the communication gap.

Parents are completely unaware of what their child is doing in school and how they can support them at home and teachers are clueless about the situation of these students. Because there is no communication between teachers and parents due to language barrier, teachers do not know what the parents expect from the school or the culture these students come from. “We do not have any meetings with the parents because we do not have the time and because it is pointless to call the parents to school when you can’t even talk to them”, says Yannis.

The implication of this is that since teachers are not aware of the students’ needs and fail to involve and invest parents in their child’s education, both parents and their children lose interest and do not see value in attending school. Observations revealed that this leads to the challenge of student absenteeism and high drop out rates.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Greek parents have racist attitudes towards refugee students which is visible in the behaviour of Greek students towards the others in school. Adonis says,

“Greek parents should abstain from making racist comments about refugees at home because it creates a hostile environment in the school as the Greek kids mirror these emotions in school.”

But teachers have not taken any steps toward minimising this even though they share a common language with the Greek parents. “We do not meet parents as often and when we do, we don’t know how to bring up issues like these. It is the parent’s responsibility not ours”, says Dimitris. Greek parents are also against having refugee parents attend meetings in the school.

6.3.3 With pedagogy

Curriculum and textbooks. The curriculum and the books prescribed by the Ministry of Education makes teaching a challenging task for teachers. The books, they feel, are non-contextual for students coming from non-European countries.

Since students cannot relate to names or events mentioned in textbooks because they are very western, students soon lose interest in the classroom. The teachers then have to prepare their own material to meet the needs of all students. Dimitris points out,

“The biggest problem is that you have to prepare your own material. Most of the times you cannot rely on students' books, because they are not refugee friendly. They cannot relate to the names, events, concepts mentioned in these books because they are European names and situations”

Katie asserts this claim and says,

“When you are teaching to a classroom of people from migrant backgrounds you have to be mindful of the fact that certain material typically made for teaching purposes is not appropriate for such context.”

Additionally, because teachers fear that these books might have elements that could “trigger traumatic experiences of refugees”, they have to create different lesson plans and activities. This leads to teacher “burn out and frustration” that was pointed out earlier. Since teachers have to spend most of their time creating material to meet the needs of all children, they get tired and that might de-motivate them to do their job or to take up such classrooms. Adonis adds,

“I would rather tailor my own lessons according to the needs of the students than use already existing material and I feel like the fact that I have to make up new material kind of increases my workload to an extent that it hampers my personal life and time gets difficult to manage.”

It is clear that teachers want to put in extra effort for these students and to enable learning for all students but they do see the implication of it and how it impacts them in the classroom. Moreover, because they are not trained to create content for students, the quality of it is poor. As mentioned earlier, due to language barrier, teachers perceive refugee students to be less intelligent and so create materials that do not match their grade level.

Lack of teacher training. Teachers feel helpless in these classrooms often because they do not know how to handle certain situations that emerge in multicultural classrooms. The language barrier, lack of contextualized textbooks, students

acting up in their lessons feel like extreme challenges to the teachers because there is no training available for them. Efi points out that she often ends up “reprimanding the child for misbehaviour when the cause of it is something she does not recognize.” Yannis adds,

“It’s not fair that teachers are expected to be good at their job when there is no training available for us. I don’t know how to make plans for students coming from other cultures, I don’t know how to teach in a multicultural classroom, I don’t know why a student is behaving in a certain way in my classroom.”

Teachers are willing to put in effort to deliver successful lessons as they do not want to feel demotivated; however, the lack of training makes it difficult for them to work on the issues mentioned above. These challenges will remain challenges as long as there is a lack of teacher training. Katie says, “I am waiting for the day when I can walk into the class confidently and deliver a lesson and at the end see all my students get a good grade and have learnt something.”

Moreover, because teachers coming into such classrooms are mostly substitutes, they are short term, untrained teachers. “When students see new teachers come and go regularly, they feel abandoned and lose interest and faith in the school system”, says Yannis. Since these teachers know that they are going to be in that classroom for a short time, they do not see any value in putting in effort. “They think they cannot make any difference anyway, so there is no motivation for them to work hard”, says Dimitris.

Dimitris and Katie shared the same view and they have been in this profession for more than ten years. Teachers who work many years and see themselves doing the same thing for many years derive their motivation from the fact that they do this to make a difference in society. The two of them also viewed their role as humanitarians . Katie says, “education is a tool to bring about social change”. Teachers with lesser experience feel frustrated and demotivated easily when they do not see success in their classrooms.

Lack of funding. There is a general lack of resources in the school. Lack of teachers, mental health professionals and interpreters, and an absence of other teaching materials such as projectors, games, dictionaries, worksheets also present massive challenges to teachers responsible for classrooms with refugee

children. Mental health issues could be impediments to learning and as mentioned earlier the lack of a mental health experts and teachers' unawareness of these issues cause chaos in the classroom. Katie points out that most of these issues can be solved if funding is increased. She says, "We cannot have more teachers, translators in the school since we have no money." Additionally, observations revealed that even good lessons fail due to lack of resources such as games, projectors and computers. Lack of funding could be a possible reason for the lack of training for teachers in-service as well.

6.4 Support needs

Teachers concluded that they cannot do their job alone and need support from various stakeholders. Yannis states,

"I think I have seen teachers get very deflated easily or made unenthusiastic very easily when they feel like the structures around them don't support what they want to do, and good teachers fall into bad habits or bad practices because of the culture around them which stems for the organization or the leadership of the school."

They identified a support network that included school staff and school leader, parents, government, and NGOs, mental health experts and social workers.

6.4.1 School staff and school leader

Teachers believe that the support of the school staff is necessary to create safe and inclusive spaces in the school for everyone. The school culture needs to be strong and in agreement with the culture of the classroom. Collaboration with and support from other teachers in making lesson plans and sharing pedagogical ideas are needed for efficient teaching. Efi points out the need for collaboration and says

"Teachers should interact and share pedagogical skills and resources with each other and help each other out because it is not a battle we should be fighting alone."

The school leader and the staff are responsible for making the school culture strong so that students feel safe and learning can take place without conflicts. It

is interesting to note that teachers compare their situation to that of a “battle”. Observation revealed that teachers would visibly become anxious every time there was a new student in the classroom.

Teacher also spend hours creating lesson plans and teaching material that has already been created and used by another teacher. The culture of the school is non-collaborative because of a clear divide between teachers who have been in the school for many years and new teachers. The school leader is occupied with administrative and financial aspects of the school and does not have structures to focus on building collaboration among teachers.

The new teachers feel that they can be better at teaching if they got support from other experienced teachers. Yannis states,

“If we all share our experiences, resources and really work as a team instead of separate individuals doing separate things, learning will happen smoothly. Old teachers can share their experiences and resources with us, but they never do and we never ask.”

Thus, the school with its teachers, staff and school leader is the largest and closest support system of these teachers and the onus is on the school leader to build a strong collaborative school structure for teachers to feel successful in the classroom. Efi says,

“It is really going to take a strong school culture and stand against racism and separation, for these children to feel integrated and part of the new community. The school staff and leader must appreciate differences and make everyone feel welcome.”

6.4.2 Parents

Parent involvement in the education of children is crucial to their development. The teachers believe that if students are supported by parents at home in academics and other aspects, they do well in the school. Dimitris says,

“In my years of teaching, I have seen that students who are helped by their parents at home do better than students who do not get any help.”

Parents have a huge role to play in teaching values to children. Greek parents have a larger role to play because Greece is the host community in this case and if parents are not supportive of multiculturalism and have racist ideas,

it affects the behaviour of their children towards 'others' in the school. Adonis points out the problem and explains,

"...because if these Greek kids are going into the classroom with ideas of separation and difference that their parents hold, it is only going to be reinforced in the classroom setting which is not going to aid the development of anyone."

Expecting Greek parents to change their views overnight is not practical, especially on this island. They have spent years living in a homogenous community and the media is feeding ideas such as 'immigrants and refugees are a threat to every nation' and 'multiculturalism is bad for nation building'. In such circumstances it is unfair to expect parents to be accepting of refugees. However, steps need to be taken to educate the parents and show them how these ideas could affect the development of their children in the school.

Parents of refugee children need to create a conflict free environment at home. Katie elaborates, "Parents and caregivers in the camp or at homes should ensure that children are not audiences to fights with other communities and support the kids in their studies." However, some teachers are sympathetic towards the situation of these parents and understand why it is difficult for them to take care of their children and they do not expect much from them. Dimitris points out,

"I won't say the parents don't care but sometimes they don't have the time because so much is going on with the asylum process and mobility from one place to another, it is difficult."

It is fair to expect less from refugee parents because the asylum process is extremely challenging in itself. Greek policies need to first make the transition easier. Only when the basic needs are met can parents be expected to care about the education of the children. However, if parents are made to see value in sending their children to school, it will benefit both the students and their families in the long run and reduce absenteeism. To do this, teachers need the "help of interpreters for communication with the parents."

6.4.3 Government

The teachers believe that teacher training is the most urgent requirement considering the huge influx of refugees in recent times. Skills necessary to handle multicultural classrooms and students from refugee backgrounds who may suffer from mental health problems or learning disabilities is essential in this situation. They pointed out the need for training not only before service but also in-service. Training that will help them “develop non-verbal communication skills, and other skills such as identifying mental health issues, learning disabilities, and using innovative pedagogy in the class...” as pointed out by Yannis, is required. Katie emphasises on the need for teacher training and says,

“The biggest support that the teachers can get from the state is training. Teacher training before they enter the job is not enough. There needs to be constant training so the teachers feel motivated and are aware of the changes taking place at the government level. Teacher training can really change the way lessons are delivered and then teachers can feel successful and take better lessons.”

Multiple challenges concerning pedagogy mentioned in the previous section can be solved with teacher training. Additionally, certain resources such as social services, mental health expertise and interpreters should be provided to ease the transition of these students into the new community. Teachers also pointed out the need to hire more teachers and reduce the teacher student ratio in schools. This will take away the pressure teachers feel in teaching large classrooms. Dimitris believes,

“It is difficult to manage learning for all students in such big classrooms, especially with refugee students. Increased funding from the government would mean more resources for the school. Games, flashcards, books and more opportunities for extra-curricular activities that are needed for the holistic development of all students.”

Participants express the need for targeted policies that will enhance the quality of life for refugees as an important element to facilitate learning and development. “The state needs to ensure the well-being of refugees by providing cleaner and safer living spaces and better facilities, otherwise we cannot help the tired and unfocused students in class”, says Adonis.

Teachers have control over certain things happening in their classroom and the school. However, they feel helpless when it comes to issues such as student well-being, clean living conditions, lack of resources. Although some teachers use money from their salary and the school uses a part of the budget to bring resources, they are not enough. "Every day we are faced with new challenges and the money is just not enough", says Katie. Teachers need to sustain themselves and their families, so expecting them to use money from their own pockets to bring in resources seems unfair.

Efforts must be put in to build stronger curriculums that promote the learning of all children. The teachers recognize that this is a huge demand and extremely difficult to achieve and may take years. Until then the teachers must put in efforts to include everyone in the lessons. To enable this, government must shift responsibility and give autonomy to teachers in the classroom to choose content according to the needs of their students. If teachers are overburdened with strict curriculum that requires to be completed within a certain amount of time, it can lead to teachers feeling deflated and demotivated to do the job. However, anonymity in the classroom can work only if teachers are trained and know how to handle this freedom.

6.4.4 NGOs, mental health experts and social workers

To reduce teacher burnout, it is essential to get support from NGOs that can provide resources such as projectors, study material, lesson plans and training for public school teachers. Efi points out the need for "social workers who can help our students and their families with the mobility process and encourage them to send the kids to school."

The problems such as non-attendance, students acting up in class arise in the absence of external services and a lack of teacher motivation. In addition to working hard to create material and lesson plans, if teachers are burdened with the jobs of mental health experts and psychologists, they will fail every day in the classroom and feel demotivated. Adonis emphasises,

“We cannot be doing ten things at one time. We are humans. I get bad feedback from my students which makes me think I am a bad teacher even when I try hard. I don’t know if I made the right choice by becoming a teacher in this classroom.”

However, teachers explain that getting this support is difficult since many Greek parents do not want NGOs involved in the school due to pre-existing biases and prejudices. Yannis explains, “parents complain when we get support from NGOs for the benefit of refugees, but they don’t understand that it will benefit everybody even their children.”

6.5 Identified best practices

In the school. Teachers point out that collaboration with other teachers to create lesson plan and share resources is a good practices in refugee education. Moreover, collaborating to create a safe and inclusive school environment fosters learning and healthy development of all children.

Efi describes an ideal school setting and says,

“A school where students feel safe, a school where teachers collaborate, parents and teachers interact, the locals support education of every child needs to be created.”

New teachers constantly put emphasis on collaboration and referred to its importance in the development of children and themselves as teachers. They believe that by resolving issues such as lack of translators and developing structures to foster collaboration, the school can support all the students to learn and develop.

Teachers also spoke about adopting a holistic approach to education in the school. They feel that students should “not just be taught academics but also skills necessary to survive in the host setting.” Teachers believe that it is important to give refugee students “control of their learning” as they have very little control in their lives outside the school. Routines and structures help bring their lives back to normal. Yannis identifies the importance of routine and states that,

“Routine for everyone involved means that teachers can do a better job, they can predict what they need to do, and students also need routine. In a time where there is no routine and structure in their life, knowing the structure and predictability ensures both the teachers come prepared but also the students are ready and prepared for what is going to happen.”

Observation reveals that teachers follow the routine and timetable given by the school but there is routine missing at the classroom level. Students do not know the structures in place and run around in the absence of a teacher. So, just having routines is not enough, how they are communicated to children and implemented is also essential.

Understanding student needs is an important aspect of good education. Teachers feel listening to students and getting feedback from them can help them become better teachers. They also feel that if they could use an interpreter to understand what the students want from school and the teachers, their job will become easier.

Katie says, “appreciating the individual learning journeys and objectives and then trying to adapt to ensure that the school strives to match those journeys and objectives is really crucial.” But to achieve this, teachers need interpreters. Observations revealed that Katie’s classroom has a wall with student goals and aims which is changed every month. Students’ write down their long-term plan and also what they want to achieve in a day, in a month and by the end of the year. A student’s paper read- “I will not say any bad word today.” Another one read - “I will learn 10 new words by the end of this week.”

As a teacher it is “important to create opportunities in the classroom that will foster easy integration and mingling of students from different backgrounds”, says Adonis. Use of innovative pedagogy in the absence of interpreters and other resources is an important skill to have. Yannis says that “non-verbal communication and miming certain words can be helpful in teaching new words and concepts.” Additionally, if lessons are well planned, they can cater to the needs of all students.

Reception classes are a hindrance to the process of learning, says Katie. She believes it is hard to learn Greek without having native speakers around. Therefore, students take a long time to pick up the language and since they see

no use in learning the language as they do not use it anywhere, they lose motivation. Moreover, it is a barrier to inclusion and integration of refugee students in mainstream classrooms. When students are moved from reception classes, they are seen as 'others' by the Greek students. This also impacts teachers' perceptions about their intelligence. According to Dimitris,

"Reception classes should be abolished or a different approach needs to be adopted to make sure it does not hinder acceptance and inclusion. There is good intention behind it but is structurally flawed."

Since Efi is new to the school, she has been looking for ways to adapt to her students' needs. She reaches out to other school staff for support, looks up videos to find innovative ways of teaching. Teachers who "adapt quickest or who are most sensitive to the needs of the students tend to also actively go out and search for ways to improve, find resources, and they also listen to their students", says Katie who is more experienced.

The importance of building relationship with the students to understand them and their culture better is a good practice in such classrooms as suggested by Yannis. He gives an example from his experiences and says,

"I try to informally create rapport with the students that are in my class by playing some games or organizing activities that will help them interact and use the new language in the class. I have seen changes in the way they interact in the classroom because they feel comfortable around me."

These practices mentioned by the teachers are ways in which they cope with the situation in the absence of resources. Their job becomes "ten time harder" when they have to be resourceful. However, as Yannis adds, "this is helping me grow as a teacher."

In teachers' professional development. Teacher's motivation to learn and grow despite the challenges is an identified good practice. Teachers need to be patient and accepting of differences and be aware of their own biases in order to teach a multicultural classroom effectively. As per Dimitris, without this awareness, lessons will fail every day. He says,

"It is important to have awareness of cultural boundaries, awareness of differences, awareness of things you can't do, awareness of possible trauma."

This is possible through self-reflection, experience and suitable training. Of course, there are some things that need years of practice and studies such as becoming a mental health expert. The onus is on the government to support teachers with such necessary resources.

Finally, it can be argued that when we resolve all the challenges mentioned above, we can provide excellent education to all students and these challenges when viewed from a positive aspect become good practices in refugee education. Efi gives an example and says that “using contextualized textbooks and resources is a best practice. Providing mental health support to all students is a best practice. Challenges and best practices are two sides of the same coin.”

6.6 Roles and responsibilities

Teachers in this study hold themselves responsible for providing holistic education for all the children attending the school. Not only do they feel responsible for students in their classroom but all the students of the school. Efi says, “What happens outside the classroom is also the teacher’s responsibility.” In addition to being responsible for the students’ actions and achievements inside and outside the classrooms, teachers also believe that it is their duty to engage with parents and other stakeholders-NGOs, political leaders. Teachers are also required to do administrative work such as filling attendance sheets and student information papers.

Teachers hold themselves accountable for student outcomes and absenteeism in school. Dimitris adds, “If students do not end up in school, the teachers must be failing to keep them interested in learning.” However, interestingly, Yannis believes that a teacher’s job is just to teach and doing administrative work and engaging with other stakeholders is a “distraction and waste of time.” Observation reveals that this opinion could be because Yannis has been in this school for the last 16 years and is worn out because of a lack of structures present to support teachers. The school is understaffed most of the

times and hence, the present teachers are expected to work more than they are paid for.

The teachers spend most of their day teaching. Planning and executing lessons are integral to this role. Additionally, teachers also facilitate most extra-curricular activities in school. Teachers view themselves as coaches for students which helps in shaping their future. They often find themselves counselling students and enabling them to create and achieve their learning goals. Teachers are of the opinion that they are relationship builders and act as a bridge between the school and the parents of the students. Teachers with more experience call themselves humanitarians because they teach refugees and empower them to create a better life for themselves and their families. Adonis is of the opinion that teachers are teachers because they believe in changing the world for the better. Furthermore, teachers have to be self-motivators in order to grow and adapt to changes in the educational setting otherwise there is a high chance of getting deflated in the absence of appreciation for the profession.

All these teachers recognize the importance of their profession and identify themselves as people who are responsible for 'nation building'. According to Katie, "students are the future of our country and it is really depended on schools and their teachers what kind of citizens they want to create."

6.7 Summary of findings

Teacher expressed what they need to become successful teachers in multicultural classrooms. According to the teachers, integration and multicultural classrooms must be supported and driven by the feeling that society is also accepting and working towards these ideas. Table 1 summarises the findings of this study.

Table 1 Summary of findings as presented by the teachers.

Challenges	Support Network	Requirements from the support network
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Newly arriving students and student drop-outs	Government	Better policies and practices to integrate these students in the middle of the academic year.
Diversity	Government	Pre-service and in-service teacher training to help implement culturally responsive pedagogy
Non-flexible curriculums and non-contextual text books	Government	Flexible curriculum and books that cater to the needs of children of different backgrounds.
High teacher student ratio and lack of resources, interpreters and mental health professionals	Government	Increased funding
Teacher "burnout" due to work overload	Teachers and school staff, NGOs and social workers	Collaboration
Conflict of culture in school and home	Parents	Collaboration and involvement
Unfocused students due to lack of proper food and clean-living spaces Conflicts in camp	Government and Parents	Government-Increased resources to provide better living conditions Parents-Abstaining from conflicts in the environment of the child

It is important to note that teachers believe that they can get support from different actors within the educational ecosystem but for the support to be effective, these actors - government, parents, school staff and NGOs must also support each other. For successful integration and good educational practices to take place, “the government needs to support the NGOs, the Greek parents need to support government policies, parents have to be willing to allow NGOs to work in the school, school staff needs to support the parents”, as Katie rightly points out. The support network is thus a complex web where the various systems interact with each other.

7 REFLECTION ON FINDINGS

7.1 Context and culture

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (1979) can be used to understand the support network of teachers. The framework can be modified to place the teacher at the center of the developmental model as this study focuses on teachers' experiences. The various elements of multicultural education with refugees, as mentioned by the teachers have been placed in Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework as depicted in figure 2.

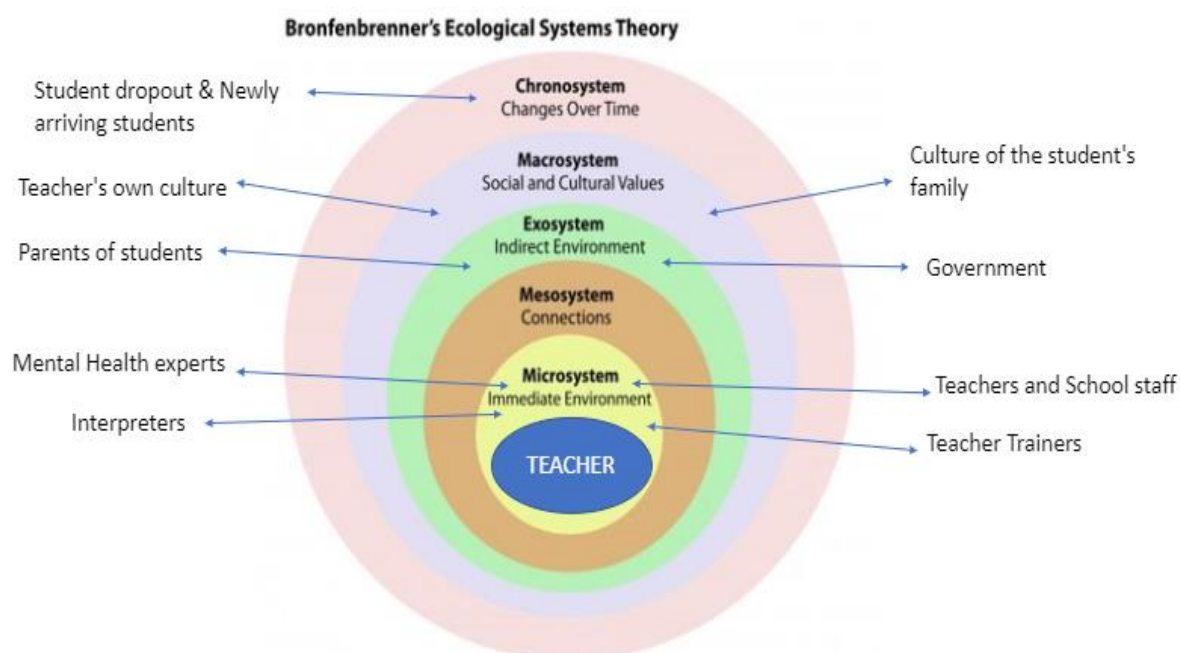


Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological framework (1979) applied to teachers. Reprinted from Psychology Notes HQ, 2013, Retrieved from <https://www.psychologynoteshq.com/bronfenbrenner-ecological-theory/>.

Collaboration with the school staff, teacher trainers, interpreters and mental health experts directly affect the success of teachers in multicultural classroom with refugees and hence have been placed in the microsystem. As discussed by the participants, without training, their pedagogical skills are not enough to foster learning in the classroom. In the absence of interpreters and mental health

experts, teachers struggle to deliver lessons and manage behaviour. Collaboration in the school is an essential element of multicultural education impacting teachers' success in the classroom. The participants believe that for learning to take place it is important to provide a safe environment for children especially refugees, which is possible through collaboration. Promoting ideas of tolerance and acceptance in the classroom is of little use if school structures do not function with the same ideas.

Parents of the children and the government belong to the exosystem as their actions indirectly affect teachers. Participants point out that refugee students need safe and clean-living spaces to be able to rest and play adequately. Some refugee students, as informed by the participants, fail to attend school due to the travel distance from their camps. Furthermore, curriculum and textbooks are not adequate for teaching students from different cultures, and teachers do not have the anonymity to tweak the curriculum, which affects the learning of these students. As per the participants, the government can support the teachers by making changes in curriculum, training, and develop policies to ensure the children's well-being in the camps.

Parents' involvement in the education of their children affects teachers' success in the classroom. The Greek parents have racist attitude towards refugees and that impacts the environment of the school as their children mirror similar emotions that can lead to conflict and hostility among students. Parents of refugees do not have the time or energy to support the education of their children since they are occupied on with the asylum process. Consequently, this affects their learning and development in school.

Students' cultural background is one of the important elements of consideration while teaching in a multicultural classroom. The participants put emphasis on the need to be aware of refugee students' cultural values, and be cognizant of their own biases regarding cultures. Teachers need training to be able to identify these issues, and to create and implement culturally responsive interventions in the school. An interpreter can support communication between

families and school, thereby, helping teachers to understand the different family cultures of their students better.

Changes in the school setting such as, newly arriving students, students dropping out, changing of teachers and other structural changes caused due to governmental policies have been located under chronosystems. These changes affect the environment of the school and has some impact on the teachers and children. For example, teachers point out that they need to modify their lessons when new students come into their classrooms and must make new plans to meet the needs of newly arrived students in the middle of the academic year.

It is thus clear from the framework that all these systems need to interact and support one another, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls the mesosystem. Without communication and support within the systems, teachers struggle to do their jobs efficiently. "To function effectively as a context for development is seen to depend on the existence and nature of social interconnections between settings, including joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting about the other" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 6). The arrows in figure 2 point both ways because developmental process is two-ways, which suggests not only does the person benefit from the environment but he or she also influences that environment (Anderson, Hamilton, Moore, Loewen, & Frater- Mathieson, 2004).

A teacher is responsible in bridging the gap between in students' knowledge and skills. The zone of proximal development, as conceptualised by Vygotsky in 1978 refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance. The zone can be missed due to the various challenges mentioned by the participants in this study. Teachers, by becoming aware of their own cultural biases can enable children to develop cultural competence and sensitivity to students, through lessons. Lessons and other school structures should not aim at creating different identities nor should it force students to adopt the Greek culture. Students' own cultural and lingual identities needs to be leveraged for their development.

When two cultures come in contact, as in the case of refugees and migrants, acculturation takes place. Acculturation is the complex interaction between these two cultures that has an impact on mental health, social well-being of people who are a part of this interaction (Castro, 2003). This interaction is then dependent on how education systems and policies promote integration of newly arriving refugees into the host community. Even though Greek schools conduct reception classes to integrate children into their mainstream school, their efficiency is a matter of concern as per the participants. Moreover, since the camps where refugees live are located far away from the city, there is little opportunity for interaction between them and their host community. This presents many challenges to teachers who have multicultural classrooms. The onus is completely on the school and the teachers to foster healthy interactions within the different cultures. Fostering social and psychological interaction is hindered not just by policies but also attitudes of Greek parents toward refugee students studying in the same school with their children.

Whiting's (1980) highlights that societal institutes such as school have influence over the type of interactions children experience, thus affecting their development. Even though teachers identify creating safe and interactive spaces as a best practice in multicultural education and refugee education, they struggle to do so due to lack of training and resources. Reception classes held for refugees is a hindrance to inclusion and integration as it reinforces ideas of differences and act as barrier in the interactions of Greek and non-Greek students. The participants hold the government responsible in developing policies and teacher-training programs that can enable teachers to guide the process of learning and create interactive spaces for children.

Taylor and Sindhu (2012) conducted research on the best practices in refugee education and concluded that targeted policies along with the values and ethos of a school is essential. Schools that support linguistic and cultural diversity help refugee students to successfully integrate into the host country. Furthermore, schools need to adopt a holistic approach and identify the social and emotional needs of refugees, and collaborate with external organizations to

meet the needs of all children. (Taylor & Sindhu, 2012.) It is also argued that the how inclusive learning is perceived influences decisions made in curriculum, teaching approaches, and the overall environment of the school consequently affecting educational outcomes (Nieto, 2010). Teacher perceptions of multicultural classrooms therefore also influences the environment of learning in a classroom.

7.2 Role of schools

Maslow (1943) in his hierarchy of needs model identifies psychological needs such as air, food, shelter, clothing, warmth, sleep as basic needs of utmost importance. Safety needs such as security, stability, freedom from fear also fall under basic needs second to that of psychological and biological needs. For humans to reach their full potential, fulfilment of the basic needs is fundamental. (Maslow, 1943.) According to McLeod (2017), applications of Maslow's hierarchy of needs developed in 1943 can be found in classroom teaching. He says that for students to learn and grow in school, their basic needs must first be satisfied. Moreover, refugee children need to feel emotionally and physically safe and accepted in schools and within the host community in order to learn and progress. Maslow (1943) also argued that students need to see that they are valued and respected in the classroom for them to become successful learners.

However, the challenges pointed out by teachers depict that there is very little cooperation between Greek parents and the school which makes it difficult for teachers to create a positive environment in the classroom. Furthermore, lack of resources and weak integration policies have left refugees struggling to meet their basic needs. As refugees battle to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, learning in the classroom takes a back seat. Schools can help refugee children to develop resilience by enhancing their individual competencies and minimise the negative impact of conflict and migration on their development and give them back a sense of control over their lives which they lose in the process of migration (Lefcourt, Martin, & Saleh, 2002). Teachers in this study stress on

the need to build confidence among students especially the refugees as a best practice.

The study reveals that schools can play an important role in supporting children with mental health needs. The support is also necessary for effective learning to take place in a classroom. Refugee children remain vulnerable to risks of developing mental health problems due to war, mobility and trauma associated with it (Rousseau, 1995). Financial difficulties paired with racial discrimination, unsafe living conditions, challenges with the new language and culture add to the existing trauma (Ehnholt, Smith, & Yule, 2003).

8 DISCUSSION

The following section discusses the key findings from the study in relation to the research questions and existing literature mentioned in the previous sections. Certain comparisons between previous research, policy and their implementation in the school on the Greek Island have been made in this section. Furthermore, training needs identified by the informants that could potentially help them in the implementation of the best practices have been explored. A systems approach has been identified as a best practice in refugee education in Greece. Finally, the trustworthiness of this study has been mentioned which includes the researcher's personal interest followed by limitations and further recommendations.

8.1 Theories in refugee education and their practice on Greek Islands

Language needs. Learning the new language is crucial in the process of integration in the new country for both children and adults as pointed out by Loewen (2004). In schools, second language learning needs are seen as representing a lack of intelligence or academic potential (Gunderson 2000). As pointed out by the teachers in this study, this holds true as most teachers find

themselves or their colleagues striving to reduce curriculum and making tasks easier to meet the needs of refugee children. This shows that teachers need support not only to understand learning needs of refugee children but also to identify their own biases and prejudices that hinder learning in these classroom.

To learn a second language, it is important that children interact with native speakers of the language (Leung 2002). This provides opportunities and incentives to children as learning the new language becomes more purposeful. Moreover, as reflected in this study, there is a clear divide in the school between refugee children and their native peers possibly caused due to the reception classes that separate students to teach the language. However, if refugee children are not given extra support, language barrier hinders learning of other subjects in mixed classrooms. Nonetheless, Rutter (1994) revealed that if second language learners are separated from mainstream classes like in the case of Greece, they miss the opportunity to interact with native speakers and may limit their access to the curriculum and lead to labelling which may have a negative impact on the culture of the school that is trying to promote inclusion and tolerance. Multicultural schools need to find a way to teach the second language that compliments ideas of inclusion and integration.

Vygotsky (1978) found that language proficiency and cultural knowledge is a result of social interaction between refugee students and their native peers in the host society. Schumann's (1986) highlights that social interaction with the native speakers is essential for successful acculturation. Reception classes proposed by the Greek government deny refugee children the opportunity to interact with native speakers, thus slowing down the process of acculturation and learning. Multicultural schools with refugees need to develop measures and strategies that facilitate interaction with native peers to improve language skills and speed up the process of integration of refugees into the new community.

Parental involvement. Teachers in multicultural classrooms with refugees and migrants need the support of interpreters to bridge the communication gap with children and their parents, thus increasing their involvement in their child's education. Parental involvement of refugees is an aspect that is missing, as

mentioned in the findings of this study, due to language barrier, distance of camps from school, social exclusion and complicated asylum processes. Even though the Greek government appointed mediators to facilitate communication between parents and the school, the initiative was futile as they did not share a common language with the refugee families. Hamilton (2001) reveals that a mediator should be aware of cultural differences that can facilitate sensitive communication between the school and the parents. Interpreters to facilitate parent-teacher communication, and training for Greek parents to accept diversity are crucial steps towards successful integration of refugee children in mainstream schools on Greek islands.

Culturally responsive pedagogy. For learning and development to take place in multicultural classrooms teachers must adopt practices that respond to the cultural differences among students. The findings of this study reveal that teachers need training to develop and implement culturally responsive pedagogical strategies. This is supported by Spark (1989) who highlights the importance of accommodating different learning styles and responding to different cultural backgrounds in instruction and curriculum. To enable teachers, training should focus on building awareness and developing intercultural competence. Additionally, this study reveals that language barrier is a hindrance to understanding the culture of students making it difficult to adopt culturally responsive pedagogy. Greek government can support the teachers by meeting these training needs and by providing interpreters to bridge the language gap.

Mental health support. The findings emphasise that students, especially refugees need mental health support in addition to safe living spaces to be able to learn and develop. This is supported by Mortimore (1995) who identifies the need to design and implement school-based interventions to meet the mental health needs of students affected by trauma. This includes supporting staff in comprehending the experiences of refugees that may lead to trauma, developing an understanding of the symptoms of mental health issues, and providing support to teachers to manage their own frustration when working with refugee students (Frater-Mathieson, 2004).

As per Mitchell (2014), effectiveness of teaching can be judged by the degree to which learners are made independent and the extent to which teachers can develop a sense of well-being in the learners. In this study, teachers are unaware of ways to address behavioural issues arising from mental health problems. They deal with behavioural issues by either sending the child out of class or discouraging them from coming to school thus, failing to develop a sense of well-being.

8.2 Refugee education policies and their implementation on Greek Islands

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (2016, 2017) of Greece drew up certain best practices in education to deal with the refugee crisis. These included parents' involvement, activities with children such as outings, conducting events to build relationship with the local community, psychological support for parents, teachers and students, and additional educational material and teacher training. This study reveals most of the best practices mentioned in the report is missing from schools on the island. Not only is there a lack of resources such as interpreters and psychologists, teachers highlight the gaps between what is expected from them and the training they receive to be able to successfully fulfil these expectations.

Refugees have a right to education as stated in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1951 Refugee Convention and education laws in Greece. In practice, refugee students are discouraged from enrolling into schools by teachers and school principals as they do not have the resources and skills to manage them. Complicated policies around vaccination also deter refugees from enrolling into schools. Refugee education coordinators have been employed to communicate with parents about the Greek school system but this initiative is futile since the coordinators do not have the language skills to communicate with them. (MoE, 2017.)

The MoE (2017) encourages schools to build inclusive structures that create a feeling of acceptance and security among children and aid in the integration of refugees in the local community. The implementation of this could be difficult as feelings of exclusion could manifest in structures such as building camps for refugees several kilometres away from the main city. Furthermore, for schools to succeed in building inclusive structures, teachers and school leaders need thorough training as revealed in this study and supported by Taylor and Sindhu's (2012) research.

The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs of Greece needs to create flexible educational policies as not many refugees opt to stay in Greece but have plans of moving to other EU countries. Moreover, separate policies are needed for the islands as they only serve as hotspots hosting refugees for a small duration. The MoE in 2017 made some proposals for the education of refugee children for the school year 2017-2018. It proposed the integration of children with enough knowledge of the Greek language into normal classrooms. In the experience of teachers in this study, there is no standard set for the level at which the students need to be before they are transferred to normal classrooms. Additionally, since teachers have little knowledge on multicultural instructional strategies, varied language levels of students in the class set them up for failure.

Even though Greek policies and proposals display good intent, this study reveals that its implementation relies on strict monitoring and regular assessment; and increased resources for the education sector. One major area of concern remains the training of teacher on multicultural education as pointed out by the participants of this study. Most classroom level issues could possibly be minimized through pre-service and in-service training of teachers on various aspects of inclusive education and education of refugees.

8.3 Teachers' needs in multicultural classrooms with refugees

Teachers need skills and intercultural competence to teach in multicultural classrooms with refugees and migrants. One of the most important skill is to

teach without having a common language with the students (Bunar, Vogel, Stock, Gright, & López Cuesta, 2018). As pointed out by the teachers in this study, they need support with developing and implementing inclusive pedagogy and structures that will support learning despite the absence of a common language.

Teachers' training is a crucial responsibility of education institutions in multicultural context (Gay, 1993; 2002; Goodwin, 1994; Grant & Sleeter, 2006). The findings of this study reveal that teachers have very little knowledge about their students' cultures and migration situation due to language barrier. Vavrus (2002) and Cochran-Smith (2004) claim that this lack of awareness and understanding could lead to minority groups experiencing a sense of rejection due to their teachers' perceptions. In this case, teachers not only lack the skills but also the resources to communicate with the families and children and the gap is left unbridged until the students lose interest in going to school and drop out.

A report by PPMI (2017) on teacher training for diversity in Europe emphasise the need to improve in three areas. First, increasing knowledge in dimensions of cultural diversity and ways to address it. Second, improving communication between teachers and parents, and teachers and students. The third concerns management and teaching such as creating safe, inclusive spaces and using culturally responsive teaching methods to meet the needs of all students (PPMI, 2017). The findings of this study present identical needs concerning teaching in multicultural classrooms with refugees.

Enhancing intercultural education in teacher training institutes must become a priority (Gundara, 2006). This claim is supported by Wallace (2001) who emphasises that such training is important to build critical thinking and intercultural competence in teachers. Since the refugee crisis in Greece has exacerbated only in the last few years, it is unfair to expect higher education institutes to already have such training in place. However, if the Greek government puts in effort to improve training for in-service teachers, learning and developmental needs of refugee students can be met.

Research all over the world suggests that teacher training on intercultural education is either insufficient or completely missing. The findings of this study

highlights that teachers struggle to succeed without thorough training in pedagogy. Resource allocation to teacher training must be prioritised by the Greek government as it is clearly a major need of the teachers as revealed in this study and as pointed out by other researchers. Principals and teachers need abundant support for the period it takes to develop inclusive school systems. As per Moore (2004), funding programmes and government agencies can provide this support through increased resources and by developing national policies on refugee education. "It will require pre-service and in-service teacher education to focus on inclusive pedagogy; continuing class-wide and school-wide support for teachers in adapting curriculum, increasing teacher awareness of different cultures and their experiences; and providing continuous professional development support for existing teachers, boards and principals." (Moore, 2004, p. 105)

8.4 Improving the quality of education using systems approach

"A system is a set of elements that function as a whole to achieve a common purpose." (Betts, 1992, p. 38) The education system of every nation is made of different actors such as teachers, parents, students, political leaders, and various design elements such as policy and funding. Each component is dependent on the other for the whole system to work effectively. For example an increase in funding for school resources will not necessarily increase learning if parents are uninvolved in the education of their children. In the case of Greece, policy makers, teachers, parents, the government and NGOs all need to work together for learning to be possible for refugee children. As the findings of this study highlight, a lack of coordination between the various actors has resulted in teachers feeling unsupported.

To achieve the objectives of the Ministry of Education, collaboration with the Ministry of Migration, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Solidarity, with educators, municipalities and international organizations is crucial. (MoE,

2016). The Ministry of Education also recognizes the training needs of teachers and other education officials such as counselors and administrators to be able to successfully implement major interventions. They propose that educators are given systematic orientation and guidance for dealing with refugee students. They also propose strengthening links with refugee parents, placing support staff in classrooms with refugees and providing teachers with psychologists. These elements are not present in the school that was examined in this study.

The findings of this study highlights the need for all the components of the system to work together and in coordination in order to support growth and learning in all children especially refugees. As mentioned earlier, this is supported by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework. For example, teachers can be effective in the classroom only if the basic needs of the students are met outside school as pointed out by this study and highlighted by Maslow (1943). The government of Greece and other nations need to adopt a systems approach by designing and implementing interventions that ensure participation of all actors, and effective functioning of all components in the education system. A systems approach paired with rigorous training of teachers could potentially improve the quality of education provided to refugees and migrants in Greece and around the globe.

8.5 Refugee education in other EU countries

In the Netherlands, support is given to teachers and school leaders to develop competencies and qualifications in all schools. Efforts have been made to increase student achievement by providing induction classes for newly arrived migrants in secondary schools and additional language support activities in municipalities. Universal and targeted measures such as extra funding for schools, policies to improve quality of language teaching and to tackle early dropout from secondary schools have been taken in the Netherlands to meet the needs of students from migrant backgrounds. (Shewbridge, Kim, Wurzburg, & Hostens, 2010.)

However, the distribution of migrants into Dutch schools was uneven leading to segregation. In 2006, policies focused on collaboration between schools in order to make this distribution more balanced. Policies mandate schools to take in students and encourage citizenship. Dutch schools have the autonomy to decide curriculum and pedagogy and in hiring and education teachers. Education inspectors keep a check on the schools to ensure implementation of the policies. (Shewbridge et al., 2010.) As this study reveals, teachers and the school would benefit if given the autonomy to decide curriculum and culturally-responsive pedagogy. According to the informants, teacher training would empower teachers with the skills and knowledge required to make these curricular and pedagogical choices. However, policies in Greece do not allow any such autonomy leading teachers to feel frustrated and 'burnt-out'.

Sweden has developed policies to promote equity which reflects in the policies of migrant education. It supports refugees and migrants to retain their own mother tongue and culture and provides support to learn the language of the host community. However, it faces a lot of challenges in its implementation due to its decentralised system. School policies vary from one school to another and some schools do not have the capacity to respond to the needs of diverse needs of migrant students. Unlike Greece, Sweden has strong early childhood education and care facilities. The government of Sweden initiates continuous reforms of teacher education and provides in-service training to improve the quality of teaching. (Taguma, Kim, Brink, & Teltemaan, 2010.)

Sweden faces challenges in integrating newly arrived migrants in mainstream classrooms as they risk falling behind and dropping out of schools. Hence, the focus is not on preparatory classes but in providing equality in learning opportunities. (Taguma et al., 2010.) Even though strong training policies are present, OECD report on Teacher Education for Diversity reveals that teachers do not feel prepared to handle diversity in classrooms (OECD, 2009). The participants' experiences in this study on the Greek island also point towards teachers feeling deflated and unsuccessful in classrooms due to lack of training.

Countries could benefit from having inspectors to ensure implementation of policies like in the case of Netherlands.

It should be noted that the situation in Greece is different from other EU countries due its geographic location and the Dublin regulation which forces migrants to seek asylum only in the first country of arrival. This puts pressure on Greece as it is an entry point for migrants coming from the middle east and Africa due to its location. Moreover, the situation on the islands is different as they serve as hotspots. Policy and its implementation, the challenges faced by the education system are therefore contextual and differs from one country to another within the European Union.

It needs to be understood that inclusion of refugee children can be achieved by improving their access to quality education and their involvement in educational institutions. Studies conducted in various EU countries such as Netherlands, Sweden, Austria and this study on the Greek island point towards the need for strong teacher training programmes. Empowering teachers through training and resources seems to be an important step towards ensuring better education and integration of refugees in the host community. Teacher training paired with support from and communication with other stakeholders could improve the quality of education offered to refugees across the world.

8.6 Trustworthiness of the study

It is necessary, in qualitative research, to establish confidence among readers which Lincoln and Guba (1985) call trustworthiness. To do so, the researcher needs to consider the following:

1. Credibility - this involves justifying the truthfulness of the findings
2. Transferability - showing that the findings can be applied to another context
3. Dependability - showing consistency in the findings and possibility for repetition

4. Confirmability – showing that the study is neutral and is free of researcher’s biases, motivation and interests.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that using techniques of triangulation, prolonged observation and getting peer perspective could increase the trustworthiness in qualitative research.

To ensure rich and authentic data, I decided to spend two months in Greece. This gave me an opportunity to immerse myself completely in the culture of the country and the school the participants work in. The participants were purposefully chosen based on their experience in teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees. This ensured that the informants had rich experiences and knowledge to answer the research questions. Lincoln and Guba (1985), point out that prolonged engagement in the field to understand the social setting and phenomenon adds credibility to qualitative research. Furthermore, since adequate time was spent building trust and rapport with the participants, it facilitated understanding between me and the participants and led to honest sharing of experiences.

Interviews were reheard to ensure there was no loss of data. During the coding process, the transcripts with codes were read by another researcher to ensure consistency within codes reducing the bias of a single researcher. The coding scheme was first tested on a small sample and then used on the entire data set (Silverman, 2000). The research process and findings of the study have been presented in a descriptive manner.

Transferability of the study is possible in any multicultural school and classroom setting with refugees and migrants in hotspots as the issues that teachers face in these settings are similar. The detailed and meticulous documentation of data and descriptive reporting of it makes it easier for further researchers to transfer elements of this research to their own study. Through careful data preparation, coding and interpretation, the results of this research have been prepared, that can validate existing theories and support the creation of new models for teacher training, and policies for multicultural classrooms with refugees.

Excessive direct quotations have been used to present the findings. This acts as a connection between the data and the result thereby increasing conformability by decreasing the researcher's biases. As per Elo et al. (2014), the findings must reflect the participants' voice and not the researcher's biases or perspectives. (Polit & Beck, 2012). Thick description of the findings is a combination of both interviews of participants and researchers' observations of the setting. Throughout the process, I reflected on my own biases and beliefs to reduce any possible errors arising from them.

Observation notes from these classrooms were not intended to be research data but analysis revealed the need for observation notes to enrich description and interpretation. Even though, triangulation is a technique to check the validity of the findings, it can be argued that the interviews were weak and needed compensation through another method. However, in this case, observation notes added more credibility to the findings of the research by making it rich and well developed.

To build reliability and ensure transparency, my personal interest in the area of multicultural education and refugee education has been included in this section. This is also a step towards minimizing the biases stemming from my own interest. Having been a teacher myself for two years in the refugee communities in India, I got interested in multicultural education. My students came from Afghanistan, Myanmar and the various states in India, which are culturally different from each other. I saw a lot of learning opportunities for the students and myself and faced multiple challenges in that classroom owing to the diversity.

These experiences led me to take up a Masters in Educational Leadership at the University of Jyväskylä with a specialisation in inclusive education. The refugee crisis in Europe is a cause of concern and made me think how I can contribute to empower and enable refugee communities through education. Since Greece is at the centre of the refugee crisis in EU, I decided to understand teachers' experiences in that context. Having been a teacher and a teacher trainer, analysing teachers' experiences in this setting enhanced my understanding of the

issue. This study will thus play a part in bringing awareness to the experiences of teachers in multicultural classrooms with refugees, especially in the hotspots.

8.7 Limitations and scope for further research

The potential gaps and limitations of this research should be recognised. I conducted this study in one school operating on an island, which is a transit spot for refugees in Greece. Education systems have to be contextual depending on the context of the host country and the stage of migration of the students. Greek Islands are transit spots where most refugees do not stay permanently, and hence, schools need to adopt short-term fixes. The situation in Greek mainland differs as it is a permanent spot for refugees. Consequently, best practices and challenges as pointed out in this study may vary based on the circumstances and context. Furthermore, the research was conducted in English, which is not the first language of the participants. Since language is critical to the expression of meaning (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010), there is evident drawback in using a non-native language to explore complex topics.

Experiences are determined by factors connected to nationality, gender, class, years of experience in the profession. This study looks at experiences of five Greek teachers in general. To understand the issue in-depth there is a need to understand the context thoroughly through ethnographic research and intersectional methodological approach accounting for how experiences differ along multiple categories. It is argued that case studies such as this serves as a preliminary stage for other research strategies. Another possible drawback is that even though observation notes have been used to enhance description, the notes were not collected systematically and there was no scope for member checking, as the participants did not have time to go through the finished analysis.

However, it is important to state that these limitations do not undermine the outcome of the study; neither does it affect the purpose the study sought to achieve. The study is a description of the experiences of teachers teaching multicultural classrooms with refugees and the findings can be used to develop

tools for teacher training and to create models that can facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders. The study has potential of setting the ground for detailed investigation of the issues on refugee hotspots. Even though there is a difference between the definition of a refugee and a migrant, the findings of the study can be applied to both these groups as the issues pertaining to multicultural education remain the same in both cases and therefore, training needs of teachers in such settings remain unaltered.

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APPENDIX

Thesis interview and questions

Date

xx minutes xx seconds

Warm-up questions:

Pseudo name: P1

School name: S1

Total work experience (in years):

Work experience in this school (in years)

Educational Background:

How many students does your class have?

How many refugee students attend your class?

Which grades do you teach?

Where do your students come from?

Main Interview question:

1. Tell me about your experience teaching in a multicultural classroom with refugee students.

Guiding questions:

1. Can you give me an example of a typical day at school?
2. What according to you makes a teacher successful in multicultural classrooms with refugees?