

**Education of Refugee Students in Greece: Teachers'
Experiences**

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ABSTRACT

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Greece encountered an unparalleled flow of people in 2015, what has been described as a “refugee crisis”. A substantial proportion of the refugee population comprised of children under the age of 18. The Greek state has been called to provide these children with the fundamental right to education. Considering that the need for refugee education provision at such a large scale has been recent and abrupt within the Greek context, the present study attempted to explore the experiences of educators involved in this educational project.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and members of school staff in June 2018 at four different schools in Northern Greece. Three of the schools were located in a small town; the refugee students were integrated in each school through Reception Classes. The fourth school was an Intercultural primary school, located in a big urban centre; the two refugee students attending were integrated into mainstream classrooms.

The findings elicited from the interviews manifest differences between the two settings, namely the Reception Classes and Intercultural School, in terms of the challenges faced and the support networks the informants had access to. Linguistic and behavioural issues as well as inadequate support were repetitive themes among Reception Class teachers.

The findings indicate the multiple layers and system interconnections that exert influence on the reality facing refugees at host communities. Systems that refugees are involved in or systems over which they possess little to no power all have an impact on their educational experience.

Keywords: refugee education, teachers' experiences, trauma

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RC	Reception Class
RIC	Reception and Identification Centre
RFRE	Reception Facilities for Refugee Education
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY	6
2	EDUCATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN	8
2.1	Education as a Right and Necessity	8
2.2	Refugee Status	9
2.2.1	Global and European Situation	10
2.2.2	The Case of Greece	13
2.3	An Ecological Approach to Refugee Children’s Experiences.....	19
2.3.1	Trauma as a Result of Exposure to Violence	20
2.3.2	Role of the Teacher	23
2.3.3	Support of Refugee Students	25
3	METHODS	28
3.1	Context and Research Process.....	28
3.2	Participants	30
3.3	Data Collection	31
3.4	Data Analysis.....	33
3.5	Ethical Considerations	36
4	FINDINGS.....	38
4.1	Cases	38
4.1.1	Reception Classes.....	38
4.1.2	Intercultural School	39
4.2	Challenges and Concerns	40
4.2.1	Students’ experiences and features	41
4.2.2	Support Systems	42
4.2.3	Teachers’ work experience	44

4.3	Students' Social-Emotional Competences	44
4.4	Support Methods	49
5	DISCUSSION	53
5.1	Effects of the Greek Societal Context on Everyday Lives	54
5.2	Challenges and Support Networks: An Interplay of Different Environmental Forces.....	56
5.3	Limitations and Future Research Recommendations.....	60
	REFERENCES.....	63
	APPENDICES.....	73

1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

In recent years, large populations have been forced to leave their homelands, seeking safety as a result of war and conflicts. In a total of 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, more than 10 million are refugees under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2018a). Children constitute the group that is more severely affected due to exposure to war, violence and traumatic events (Anderson, Hamilton, Moore, Loewen & Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Stermac, Clarke & Brown, 2013). However, even though exposure to traumatic experiences can pose challenges for some immigrant and refugee youth in terms of mental health, this is not the case for all individuals (Bonanno, 2004). Despite the various obstacles they face, some individuals manage to utilise coping strategies, demonstrate resilience and recover from trauma (Stermac et al., 2013, p. 216). Thus, some scholars have criticised the tendency to pathologise refugees and put emphasis on their trauma and vulnerability in opposition to their strength and resilience (Hayward, 2017; Summerfield, 1999; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Instead of implementing a medical intervention to facilitate the process of recovery, a welcoming and safe social environment such as a classroom can be a space where normalisation occurs, feelings of trust and respect are cultivated, and thus a healing process is initiated and resilient outcomes are promoted (Anderson, 2004, p. 61; Hayward, 2017). The role of the teacher in such a space is of utmost importance. Teachers need to be able to understand the backgrounds of their students and their traumatic experiences as well how important their own role is in building a feeling of trust and belonging among the newcomers (Hayward, 2017).

The initial aim of the current study was to explore teachers' experiences in terms of the social-emotional expressions and needs of their refugee students within the Greek education system, following the staggering inflow of refugees to the country in 2015. Teachers have a major role to play in the creation of a welcoming space that can be beneficial for students who have been exposed to violence and traumatic events. They need to be aware of the backgrounds and stories of their students in order to provide positive and culturally appropriate

educational experiences that can help students develop a sense of well-being and belonging (Barowsky, 2010; Stermac et al., 2013). How these teachers view their students is critical for the success of their educational practices. Teaching practices that view and treat refugee students as vulnerable and passive victims fail to acknowledge their full potential and can be culturally insensitive. On the other hand, when refugee students are treated as strong and resilient individuals, their presence in the classroom is valued as an asset and a healing process can be potentially facilitated (Hayward, 2017; Summerfield, 1999; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

In order to gain an insight into teachers' experiences of the social-emotional functioning of their refugee students, semi-structured interviews with teachers who have been teaching in primary education Reception Classes (RCs) and an Intercultural School in 2 cities in Northern Greece were conducted in June 2018. Their responses were expected to provide answers to the following two research questions:

- What are the social-emotional expressions of refugee students experienced by their teachers?
- What are the practices employed by teachers to ensure a feeling of wellbeing amongst their refugee students?

During the interviews with the research participants, however, the focus of the study started deviating from its initial objective. Though initially aiming to portray the social-emotional manifestations of refugee students within the Greek education system, the discussion with the informants shed light on multiple aspects of the refugee education in Greece, stemming from the experiences of these teachers. These experiences included the challenges the teachers faced and how they dealt with them, the perceived needs of their students, both social-emotional and academic, as well as the support they provided. As such, this study could better be described as a content analysis of the experiences of teachers within the field of refugee education in Greece, shedding light on the multiple environmental forces that exert influence on the refugee educational reality.

The present study is divided in five parts with the first one being the introduction where the purpose of the study is being described, followed by the theoretical background. This second section begins by establishing the significance of education within the refugee experience and is followed by an outline of the refugee reality on a global and European scale. The focus is then placed on the case of Greece and the specificities of the refugee experience in that region after the outbreak of the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015. The theories that have informed the current study follow. The third section includes the methods that have been utilised for the implementation of the study whereas the fourth section describes the findings that were elicited from the interviews with the informants. The paper ends by discussing these findings on the basis of the theoretical framework.

2 EDUCATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

2.1 Education as a Right and Necessity

Education is a fundamental human right and is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) as well as in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR, 1989). Despite it being a universal right, many refugee children are deprived of education or have access to disrupted education due to factors related to their migration experience. Moreover, despite the existence of international conventions, the type of education children receive, as well as the extent to which the right to education is being respected is reliant on national policies and might vary between different national contexts (Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

Although the provision of education has been viewed as a chance to restore a sense of normalcy in the hitherto unstable lives of refugee children (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003, p. 25), Dryden-Peterson (2017) points to an alternative understanding of education, that of a long-term endeavour that is in line with the prolonged uncertainty that accompanies the refugee experience, taking into

account that the period of displacement is not temporary. In any case, the benefits that education can potentially yield in the lives of refugee children are undeniable. The transitions these children go through take place at a time which is critical for their social and psychological development, putting them at potential risk of developing behavioural problems and learning difficulties (Anderson et al., 2004, p. 2). Schools constitute the place where the socialisation process can start again after being disrupted for a long time and children's adaptation to the host community can be fostered through their interaction with regular students and the acquisition of the host-community language. Schools then have a fundamental role to play in the creation of a safe environment that will allow for the normal development of children and their integration to the new community.

2.2 Refugee Status

In recent years large populations have been forced to leave their homes in order to avoid violent conflicts and resettle in safer areas. These forcibly displaced groups of people might belong to different categories, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people (2018a). Refugees constitute the main focus of the present study; however, the refugee definition will be discussed in relation to the other categories, especially asylum-seekers, a category which is often used interchangeably with refugees, in order for the reader to gain a better understanding of what exactly being a refugee entails according to international law.

The United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951 and having been in force since 1954, and its 1967 Protocol have explicitly determined the criteria that need to apply in order for an individual to qualify as a refugee. According to the Convention, a refugee is an individual who:

“...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being

outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14)

It is thus obvious that refugees comprise a distinct group that is legally defined and, as such, enjoys certain rights and standard protection under international law (Anderson et al., 2004; Gil-Bazo, 2015; Reed, Fazel, Jones, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; Reyhani, 2019). In contrast to refugees who constitute an explicitly defined group, there is no clear definition of asylum in any international legal document. Additionally, as opposed to the refugee status which characterises the individual, asylum has been so far viewed as the institution of protection a state can potentially offer to an individual and, as such, the legal nature of asylum as a right of individuals is a subject of debate within refugee studies (Gil-Bazo, 2015; Reyhani, 2019). Internally displaced people, who constitute the third category of forcibly displaced people, on the other hand, have not fled their country and remain under the protection of that country's government, but are on the run from home within the borders of their own country (UNHCR, n.d.).

In the following pages the facts and figures associated with the refugee experience in recent years will be discussed within an international and European context whereas the section will close by presenting the case of Greece and the refugee reality in the country since the outbreak of the so-called "refugee crisis".

2.2.1 Global and European Situation

At the end of 2017 the highest so far number of forcibly displaced people was recorded, with 68.5 million people (1 out of every 110 people worldwide) being on the run from home. About 37% of those were estimated to be refugees while more than half of the refugee population consisted of children under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2018a). The Syrian conflict between Assad's government and the opposition coalition that broke out in March 2011 (Hove & Mutanda, 2015) has majorly contributed to the sharp increase of forcibly displaced people worldwide in the last five years. In particular, as of December 2017 about 20% of forcibly displaced people were Syrians. At the same time, a number of other considerable

displacements have occurred in other parts of the world, both in Africa and the Middle East (UNHCR, 2018a).

Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Eritrea and Burundi were the ten countries of origin with the largest number of refugees in 2017, accounting for 82.5% of the total refugee population (UNHCR, 2018a). Despite the increased influx of migrants in Europe during recent years, the vast majority of the refugee population has been migrating to neighbouring, economically disadvantaged regions (Barbulescu, 2017; Reed et al., 2012; UNHCR, 2018a). Germany was the only high-income country in the list of ten major host countries for refugees in 2017 whereas Turkey remained the first on the list (UNHCR, 2018a).

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Europe, however in recent years public discourse related to migration issues and refugees has come to the foreground with the so-called “refugee crisis” that reached its peak during 2015 when more than one million people entered the continent (Bulmer & Solomos, 2018; Castelli Gattinara, 2017; European Migration Network, 2018; UNHCR, 2019). Numerous countries were affected in complex ways by the influx of refugees and asylum-seekers in Europe. After a boat carrying over 800 people sank in the Mediterranean Sea in April 2015, the EU proposed a set of measures in response to the crisis that started unfolding at the time. Although the EU has been presenting itself as a safeguard of human rights, some scholars have nonetheless questioned the humanitarian element embedded in the European policies that were directed at the management of migration (Abbasi, 2015; Barbulescu, 2017; Castelli Gattinara, 2017; Panebianco, 2018). Castelli Gattinara (2017) particularly pointed out the inconsistency between the Schengen principle of allowing asylum-seekers to reach their destination of desire once entering the EU and the Dublin Regulation that allowed Member-States to reject certain claims and send migrants back to their countries.

One of the measures taken by the EU in response to this unprecedented incident was an increased presence in the Mediterranean Sea in order to prevent the loss of the lives of people on the route from Libya to Italy and from Turkey

to Greece (European Union, 2016). However, the funding was temporary and directed at extraordinary operations, meaning that once that crisis was over no further assistance would be available for subsequent potential crises (Barbulescu, 2017). The use of military force to prevent smugglers from getting refugees and asylum-seekers on boats from the Libyan shore was another measure adopted by the EU Member-States. This action against smugglers, however, would also mark a ban against the right of asylum-seekers to seek a safe refuge in Europe (Barbulescu, 2017).

The uneven distribution of asylum-seekers among the Member-States, with the majority being accumulated in Greece, Italy and Hungary (Panebianco, 2018), led the EU to adopt quotas in May 2015 for the relocation of 40000 Syrian and Eritrean persons in need of international protection (European Commission, 2015a), supplemented by 120000 persons in September 2015. 718 million euros would be available to the Member-States to support the relocation process (European Commission, 2015b). However, the agreement did not unfold as smoothly as it was hoped for with some Member-States contesting the proposed quotas (Barbulescu, 2017; Castelli Gattinara, 2017).

Different nations reacted in different ways to this unprecedented wave of migrants. Despite the actions taken by the EU to adopt a common set of procedures regarding the asylum process and reception conditions (Directive 2013/32/EU; Directive 2013/33/EU), reality showed that there was no consistent adherence to the practices directed at refugees between Member-States (Dingott Alkopher, 2018; Panebianco, 2018). Germany and Sweden maintained an open-door policy in the beginning and were the two countries that hosted the majority of the refugee population in the EU during 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). Later in the crisis, however, their policies were reversed (Dingott Alkopher, 2018; Renner, Thomas, Mikulajova, & Newman, 2018). In August 2015, near the Greek border village of Edomeni, the Macedonian riot police attempted to block the entrance of migrants to the country, using force to push them back to Greece where they were trying to leave from (BBC, 2015; Milan, 2018). Serbia, although maintaining a welcoming stance at first, later tried to restrict the flow of people, along with

the Slovenian and Croatian governments which faced an increase in the influx of migrants due to the sealing of the Serbian - Hungarian frontier in September 2015 (AFP in Budapest, 2015; Milan, 2018). In early 2016 the Western-Balkan route was eventually shut down (Eleftherakos et al., 2018; Kingsley, 2016; Milan, 2018) and in March 2016 the EU-Turkey deal was enforced, binding Turkey to readmit asylum seekers who were returned from Greece (European Council, 2016).

2.2.2 The Case of Greece

Greece encountered an unparalleled flow of people in 2015 with more than 800000 entering from the sea with the aim of relocating to other European countries. The measures taken by the EU since then have majorly moderated the inflow of people with about 177000 sea and land arrivals in 2016, 36000 in 2017 and 40000 during 2018 (UNHCR, 2018d). As of December 2018, 71200 refugees and migrants were estimated to be residing in Greece (UNHCR, 2018c). In 2018 alone more than 66000 people applied for asylum in Greece and more than 21000 of those were estimated to be children under the age of 18 (Asylum Service, 2019). The distribution of the refugee population within the country was not even, with the bulk of the flow being gathered on the islands of the Aegean Sea (Kalogeraki, 2018, p. 170). At the same time, the refugees were not a homogenous group, but were coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Between January 2016 and October 2016, 46% of the incoming population was from Syria, 24% from Afghanistan, 15% from Iraq, 5% from Pakistan and 3% from Iran (General Secretariat for Media and Communication, 2017).

The Aegean Islands held a crucial spot within the migration trajectory due to their geographical position, comprising both the Greek as well as the external EU border. However, the reason behind the disruption of people's mobility and their accumulation on the Aegean Islands after the 2016 EU-Turkey deal was not the remote location of the islands, but their very definition as the entrance to the EU (Dijstelbloem & van der Veer, 2019). The insufficient infrastructures available on the islands, unsuitable for the accommodation of a large number of people for prolonged time, led to the Greek government being coerced to commence a

decongestion operation in order to transfer people to better shelters in the mainland. Between June 2016 and December 2018 more than 42000 people were transferred to the mainland with the help of the UNHCR and as of December 2018 about 14600 (20%) refugees and migrants were estimated to be living on islands and 56000 (80%) on the mainland (UNHCR, 2018c).

Initially, newly arrived individuals were accommodated at Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) created by the Greek authorities on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos. After the EU-Turkey deal these were described as detention centres (Greek Council for Refugees, 2018a). The Greek reception facilities have been criticised as insufficient and were later supplemented with temporary accommodation facilities in the mainland. However, these temporary sites are not designed for long-term accommodation and their legal status is unclear. Thus, the Ministry of Migration Policy announced that their number would be reduced from 44 to 22 by the end of 2017 (Greek Council for Refugees, 2018b). As of September 2018, six RICs and 28 temporary accommodation sites were in operation on the islands and mainland (UNHCR, 2018e). In addition to the above, the UNHCR commenced an accommodation scheme as part of the ESTIA (Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation) programme in November 2015 in cooperation with local authorities and national and international NGOs (UNHCR, 2017). The scheme provides housing to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in apartments and buildings and as of May 2018 a total of 48283 individuals had benefitted from it (UNHCR, 2018b).

It has been asserted by some scholars that Greece was left to deal with the staggering inflow of people on its own, making evident that it did not possess sufficient structures to support a task of this scale (Kousoulis, Ioakeim-Ioannidou, & Economopoulos, 2017). It is essential, nonetheless, for the refugee crisis to be viewed in conjunction with other crises that have occurred both globally, such as economic inequalities and climate change, and in Europe, such as the Great Recession or Brexit. Greece in particular has attracted a lot of attention due to its central position in the financial crisis in Europe. Kousoulis et

al. (2017) suggest that this economic and social crisis has contributed to the state's incapacity to deal with the refugee crisis.

It was not only the state that was unprepared, however. In the summer of 2015, with the immense numbers of people arriving to the Aegean islands and the banks being temporarily shut as a result of the uncertainty that the outcome of the referendum brought to the foreground (Greek citizens were called to decide whether the government should accept the new bailout conditions proposed by the Eurogroup), the Greek population encountered unparalleled levels of political, financial and social instability; this was not only difficult to grasp but was also creating a sense of helplessness regarding people's capacity to deal with the enormity of such events (Green, 2018). Cabot (2018), points to an interesting analogy between the economic crisis faced by the Greek citizens and the humanitarian crisis that has been brought to the foreground as a result of the en masse arrival of refugees in Europe. Even though the refugee experience bears numerous differences compared to the experiences of citizens who are affected by austerity and dispossession, Cabot suggests that both groups should be viewed as belonging to the same continuum in the context of the Greek economic and humanitarian crisis. Austerity, she claims, has created 'internal refugees' not so much in the sense of geographical displacement, but rather in terms of citizens being removed from the "terrains of rights" (p. 6) and deprived of decent living conditions (Cabot, 2018).

Both refugees and Greek citizens affected by the economic crisis have become in recent years more reliant on formal and informal humanitarian initiatives rather than state agencies since the latter have proved to be incapable of providing the necessities (Cabot, 2018; Evangelinidis, 2016; Kalogeraki, 2018; Papataxiarchis, 2018; Zsófia, 2018). The refugee crisis was accompanied by an upsurge of solidarity initiatives, especially on the islands of the Aegean, that were later supplemented or gave place to international NGOs from Europe and around the world (Cabot, 2018; Evangelinidis, 2016). Nevertheless, solidarity movements have often distinguished themselves from professional humanitarian organisations, emphasising their own horizontal character which

allows for the care-recipient to be treated with respect and not like an 'object', as opposed to institutionalised organisations (Cabot, 2018; Papataxiarchis, 2016; Papataxiarchis, 2018; Zsófia, 2018).

The way Greece responded to and managed the migration flow has received criticism by other nations. The President of North Macedonia (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at the time) Gjorge Ivanov stated publicly that: "The crisis is coming from the territory of Greece – a Schengen area state. So Macedonia has to defend Europe from the EU itself." (The Telegraph, 2016). However, apart from questions related to national security and border control that may contain anti-immigrant undertones and that emerged as a result of the Greek state's stance towards migration, it is important to note the implications this stance had for the refugee population as well. According to a study conducted during 2017 on the island of Lesbos, the inadequacy of the accommodation facilities, the lack of accurate information with regards to asylum procedures, abusive behaviour on behalf of the authorities, continuous exposure to stressful conditions and the lack of sufficient and culturally appropriate mental health service provision have been all found to have an impact on the mental health of refugees (Eleftherakos et al., 2018).

Since children under the age of 18 comprised a substantial portion of the refugee population, with more than 3700 being unaccompanied as of December 2018 (National Center for Social Solidarity, 2019), it is essential to understand how the Greek state handled this vulnerable group, especially from an educational point of view since schools can be spaces where normalcy is restored (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003, p. 25). The Greek state had the obligation under European and national law to provide these children with the fundamental right to education (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2017). This demanding task was taken up by a special committee within the Greek Ministry of Education, the Scientific Committee for the support of refugee children, which was set up in March 2016. Before the Ministry of Education officially assumed responsibility for the formal education of refugees, various NGOs were involved with the creative engagement and education of refugee children. Once the

Ministry of Education took over, they tried to regulate the field and NGOs were requested to be certified. However, the relationship between formal and informal education has not been explicitly clarified (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2017; Zsófia, 2018).

The refugee education plan focused on the gradual integration of the refugees into the Greek education system and the academic year 2016–2017 has been described as the “transition year” (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Migration, n.d.). Children between 6 and 17 years of age, living in non-organised facilities were supposed to attend Reception Classes (RCs) taking place in the morning programme of primary, secondary and intercultural schools. Children living in organised facilities, on the other hand, were supposed to be daily transferred to Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (RFREs) taking place in the afternoon, with the help of Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs) and the financial support of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Children of preschool age were supposed to attend kindergartens that would be set up within the accommodation centres (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2017).

Reality showed, however, that the education project was not implemented as successfully as it was hoped for, as is evident in the April 2017 Assessment Report on the Integration Project of Refugee Children in Education (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2017). Kindergartens took 9 months to be established due to the unsuitability of the premises and, as a result, they did not operate at all during the whole academic year. The operation of the RFREs also manifested numerous difficulties stemming from the constant change of teachers, their inexperience, regulation issues, reactions from the host communities, problems with children’s ages, fluctuation of children’s attendance rates and difficulties in the cooperation between the morning school and the afternoon programme. In addition to that, the operation of education facilities on the Aegean islands was prevented by the Ministry of Migration Policy and as a result the children stranded on the islands did not have access to formal education (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2017).

Based on the assessment of the year 2016–2017, the Committee created a list of propositions for the following academic year (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2017). According to those, children living in cities should attend kindergartens or RCs at primary schools of their neighbourhood while those who possessed satisfactory knowledge of the Greek language should be integrated in regular classrooms according to their age, with additional Greek language classes. The Committee suggested for preschool aged children living in temporary accommodation centres to attend kindergartens within the centres whereas for older students to attend morning RCs, provided that there is enough space available in schools and these are easily accessible with public transport. If those rules did not apply, children of accommodation centres would continue attending afternoon RFREs. The Committee also suggested for children living on the islands to be integrated in the education system.

According to data collected in May 2018 by the Education Sector Working Group (2018), more than 8000 refugee and migrant children were enrolled in Greek Schools, attending either RCs in primary or secondary schools, intercultural schools, schools with no special provision, afternoon RFREs and kindergartens within accommodation centres. The majority of these children were living in apartments or hotels for unaccompanied children. However, only 62% of the total child population (5–17 years) living in apartments was estimated to be going to school. The vast majority of those were residing in the region of Attica while the second largest percentage was located in Central Macedonia. According to the Ministry of Education, on the other hand, an estimated 11000 children were attending formal education as of December 2018 (UNHCR, 2018c). The percentage of children from the islands attending formal education is still low and UNHCR has been providing support with non-formal education activities (Education Sector Working Group, 2018; UNHCR, 2018c).

2.3 An Ecological Approach to Refugee Children's Experiences

All people experience changes in their lives that require a period of adaptation. Refugees, however, constitute a special group in the sense that the changes they have to adjust to are significant and abrupt and take place in multiple aspects of their lives. Taking into account that the environment and the changing conditions of that environment significantly affect the experience and development of refugees, Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach can serve as the conceptual framework that will allow for a better understanding of the impact the environment has on the development of refugee children (Anderson et al., 2004, p. 4).

The different experiences that take place within the different phases of the refugee child's trajectory all have an impact on the child's development. In particular, these experiences occur within the pre-migration, trans-migration and post-migration phases, as seen in Figure 1. At each phase, a set of nested, interconnected systems exists, what Bronfenbrenner calls the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The first one refers to the relationship between the individual and her immediate environment, such as her classroom. The second one refers to the relationship between the individual's proximal settings such as home and school. The exosystem involves relationships between systems within which the individual does not actively participate, such as the parents' workplace and school. Finally, the macrosystem encompasses all the above relationships and refers to a broader societal context that involves cultures, sub-cultures and different belief systems (Anderson et al., 2004, p. 4). Although the focus of the present study is mainly set within the microsystem of the post-migration stage and more specifically within the school context, other aspects of the post-migration phase such as housing as well as experiences that occurred in previous stages will all be taken into consideration to provide more holistic insight into the development and adaptation process of the child.

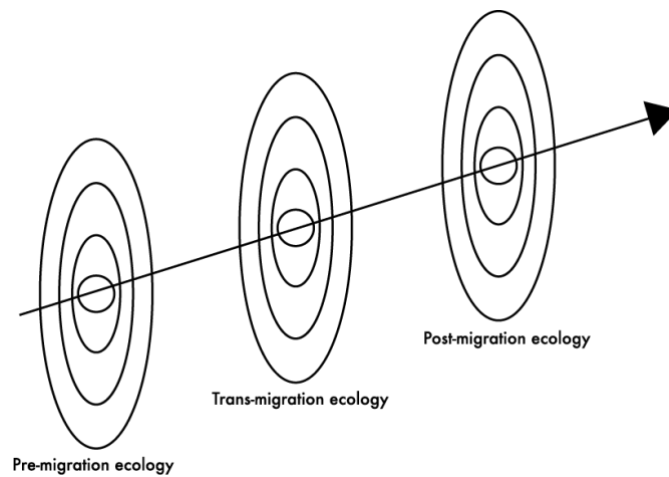


FIGURE 1. Model of refugee adaptation and development (Anderson et al., 2004, p.8)

Another theoretical framework has been utilised in the current study, which, in connection to Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach, can provide a deeper understanding of the effects the migratory process has on refugee children. This includes literature around pre-migration stressors related to trauma and grief and the impact these have on the mental health of refugees (Eisenbruch, 1988; Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Gadeberg, 2017; Hamber, 2019; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Reed et al., 2012; Summerfield, 1999).

2.3.1 Trauma as a Result of Exposure to Violence

The migration process, including violent pre-migration situations, the experience of displacement and challenging post-migration events, can lead to the traumatising of the individual and can potentially interfere with their cognitive and emotional development (Frater-Mathieson, 2004, p.12). Exposure to war, violence and other adversities has been associated with the development of mental health problems among refugee children (Trentacosta, 2016). Psychological trauma entails both the exposure of the individual to adverse circumstances and the insufficiency of the coping strategies available to the individual to help them overcome the difficulties they are facing (Frater-Mathieson, 2004, p.14). In one review of studies on the mental health of refugees and immigrants, the existence of risks during the pre-, trans- and post-migration stage and the challenges specific to each stage were pointed out. For children,

these could include disruptions in education during the pre-migration stage, separation from family during the trans-migration period and linguistic and cultural challenges during the post-migration stage (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

Apart from the immediate negative impact war has on children, such as changes in family composition, disruption of schooling and a feeling of insecurity, it has been suggested that there are also long-term effects on individuals' mental health which are not as visible and which can last for years after the traumatic events took place. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety have all been viewed as by-products of traumatic experiences (Barowsky & McIntyre 2010; Stermac et al., 2013; Trentacosta, 2016). Trauma theorists have assumed that clinical interventions would be beneficial for all individuals that have experienced trauma without exception (Bonanno, 2004).

Nevertheless, the concept of traumatisation has received criticism by some scholars as it is usually defined broadly with a variety of potential symptoms, such as feeling lost or crying, but a concrete definition is lacking (Summerfield, 1999). What is more, there is disagreement in academia regarding the theoretical concepts that are most suitable for the assessment of trauma and mental health in refugee populations (Gadeberg, 2017). This tendency in the field of psychology to emphasise the psychological effects of exposure to trauma and promote professional medical interventions as a necessity in order to recover from such effects emerged after World War II; PTSD was the medical term used to describe these long-term effects of exposure to violence (Summerfield, 1999).

However, the view of trauma as a medical condition is a product of Western psychological models which cannot and should not be applied to all contexts unconditionally as they may not conform with the refugees' perspective on mental health needs (Hayward, 2017; Summerfield, 1999). In one review of studies on the mental health of Syrian refugees, for example, community-based interventions were suggested as a form of psychosocial support for some individuals (Hassan et al., 2016). Furthermore, the assumption that traumatisation is the direct result of exposure to violence shifts the attention

from the social sphere to the individual, biopsychological sphere. Individuals are presented as responsible for their condition and the situational, sociocultural and political factors that could also be critical for shaping the worlds of these individuals seem to be ignored (Summerfield, 1999).

According to Hamber (2019, p. 8), trauma should not be viewed as the effect generated in a linear way from exposure to a traumatic experience. It should rather be understood in relation to the context within which it is taking place. This perspective allows us to view trauma as a process. Trauma then is not merely determined by the past experiences the individual has gone through, but by the reinterpretation of these past experiences according to the individual's understanding of the current social conditions that surround her (Hamber, 2019, p. 8). In other words, current experiences are essential to how one interprets the events of the past.

Trauma and mental health problems should not be viewed in isolation from the cultural perspective of the individual who experiences it. Culture can play a critical role in the way someone experiences, interprets and reacts to health problems, that is whether they will seek help, how much information they will reveal about their problem, what language they will use to describe an illness as well as whether they will use remedies from their own tradition to treat an illness. (Hassan et al., 2016; Kirmayer et al., 2011.) The role of culture within the realm of refugee mental health has been stressed by other scholars as well. Eisenbruch (1988) discussed the grief and bereavement that refugee children experience as a result of cultural and personal loss in relation to the mental health problems that this bereavement can potentially harbour. He stressed the importance of viewing grief on a community level rather than through the Western lens of individualism and emphasised the role of social support systems as protective factors against psychological symptoms (Eisenbruch, 1988). Frater-Mathieson (2004, p. 25) further suggested that unless trauma and loss symptoms are understood through a cultural lens, their validity is questionable.

2.3.2 Role of the Teacher

One of the first and most significant steps a refugee child has to take when settling in a new country is to adapt to a new school environment. Both past experiences, such as exposure to trauma and violence, and post-migration experiences such as housing and new surroundings, can either facilitate or impede this process of adaptation (Anderson et al., 2004, p. 9). Different studies on the impact of trauma on refugee children within an educational setting manifest inconsistent results, ranging from children exhibiting resilience to children displaying emotional problems such as being reserved or aggressive (Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Szente, 2006). These contradictions demonstrate that refugees are not a uniform group with the same needs and experiences.

A school and, more specifically, a classroom can by its nature have therapeutic benefits for the child (Hayward, 2017), constituting a bridge between the child and the new social environment and providing the necessary resources for students to thrive in such an environment (Matthews, 2008; Sullivan & Simonson, 2016). Schools can sometimes be the only point of contact between the host community and refugee students and, as such, they have a major role to play in the support of their students, helping them cope with the impact of traumatic experiences, ensuring a smooth transition into the new environment and thus promoting resilient outcomes (Anderson, 2004, p. 61). A close bond to a caregiver and/or an effective parent has the potential to ameliorate the harmful consequences war has on children's development (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). However, taking into consideration that certain children might face an additional disadvantage due to their parents' psychological difficulties, the role of the school in general and of the teacher in particular becomes all the more essential (Anderson, 2004, p. 61).

Teachers can equip their refugee students with the resources necessary for their future, ameliorating the sense of uncertainty that is often inherent to the refugee experience and preparing them for what is to come (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). They hold a crucial position that renders them capable of acknowledging potential skills in their students and assisting their further development. This

approach of skill reinforcement can result in resilient outcomes and boosted self-confidence. (Hayward, 2017; Masten, 2016, p. 21). In the idiosyncratic domain of refugee education, however, teachers need to take into consideration the impact of trauma in order to avoid causing additional stress to their students. Nonetheless, given the fact that teachers are not mental health professionals, they should approach the vulnerable group of refugee students with caution when trying to support their wellbeing in order to avoid reverse outcomes that can be harmful (Hayward, 2017).

The ability of the teacher to successfully handle the task of refugee education is determined by multiple factors. The beliefs of the teachers towards their students, the role they possess as well as the resources available all have an impact on the level of success of the education and support provided to refugees (Rose, 2018). Teaching practices that view and treat refugee students as vulnerable and passive victims fail to acknowledge their full potential and can be culturally insensitive. On the other hand, when refugee students are treated as strong and resilient individuals, their presence in the classroom is valued as an asset and a healing process can be potentially facilitated (Hayward, 2017; Summerfield, 1999; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

Teachers need to be cautious not to underestimate the capabilities of their students solely based on their refugee status. A knowledge of different cultures and the values that are embedded in these cultures is required for teachers to truly understand what it means to be a refugee. Already in 1984, Olstad, Foster and Wyman (1984) pointed to the need for educators to obtain skills that will allow them to effectively perform within multicultural settings. Taking into account the cultural differences that are very likely to exist between refugees and their teachers, there is a potential risk for conflicting stereotypes to occur within the student-teacher relationship. It is then crucial for teachers to develop a cultural understanding in order to positively contribute to refugee education. For teachers to gain such knowledge, however, and encourage cultural diversity in the classroom, great levels of support are required, including preservice multicultural education and in-service training, so that they won't get

overwhelmed by this demanding task (Chisholm, 1994; Hamilton 2004; Szente, 2006).

2.3.3 Support of Refugee Students

The support available to refugee students within an educational setting can be a result of practices occurring at different levels and within the interconnections of these levels. On a school level there are certain features critical for the effectiveness of the school, such as the role of leadership, parental involvement and school environment (Hamilton 2004; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). In an American-context study that explored practices that could facilitate the support and adaptation process of refugee children, strategies related to emotional support, academic adjustment and an establishment of bonds between home and school were located as potential successful practices (Szente, 2006). Taylor and Sidhu (2012) also point to the significance of parental and community involvement. Several studies have shown that when parents are involved within the student community, that can positively influence the performance and behaviour of students (Hamilton 2004, p. 89). Home visits by the teachers and the use of interpreters can facilitate the creation of bonds between home and school and thus promote parental involvement (Szente, 2006). At the same time, schools need to have an outreach attitude and support parents develop certain skills, such as second language skills, and cultural understanding in order to facilitate their participation (Hamilton, 2004, p. 86).

In a study regarding the educational practices directed to asylum-seeking and refugee children in England, Pinson and Arnot (2010) identified multiple different approaches schools employed for the integration of these students. The authors determined the holistic approach as the one that is taking into account the various aspects involved in the refugee reality. In this context, the term holistic is defined as an attempt to cater to a diverse set of needs such as social, emotional and developmental and not only to academic ones (Pinson & Arnot, 2010). Within a holistic approach particular emphasis is given to a school ethos

that is oriented towards the promotion of a positive image of refugees and asylum seekers (Pinson & Arnot, 2010; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Such schools redefine the very ways integration is manifested and do not merely adhere to predetermined indicators set by policy documents that tend to attach too much importance to academic achievement. One of their primary aims is for the children to feel welcome and secure so that they can achieve personal growth (Pinson & Arnot, 2010). Given the fact that students who do not conform to the predominant norms are more likely to become the targets of bullying, it is important for schools to ensure that refugee students are not being subject to bullying and racism by their peers (Hamilton, 2004, p.88).

A welcoming atmosphere, both on a classroom level through furniture arrangement and on a school level through a detailed introduction to the institution, can create a sense of belonging among refugee students, initiating a healing process. A sense of belonging is also achieved through an inclusive approach that is informed by the cultural background, experiences and language skills of the students (Hayward, 2017). Language in particular should be a priority for teachers as its acquisition can determine how successful the resettlement process will be for the individual (Loewen, 2004, p. 35). Obtaining the language of the host community allows individuals to exercise their agency and function effectively within social contexts. At the same time, the emotional well-being of refugee children is attended to since knowledge of the language allows them to better express themselves and share their concerns and emotions, mitigating potential feelings of anxiety (Hayward, 2017). Prior education experience can facilitate the new language acquisition process. However, since most refugee children have experienced discontinuous or disrupted education, the task of learning a second language presents additional challenges (Loewen, 2004, p. 36). Apart from language barriers, teachers might also experience various challenges related to cultural differences and inconsistencies in the learning styles of their students (Frater-Mathieson, 2004, p. 30). According to Taylor and Sidhu (2012), a successful approach to refugee education is one that attends to the language and learning needs of the students in a culturally appropriate way

and slowly integrates them in mainstream classrooms once their initial support needs are met. There is consensus among academia regarding the linguistic benefits of placing refugee children in mainstream classrooms. However, their inclusion in regular classrooms requires adequate planning, otherwise it might result in reverse outcomes for some students (Loewen, 2004, p. 44).

The academic adjustment of the child is also crucial. Language learning is inherently linked to academic adjustment and the benefits of language acquisition have been previously addressed. However, given the fact that children do not possess the language of the host community, translators would be essential to bridge the communication gap between the child and the teacher. Since many schools have limited resources, though, hiring a translator might not be an option. Employing university students who speak the child's language as volunteers or forming peer learning groups can be beneficial for the child's academic adjustment. Providing after school activities as well as participating in school projects can also enhance the adaptation process (Szente, 2006). Finally, emotional support through play therapies related to art and music can teach children basic emotions and how to express them without the use of language and consequently facilitate the adaptation process (Sullivan & Simonson, 2016; Szente, 2006).

3 METHODS

In the following section I will discuss the process that I followed for the implementation of the current study. I begin this section by describing the selection of the setting and time where and when the data collection was conducted, and by mentioning the steps that were taken in order to locate the informants that were to participate in this research project. I move on by describing the demographic features of the population of interest, that is the refugee students who the informants had been in contact with for about a year at the time of the interviews, in order to provide a complete picture of the context of the study. Consequently, I outline the profile of the research participants while I move on with a description of the procedure that was followed to interview these participants. In the final part of this section, the process of analysing the data and, lastly, the ethical considerations are being discussed.

3.1 Context and Research Process

I conducted the data collection during June 2018 in two cities of Northern Greece where a considerable number of refugees is currently residing. Specifically, the majority of the refugee population in Greece is currently concentrated in the region of Attica as well as Northern Greece after the Greek government implemented a decongestion operation from the islands to the mainland due to the unsuitability of the accommodation facilities on Aegean Islands (UNHCR, 2018c; UNHCR, 2018e). The two areas where the data was collected from were chosen for their accessibility since the limited resources available did not allow for a broader selection of sites. One of the cities is a big urban centre where a considerable number of refugees live, amongst other places, in private apartments whilst the other one is a small town where the refugee population is concentrated at a temporary accommodation site.

The time of the data collection was decided by taking into consideration one main aspect. The academic year for primary schools in Greece ends on the 15th of June. By conducting the interviews in June, the informants would have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of a full academic year. At the same time, since most of their responsibilities would be over by that time, they would be more flexible and would have more time available to participate in the study.

In order to locate the particular schools and informants I first contacted the relevant bodies that are responsible for the primary education in these two cities about 2 months prior to the data collection to gain further information about the right to conduct a study of this nature as well as to identify the schools where refugee students were attending. After specifying the schools that were meeting the requirements, I contacted the principals of the schools either on the phone or by sending emails to set a certain date and time to visit the school in person. The aim of this visit was to directly talk to the teachers who were in contact with refugee students throughout the academic year and gain their consent for their participation in the study.

Once this process was completed, I ended up with a total of four schools in two different cities in Northern Greece that were to participate in my study. Three of the schools were located in one city and the refugee students were integrated in the school through Reception Classes while the fourth school was an Intercultural primary school where only two refugee students were attending, and these were integrated into the mainstream classrooms. These two very different settings could contribute to a deeper and more complete understanding of the diversity of refugee education in Greece.

The age range of the students in the different schools varied. Specifically, the students attending the Reception Classes were in most cases divided in the three schools based on their age and, as such, there were three different age groups, one at each school, the younger students aged roughly between 6 and 8 years old, the "middle-aged" group with students aged between 9 and 10 years and the older students aged between 11 and 12 years. Although age was the primary criterion for the division of the students, in some cases "children's

comfort” was taken into consideration, as one teacher said, allowing for siblings to attend the same Reception Class even though they belonged to different age groups. In the case of the Intercultural School, the two students were 6 and 8 years old and joined the respective mainstream classrooms as determined by the Greek education system, namely the 1st and 3rd grade. Regarding the ethnic backgrounds, these were also diverse. Refugee students attending the Reception Classes came from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and the region of Kurdistan while the two refugee students of the Intercultural School were both from Syria.

3.2 Participants

The three informants teaching at the Reception Classes were all women having worked with refugee students for about one year at the time of the interview. In order to protect the anonymity of the informants, I have assigned pseudonyms to each one of them. Maria had been teaching for nine years in total, four of which she taught at multicultural classrooms and one of which she taught at the Reception Class with refugee students. Georgia had been teaching for a total of ten years, holding a four-year teaching experience at multicultural classrooms and less than a one-year teaching experience at the Reception class with refugee students. In her case, the position at the Reception Class was assumed at the end of the academic year when the previous teacher had to go on a maternity leave. Thus, her actual teaching experience at a Reception Class was less than one year. The third Reception Class teacher, Helen, had a teaching experience of 11 years, one of which was at the Reception Class.

The informants of the Intercultural School were not only teachers, but also worked in administrative positions. Specifically, one of the interviews was conducted with the principal of the school, Kostas. The second informant of the Intercultural school was the vice-principal, Athena, who, apart from having administrative duties, also entered the classroom that one of the refugee students belonged to a few times a week as a complementary teacher. Finally, I talked with Lydia, the main teacher of the classroom where the 8-year old refugee was

placed. Although the initial idea was to only interview teachers that were in direct contact with the refugee students throughout the academic year, interviews with other staff members of the school were welcomed in an effort to gain an insight into the different perspectives of people working with refugee students both directly and indirectly.

Kostas had been a teacher for a total of 32 years at the time of the interview, being a principal for the past 17 years. He spent his whole 32-year teaching career at multicultural classrooms while he had also been involved with refugee students for the past two years. Athena had a teaching experience of 21 years, 19 of which had been at multicultural classrooms. During the last three years she had also been involved with refugee education. Finally, Lydia had a 13-year teaching experience, 12 of which were at multicultural classrooms and the final one also being in refugee education.

3.3 Data Collection

I met with the informants twice. As mentioned earlier, an initial visit at the schools took place in order to explain the nature and purpose of the study to the potential participants. Once their participation was confirmed, I obtained their contact information and a specific date and time for the interview was determined a few days later. The second encounter took place when the interviews were conducted. The interviews took place at a location that we mutually agreed on. I wished to make sure that the place of the interview would be a space where the informants would feel comfortable having a conversation. In the case of the two Reception Class teachers, the data collection took place at a local cafe whereas I interviewed the third one at the school she was working at. The principal and vice-principal of the Intercultural school were also interviewed at their working environment while the teacher of the Intercultural School was interviewed at her home.

The data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The reason behind this selection was my inexperience in conducting research, that

would not allow for a fully structured or unstructured interview. Additionally, since the aim of the study was to understand the informants' perceptions on the impact of trauma on their refugee students, a certain level of freedom in the interview was considered suitable to explore these perceptions within a broad range in order to identify elements that I might have not taken into consideration when framing the interview (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Brown, 2017). Moreover, I wished to provide sufficient space for the informants to recount their own subjective experiences within the field of refugee education (Mcintosh & Morse, 2015), letting my own preconceptions determine the result of the interviews at the lowest degree possible. The language of communication was selected taking into consideration the fact that the informants should be able to express themselves freely and to the highest degree possible. Therefore, since both the informants and I shared the same mother tongue, Greek was selected as the language of communication.

The interview consisted of three main themes and a total of 11 questions that were adjusted accordingly given the circumstances and the flow of the conversation. The first set of questions was more general, seeking to understand the general views of the participants in terms of teaching refugee students as well as their views on the positive aspects and challenges when teaching refugees. Subsequently, the questions focused more on the social-emotional competences of the refugee students whereas the final questions sought to outline the practices the informants utilised in order to ensure the social-emotional wellbeing of their students.

The first two interviews were performed in a public space with other people being present whereas the rest of the four interviews were conducted either at the working environment or the home of the informants, where only the respective informant and I were present. Before the beginning of the interview the interviewees were asked to sign two copies of the consent form, one copy of which had been given to them during the first encounter in order for them to read carefully. Following that, I started the interview by asking the questions that were written on a sheet of paper and adjusting the discussion accordingly based

on the informant. The duration of each interview was 30 minutes on average, with the shortest one being 20 minutes and the longest one being 50 minutes long. The method selected to record the interviews was audio recording and the equipment used was my mobile phone. An initial test-recording of a few seconds took place to ensure that both parties were audible. The recordings were then transferred to my laptop and the consent forms were stored in my personal file.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collection process was completed before the end of June 2018. While collecting the data, I kept a diary discussing my thoughts and preconceptions before and after the interviews. No journal entries, however, were submitted for the first two interviews. The purpose of these reflective journal entries was to facilitate the analysis of the interviews, which was to be carried out later on, by reviewing my personal thoughts during the data collection that could potentially have an impact on the way these interviews were analysed. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2013), keeping a diary can help hone rigour in the analytic process.

Following a 2-month gap after the data collection, I started transcribing the recorded interviews in August 2018. This transcription process is the initial step of familiarising oneself with the data and, despite being time-consuming, it is an essential part of the analysis as it can facilitate the development of a deeper understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interviews were transcribed manually, listening to the recordings through a set of earphones and writing on a Word document while no transcription software was used. The transcripts consisted of uttered speech both by the interviewer and the interviewees, including sounds such as laughter (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On the other hand, body language and facial expressions have not been reported. When transferring excerpts of the transcripts to the present document, ellipses (...) have been used on multiple occasions when the excerpt was too long and the information omitted were not adding to the original meaning. The language used

in the transcripts was the same one as in the interviews, namely Greek. Six different transcripts of a total of 65 pages (font Calibri, font size 12, single line spacing) have been created and saved on my laptop, one for each interview. All documents saved electronically, such as the recordings and the transcripts, were anonymised and all identifiers were removed, as determined by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2009).

Once the transcription of the audio recordings was completed the analytic process began in October 2018. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the familiarisation with the data continues with actively reading and re-reading it in an effort to identify meanings and patterns. After going through the transcripts intently, the text was divided into meaning units that would either be one-phrase-long or one-paragraph-long. These portions of text were then labelled with one or more one-word or one-phrase codes that were summarising the content of these particular meaning units in English (Table 1). The software used for this process was a simple Excel spreadsheet that allowed for an easy assortment of the text units, which were copy-pasted from the Word documents, and their labels. This process generated about 400 different codes, some of which were closely related.

TABLE 1 Initial Analysis- Code Assignment (Original and Translated version)

No.	Text	Code	Informant
256	<p>Γενικά αυτό είναι που εμένα νομίζω με δυσκολεύει περισσότερο, το ότι έχουν θέματα στο να υπακούν κανόνες, δεν έχουν μάθει να ακούν κανόνες</p> <p>Generally this is what's harder for me, the fact that they have issues obeying to rules, they haven't learnt to obey to rules</p>	Challenges/ Lack of prior school experience/ Obeying to rules	2

The next step was for these codes to be grouped in broader categories. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase involves a thought process on the

researcher's behalf about the relationships between codes, themes and the different levels of themes. This was a challenging process as a significant amount of interpretation on the author's side would be involved. A few attempts had to take place before the final categories were determined. At first, I tried to divide these codes based solely on the themes that I felt were emerging from the interview excerpts and by making sure that every single code would belong to a particular category. As I was moving forward, however, I felt that more weight had to be given to the research questions and that the categories that would be assigned to the codes should derive from these research questions. Since the interviews held with the informants were more open, though, the topics discussed, and thus the codes assigned to these interviews, were not strictly limited to the boundaries of the research questions. That would mean that if the categories derived directly from the research questions, not all codes would match a category.

TABLE 2 Categorisation of Codes

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS			
Student's Experiences and Features	Support Systems	Teacher's Work Experience	Other
Challenges/ Language barrier/ Communication/ Behavioural problems	Unwilling to cooperate	Disappointment/ Lack of relevant working experience	No contact with parents/ Language barrier/ Translator

Eventually, I decided that there should be a balance between the themes emerging from the data and the extent to which these themes were in line with the research questions. Thus, I decided that the main categories should be determined based on the research questions, while the subcategories would be determined based on the themes that emerged from the data. That would still mean that some codes would have to be excluded from the final analysis, but this was a conscious decision in order not to let the essence of the analysis deviate

from the research objective. This categorisation process took place for every interview individually in order to get an insight into the number of instances each code occurred at every interview (Table 2). In the end, three main categories were created which will be discussed in detail in the Findings section.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

An ethical approach is critical within educational research and it should permeate the entire research process, from the initial phase of planning to the reporting of findings (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 30). The current study was conducted always keeping in mind potential ethical issues and with respect to the privacy of the research participants. The consent I wished to gain was twofold, both on school and individual level. By initially contacting the school and briefly explaining the purpose of the study, I ensured that the nature of the research project would not be at odds with the school philosophy and policy. The subsequent meetings with the teachers gave me the opportunity to build an initial connection with the potential participants, which would not be feasible through an email or call. All of them agreed to participate. Most of the teachers had previously participated in other studies and were thus familiar with the process. They were encouraged to ask questions during this first meeting but were also handed a consent form to keep and carefully read until the time of the interview. This way they would have time to think of potential questions that did not arise during our first meeting. The consent forms (Appendix 1) were available both in Greek and English to avoid any possible misinterpretations and explicitly addressed the commitments the participants would engage in and the rights that derived from such commitments. The contact information of both the researcher and her thesis supervisor were provided for further enquiries.

Upon mutual agreement, the date and place of the interviews was set. Once the collection of the data was completed, the products of the data collection process were saved in my personal file. According to the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2009), all documents saved electronically, such as the

recordings and the transcripts should be anonymised, and all identifiers should be removed. Numbers and pseudonyms have been used instead. The participants were explicitly informed about the way the information they provided would be handled and, upon request, they could access this information. The participants agreed for their consent forms and recordings to be saved until the final submission of the thesis whilst for the transcripts to be saved for two years after the date of submission.

4 Findings

I conducted the interviews for this study at two different educational settings in an effort to outline the diversity that exists within the field of refugee education in Greece. These two settings have several differences in the way and context they operate which will be described in the following paragraphs. The citations used in this section have been translated from Greek to English by the author. The original excerpts can be found in the Appendix (Appendix 2).

4.1 Cases

4.1.1 Reception Classes

The Reception Classes operated within the regular morning school programme; however, refugee students were in a separate class and not included in mainstream classrooms with the rest of the students, except for the specialisation classes. The number of refugee students per class was approximately 12 children, but this number would fluctuate on a daily basis. Interaction between refugee students and the rest of the students took place during recess, school activities, such as trips or celebrations, and occasionally at co-taught classes that were the result of teachers' initiatives. The extent of this interaction was different for different schools. Maria referred to how "from the beginning we did a lot of activities with other classes with children of roughly the same age"¹. Helen on the other hand described how her students "were constantly sitting alone during recess"². However, the degree of interaction would also be different for different students. As Helen explained some students of hers "who were very sociable by nature... bonded with some girls from the third grade"³.

The students were all accommodated in a temporary accommodation site on the outskirts of the town and were transferred to and from the school on a bus daily. There was a complete gap of communication between home and school; no interpreter was available and the teachers never had the chance to meet the

parents of their students as Maria stated: "We had no meeting with the parents. We never saw them. Never."⁴

The timetable and school programme were differentiated for Reception Classes. The day started about 30 minutes later than for the rest of the school "because these children do not take part in praying"⁵, as Georgia explained. A regular school day would include Greek language and maths, taught by the Reception Class teachers as well as one hour of specialisation classes, such as English language or physical education, taught by other teachers. The schedule and atmosphere in the classroom would sometimes be less strict and more relaxed, as described by Maria "we had them a bit looser at first, talking to each other"⁶. The daily schedule would also include a lot of handcrafts, especially for the younger students.

All Reception Class teachers interviewed had no prior experience in refugee education, thus at the time of the interviews they had just completed their first year teaching refugee students. Maria and Georgia had previously worked at multicultural settings with immigrant students, but as Georgia explained "this was the first time I taught refugee students, the previous three times I had taught children of Albanian and Russian origin...they spoke Greek impeccably"⁷. Thus, in that case there was a common language of communication whereas in the case of refugee students "we had to find a means of communication...common to everyone because the refugees could not communicate with each other either"⁸, as Maria stated.

4.1.2 Intercultural School

The Intercultural School that participated in the study had a different approach to refugee education. The refugee students of the school were only two in total, whereas the rest of the students were either immigrants or Greeks. These two students were integrated in the mainstream classrooms according to their age and were therefore in daily contact with their Greek-speaking classmates. They were accommodated in an apartment provided by an NGO and, as opposed to

the Reception Classes, the father of the students visited the school frequently along with an interpreter also provided by the NGO.

The programme followed, which is defined by the Greek Ministry of Education, bears no differences compared to a regular, non-intercultural, primary school in Greece. Subjects such as Greek language, maths, history, English language, physical education, music and art were included in the daily schedule of the third grade. The refugee student that belonged to that class participated in all subjects except for the Greek language class, when she was “at the Reception Class, [attending] the respective intensive language course”⁹, as Lydia explained. This Reception Class was different to the ones mentioned earlier, which are only directed to refugee students. In this case, the Reception Class takes place on a complementary basis to support students with learning difficulties or other needs in specific subjects, in this case, the Greek language.

In terms of the informants’ working experience, all of them had been in the field of multicultural education for numerous years. The school community in general was familiar with a diversity of backgrounds and cultures among the students and it was not the first year refugee students were part of the school.

4.2 Challenges and Concerns

One of the questions directed to the informants asked them to describe what they thought of as a challenge when working at a multicultural educational setting. It was mainly the informants teaching at Reception Classes who referred to a variety of challenging aspects throughout the interviews, whereas the Intercultural School informants had fewer things to say. In some cases, the term challenge had a negative connotation, that is the word was employed to describe something the informants struggled with, while in others challenge was perceived as something interesting. The challenges mentioned by the informants could fall under the following broad categories, although there were also some other individual factors causing challenges that could not be placed in these categories. Phrases such as “I found it hard”, adjectives such as “difficult” or

nouns such as “challenge” were used to determine the units that these categories would be assigned to.

4.2.1 Students’ experiences and features

Some of the most repetitive challenges were connected to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the students as well as their experiences as refugees. One of the most salient examples was the challenges posed by the linguistic barrier which was repetitively mentioned by the Reception Class teachers. The students of the Reception Classes had diverse ethnic backgrounds, coming from a variety of different countries and thus their native languages were also diverse. In addition to that, most students did not speak English while the teachers only spoke Greek and English, leaving both sides with no common means of verbal communication. This linguistic gap posed a major challenge for the teachers especially in the beginning. As Helen said, “communication at first was very very difficult...That is, in the beginning we were miming”¹⁰. It was evident that teachers reached points of despair at times due to their inability to communicate and help their students understand the rules that apply within a Greek educational setting. In Maria’s words:

A fight breaks out. The children come and fight during recess. They tell me what happened. First of all, I don’t understand what has happened...And even if I do understand... How can I explain to them how we should function, [how can I] solve the misunderstanding?¹¹

In addition to the language barrier that caused considerable problems, the teachers also had to deal with the mobility of the refugee population. The families of the students did not consider Greece their final destination and, as a result, there was a constant fluctuation of not only the number of the students, but also the students themselves during the academic year. Some students would not go to school on a regular basis, some would stop going permanently without informing the teachers in advance and new students would sometimes start attending. This perpetual fluctuation seriously affected the learning environment as “the whole balance changes, [they need to] find the rhythm of the class again, introduce themselves again, accept new members again”¹², as Maria explained.

Another repetitive theme among the data collected at the Reception Classes was that of aggressive behaviour, explosive temper and emotions of anger among the students, elements that, according to the teachers, could hamper the school procedures. The informants would provide a justification for these behaviours even when they were not asked to reveal their thoughts on the perceived causes. Such justifications would include the students' lack of prior school experience, as Georgia said "one of the issues was not only the learning and academic aspect, [but rather] the aspect of learning how to function within a school setting"¹³; students' traumatic experiences, as explained again by Georgia "I have a student who saw his mum exploding on a land mine...This child does have aggression issues"¹⁴; and cultural differences, as Maria said "a feature that is very strong among them is that they react explosively, they can easily hit someone...This is not acceptable for us"¹⁵.

The issue of the language barrier was also mentioned by informants of the Intercultural school, though to a far lesser extent. However, in their case, more general terms were employed, and this linguistic gap was described as a challenge that can potentially exist when teaching refugee students in general and was not necessarily referred to as a challenge during that particular academic year and with those specific students. Even when there were mentions of the language gap as a challenge, the informants maintained a more positive attitude describing it as an obstacle than can be overcome, as Lydia said, "in the end the obstacle is not the linguistic aspect...the children are eventually able to read within a year-a year and a half"¹⁶.

4.2.2 Support Systems

Many of the challenges Reception Class Teachers described stemmed from the lack of effective support systems. Maria repeatedly referred to insufficient guidance and planning by the Ministry of Education as well as inadequate teaching material:

We had some, how can I put it...guidelines, [which were] not only general but oversimplified... We had no substantial help, neither in terms of teaching nor in terms of material.¹⁷

Even when there was training and counselling provided, the trainers were not knowledgeable and thus the quality was described as extremely low by Maria, “it wasn’t a training...Nothing in reality because they didn’t know what to tell us”¹⁸. As a result, the teachers had to create their own material from scratch and determine the instructional methods on their own, as Georgia explained “each one of us does whatever we think is right, we try to find handouts...”¹⁹. They also self-organised and worked together on their own initiative to deliver the best possible results to their students despite the utter absence of support. Such a lack of planning was condemned by Maria who felt that this task was extremely large to be taken on by the teachers themselves since “the educator might not have the will, might not have the eagerness, might not have the time to sit and do it”²⁰. On the other hand, except for the inadequate support provided by the state, the school community was also sometimes unwilling to facilitate the educational process for refugee students. This was the case for Helen who expressed her concerns about the isolation of the refugee students at her school and the reluctance of her colleagues to approach those students:

There was no effort... by other colleagues to approach those children. And I believe the fact that they were alone in one classroom was a very big problem.²¹

Such issues did not come up during the interviews with the principal and vice-principal of the Intercultural School. It was only Lydia who discussed, in more general terms, issues regarding the support systems when it comes to refugee education in Greece. Taking into account the spatial segregation and concentration of refugee and immigrant populations in specific parts of the city, she referred to the inadequate planning and resource management provided by the state which fails to meet the special needs that arise from this refugee population concentration:

And the truth is that while this thing accretes, the school and the state hasn’t taken special care of these areas, to possibly fortify more. There is a horizontal distribution of things, as if everyone needs them.²²

4.2.3 Teachers' work experience

The three teachers working at the Reception Classes had no prior experience teaching refugee students. This lack of experience, combined with the above mentioned insufficient support, made this task difficult, as explained by Georgia "it is my first year teaching refugees this way and I had a very hard time"²³. Helen even admitted feeling disappointed when finding out that she would work at a Reception Class "because I thought I wouldn't be able to deliver"²⁴. During the school year she sometimes lacked the motivation to work, "because sometimes this year I didn't even want to come to school"²⁵. Maria, on the other hand, had a more positive outlook on this challenging task. Despite facing some unfamiliar challenges, she described this experience using words such as interesting or different, "it was a very interesting year because it was like a challenge... It was something completely different compared to other years, so it was very very interesting."²⁶

In contrast to the Reception Class teachers, the informants of the Intercultural School only discussed their work experience in terms of the number of years they worked in the sector of multicultural education while there was no mention of challenges in connection to this experience. On the contrary, Athena referred to how this multiple-year work experience has helped teachers familiarise themselves with the different cultures of their students:

Look, we've been working at this school for so many years now, with children that come from different cultures and different civilisations, that we do not anymore feel that it is something, something foreign.²⁷

4.3 Students' Social-Emotional Competences

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, on certain occasions the behaviour of refugee students would hamper the educational process at Reception Classes. However, this problematic behaviour was only one aspect of the children's social-emotional competences as described by the teachers. At both settings, informants were asked to talk about both positive and problematic expressions of their students' social-emotional competences, with clear differences emerging

between Reception Classes and Intercultural School participants. However, inconsistencies occurred even between the experiences of Reception Class teachers. The themes that emerged from the informants' descriptions will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

Throughout the interviews with the Reception Class teachers there was sometimes a clear distinction between the initial behaviour of the students, expressing existent social-emotional competences or the lack thereof, and their behaviour at later stages, following a learning process. There was a variety of behaviours at both ends, ranging from problematic to positive in the eyes of the teachers. One of the most repetitive examples was that of students being aggressive and hitting each other, "that is, these children were always fighting"²⁸, as Helen stated. However, there were also mentions of positive expressions of existent competences, as Maria described:

...These children were and are showing in all kinds of ways their gratitude, their love, any way they can, even the smallest thing... That is, they bring 10 cookies, they bring one for me. This is an incredible feeling for a teacher, it is amazing.²⁹

There was also a range of behaviours at later stages with Maria describing how her students "learned to better manage their emotions"³⁰ and familiarised themselves with the local culture and rules of the school, while Georgia talked about the bond that was created between her female students and Greek female students, "...the girls...have become very good friends with Greek girls and during recess they will be hugging each other"³¹. On the other hand, there were also cases when the results of this learning process were not as successful. Helen, for example, particularly focused on the learning process when asked about her students' social and emotional competences, emphasising the challenging aspect of it. She referred to the isolation and lack of social interaction between her students and other school members and teachers as limiting factors for the cultivation of social skills among the refugee students. Even when there were deliberate efforts to help refugee students socialise with the rest of the school students, despite an initial ostensible success, the final outcome was not the desirable one:

Because I saw that they were forced to play a group game with another class...and it helped them a lot. And for about a week they might have even talked to the children a bit. They later lost it again, it didn't go on.³²

It is nonetheless noteworthy that not all of the above-mentioned behaviours were ascribed to all students of Reception Classes without exception. When asked about their students' social-emotional competences, Maria chose to talk about her class as a group without distinguishing between different students whereas both Georgia and Helen explicitly referred to specific students when asked about instances of problematic or positive manifestations of social-emotional functioning. Georgia described her students as "very sociable"³³ with only one exception, "I only have one child that does not socialise at all... that... is always alone"³⁴. Helen on the other hand referred to how introverted most of her students were with an exception of three girls that arrived at the end of the academic year:

And they were themselves very sociable children, thus they were hugging me, they were coming close to me, they were talking to me, whereas the rest were very distant children.³⁵

Another essential aspect of the discussion around students' competences was the justification that teachers tended to provide for an array of behaviours. These justifications were mentioned even when teachers were not asked to reveal their thoughts on the causes of particular behaviours and their content varied from the traumatic experiences the children had gone through, the linguistic barrier and cultural differences to the lack of prior school experience and children's personal or gender-specific qualities. Expressions of aggression, for example, that were mentioned by all Reception Class teachers without exception, were attributed to a cultural gap between students' own culture and the Greek culture, as Maria described:

...we tell them all day long do not hit each other, do not hit each other, do not hit each other, something that clashes with their culture and with what they are experiencing there. That is at home they might hit each other, their mother might hit them, they tell me that.³⁶

The traumatic events that the students had experienced as well as the lack of prior school experience that did not allow for students to know how to act within a school environment were also employed to justify expressions of aggression.

Moreover, there were social manifestations, both positive and problematic, that were attributed to the students' inherent qualities. According to Georgia, for example, if her only student that lacked social skills "had a more open character, even if she did not speak the language that well, she could have socialised better"³⁷. Thus, her inherently more reserved personality was viewed as the reason behind her limited interaction with the rest of the students. Helen also ascribed her female students' developed social skills to their personality whereas she also utilised their gender as an explanatory factor for their behaviour in contrast to her male students' more reserved attitude. On the other hand, there was also a case during the last interview that, after noticing this tendency among the previous interviews, I attempted to prompt Helen to provide her own personal explanations on why her students were refusing to open up and socialise with the rest of the school community, when she claimed:

I cannot attribute it to something in particular. I just think that because... they were not in contact with anyone else... They tried to maintain the same thing here at school³⁸.

If we now turn to the Intercultural School, the informants had quite different experiences to narrate regarding their refugee students' expressions of social-emotional competences. Contrary to the Reception Class teachers who on certain occasions made a clear distinction between the initial social-emotional competences of their students and their learning process throughout the year, the informants of the Intercultural School employed different terms that merely described instances of such social-emotional expressions without clearly distinguishing between an initial and later stage. It was only Kostas who once described a particular incident of the refugee students approaching him and talking to him at the end of the academic year, but once again this could merely be considered a description of the way the students interacted with the members of their circle since it was not distinctly mentioned whether this act was the result of a learning process on a social-emotional level. Kostas clearly stated, however, that he thought that this was a big step on a linguistic level:

...the sole fact that at the end of the year they came about 2-3 times and talked to me, that is a big step... A child like that talking to you in Greek. ³⁹

When discussing problematic expressions of social-emotional competences, both Kostas and Athena did not have many examples to give, which is understandable given the fact that they did not interact with the refugee students on a daily basis and to the same extent as Lydia, who was the teacher of one of the students. Although Athena did enter the class as a complementary teacher weekly, Kostas' main interaction with the students was during recess when he would see them playing and interacting with each other, "I was watching them, the children were very good... They were playing with their classmates, they were talking with their classmates in Greek"⁴⁰. Both Athena and Kostas pointed out that there were no major issues regarding the behaviour of their refugee students, with Athena emphasising on multiple occasions how polite and neat they were, although as the discussion moved forward she described an incident that took place at the beginning of the academic year that made an impression on her. There was one specific occasion when the father of the students did not come to pick them up as usual and, as the vice-principal, she had to call the interpreter while waiting with the students until someone would pick them up. This incident upset the two sisters who started crying and wanted to leave "I've never seen that before, dragging me to go open the door in order for them to leave"⁴¹.

Lydia on the other hand was in daily contact with one of the refugee students and thus had more instances of social-emotional functioning to narrate, both positive and problematic. Based on the description provided by the NGO that was providing accommodation to the refugee family, she admitted that she expected to get introduced to a scared and traumatised child who had previously experienced war. There was however an inconsistency between her expectations and reality as she described greeting a child who was smiling, "when you see a child smiling daily, you wonder how frightened and scared it is"⁴². In addition to that, the student's social-emotional competences were described through her reactions and gestures and were portrayed as developed despite the linguistic barrier, "you understand from her reactions, from her gestures, a child that externalises her feelings in other ways"⁴³. One of the positive expressions of social-emotional competences even bore similarities with Maria's descriptions of

positive behaviours among her students, that is a tendency to express gratitude by offering something small in return:

When a classmate of hers helps her, she will show her in some way that she is thanking her, she will either treat her something or give her a small gift.⁴⁴

There were also, however, instances of social-emotional expressions that were described as problematic by Lydia, which, just as in Athena's example, took place during the beginning of the academic year, while the student was still adjusting to the new environment. These were related to the content of the course books and the daily school procedures, areas unfamiliar to the student who had no prior school experience. In both cases the student talked about her concerns to her father who later transferred these concerns to the teacher with the help of the interpreter.

4.4 Support Methods

When discussing the practices and approaches employed by the teachers and staff to support the learning experience and wellbeing of the refugee children and facilitate their adaptation to the new school environment, informants from both settings referred to classroom-level practices as well as school-level ones. Some of them even mentioned ideas and suggestions for further acquaintance with the culture of refugees and for their better integration into the school. However, given the very different contexts the Reception Classes and the Intercultural School operate in, such as the degree of familiarity of the entire institutions with multicultural education and the networks they have access to, certain dissimilarities emerge.

The very reason behind the existence of Reception Classes became evident throughout my discussion with the teachers. Their aim was not as much to help students gain academic skills, but rather teach basic communication skills that could facilitate their adaptation process, support their wellbeing and help students feel comfortable and relaxed. In Georgia's words:

And because, at the stage we are in, we cannot teach them grammar and syntax, that is out of question, we are just trying to teach these children to communicate.⁴⁵

A range of approaches was utilised by the teachers in their effort to create a welcoming atmosphere for the students, such as a focus on pleasant activities like art and crafts or in terms of classroom and desk arrangement, as Maria stated: “We tried to arrange the desks like...in order to be like groups, so that they feel more comfortable”⁴⁶. A certain level of freedom was provided to the students within the classroom setting, giving them the opportunity to sit wherever they wanted or move during class, taking into account that the vast majority had no prior school experience and they were not familiar with the school culture and regulations. Teachers also tried to build bonds and show affection to the students, being close to them during recess and engaging in conversations that crossed the limits they would otherwise set within regular classrooms. That was the case for Georgia who claimed the following:

Some girls who, you know, are going through puberty will tell me ‘miss, I like...’ That is, things have come to be friendlier between us... I wouldn’t do that at a regular class. No, I would not sit and discuss their personal matters for instance.⁴⁷

On a school level, some aspects of the culture of students were respected, not having them participate in the Christian prayer that takes place every morning at Greek schools and complying with their wish to fast during Ramadan. Moreover, there were efforts to include refugee students in school activities and have them participate in art and music classes with regular students. At Maria’s school, for example, there was a positive attitude towards refugees and preparations within the whole school community took place before the arrival of the refugee students. As a result, the rest of the students welcomed the refugees, friendships were formed and no conflicts occurred, according to Maria. This, however, was not the case for Helen who faced the reluctance of her colleagues. Despite her zealous efforts to have her students attend classes along with regular students, the rest of the teachers were not willing to cooperate, resulting in her students being isolated throughout the year, not only during class but also during recess or school trips: “I tried several times, begging...for them to have a common class, either a physical education or some art class... There was no willingness”⁴⁸.

These challenges that occurred throughout the academic year allowed for teachers to reflect on an improved set of practices that could further facilitate the integration of refugee students. Helen stressed the imperative need for her students to be integrated in regular classrooms the following year as she believed that could be beneficial both on a linguistic and a behavioural level, helping refugee students socialise while practicing Greek. Georgia, reflecting on her concerns regarding the behaviour of one of her students “thought that it might be good to talk to the psychologist who comes to school”⁴⁹. At the same time, teachers reported a lack of knowledge of the background of their students and a complete communication gap between parents and schools that posed additional challenges. Maria suggested for an activity that could both get parents involved and introduce the culture of refugee students to the Greek school:

Now if we could be in communication with the parents all year round and have an event, bring the parents to school so that mums could prepare their own recipes, our [mums] would prepare other [dishes], their own songs, our own songs. That could be an incredible thing.⁵⁰

The situation at the Intercultural School was evidently very different as there was a total of two refugee students who were both integrated in regular classrooms. On a classroom level, various activities took place that were not only directed to refugee students but were aiming at supporting the diverse needs of the entire class. Athena, for example, who entered the classroom a few times a week as a complementary teacher, described a series of self-awareness and communication games that she organised along with the main teacher “in order for the group to bond and to clear the air a bit”⁵¹. It was the main teacher, however, who provided a deeper insight into the multiple layers of support the refugee student had access to. First of all, Lydia was aware of the background of her student and she ensured that the rest of the class was prepared for her arrival:

I told them that a new student is coming to school, who hasn't attended the Greek school, who is from Syria. I talked to them a bit about what is happening in Syria and what we think a refugee is.⁵²

Additionally, a proper welcoming celebration took place when the child first arrived and gifts were offered to her. Despite the fact that Lydia did not alter her

teaching methods as she believed the way she teaches would be sufficient for the support of the refugee child, she referred to some additional steps she took for a smoother transition. These included different books and exercises, suitable for the academic level of the refugee student and the provision of peer support, having the refugee student's classmates help her when facing certain difficulties. The student would also attend intensive Greek language classes in a separate class. At the same time, Lydia had frequent meetings with the father of her student to discuss the progress of his daughter with the help of an interpreter.

Nonetheless, it was not only the support available at a classroom level that contributed to the successful adaptation of the refugee student. As the school principal, Kostas described the practices that are employed by the whole school community for the support of the students. He described the procedure the school follows when a new student is admitted, ensuring a welcoming atmosphere both for the student and his/her parents:

A new child comes, we are not sending it directly to the classroom. I will personally take the child, take the parent... enter the classroom with them, introduce [the child] to the rest of the children. The parent will be with me and will listen to what I say.⁵³

The parental involvement was stressed multiple times by all the informants of the Intercultural School. Parents were considered a vital part of the school community and were described as cooperative both by Kostas and Lydia. Their presence within the school community was valued. The school was generally described as a space where students and families of all backgrounds could feel comfortable and free to voice their concerns: "They must feel comfortable, they must feel that they can tell the principal of the school whatever troubles them"⁵⁴, as Kostas said. Finally, the school was involved in a wide range of projects and the students had the chance to participate in various extracurricular activities, features which, according to Lydia, enabled the effective integration of the refugee student in this new environment:

There are days when children play chess, dance, have drama classes out of the school routine and they have ways to meet and continue their socialisation beyond recess and school life.⁵⁵

5 DISCUSSION

The staggering inflow of refugees to Greece in 2015 has raised several questions with regards to the way the Greek government reacted to this unprecedented incident and the measures that were taken to ensure that the diverse aspects of the integration of refugees were being fulfilled. One crucial aspect for the integration of refugees is the education provided to refugee children. Taking into account that a substantial proportion of the refugee population that entered the country was children under the age of 18 (Asylum Service, 2019), the present study attempted to shed light on the refugee reality within the Greek education system by talking with those people that were in direct contact with the refugee students, the educators.

The task of educating refugee children is a crucial step for their integration into the new social context they find themselves (Hamilton, 2004, p.83). Numerous environmental factors contribute to the level of success of such an important project. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), it is the interplay between different systems that influences the development of the child and, in this case, the adaptation of refugees to their new environment. It is not a classroom alone that has an impact on the child, but other networks either proximal or indirect are equally important for the final outcome. Evidently, the experiences of teachers reported in the present study manifest vast differences between the two educational settings, namely the Reception Classes and the Intercultural School. A discussion with these educators gives us an insight into the multiple layers and system interconnections that exert influence on the reality facing refugees at host communities, even more so at an educational context. Systems that refugees might directly be involved in or systems over which they possess little to no power may all have an impact on their educational experience. In the following paragraphs, the findings that were elicited from the interviews will be discussed on the basis of Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework combined with the concept of trauma, making a clear distinction between the context of Reception Classes and that of the Intercultural School.

5.1 Effects of the Greek Societal Context on Everyday Lives

One of the most salient features to be taken into account about the Greek society as we know it today is the financial crisis that started unfolding in the country after 2009 and which has had considerable impact on many aspects of the social reality the citizens found themselves. These changes in the country's economic state are equivalent to the development of Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem that influences the rest of the structures embedded in it (micro-, meso- and exosystem) and ultimately the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Although refugee students did not experience a transition from a financially stable environment to an unstable one the same way their Greek counterparts did, yet they found themselves in a society with major economic problems and without necessary provisions in place to facilitate their integration; they found themselves in need of assistance in a community whose members were seeking help themselves (Cabot, 2018; Zsófia, 2018).

This social reality reflected on the microsystems within which refugee students actively participated. On one hand, the social upheaval characterising the Greek society was evident within the community dynamics and the (non-) openness of its members towards the newly arrived. With the Greek state still deep in the financial crisis during the arrival of refugees and its citizens struggling with austerity, both refugees and citizens found themselves relying on humanitarian aid provided either by formal or informal organisations (Cabot, 2018). In such conditions, a sense of solidarity started emerging stemming from a common understanding of precarity. The schools took a series of actions to welcome the new members, make them feel at home and support their integration. Preparatory arrangements and welcoming celebrations indicated a positive attitude towards the newly arrived. For the schools where Reception Classes operated that was an extraordinary occasion since refugee students were being integrated for the first time in their communities. Maria described how the preparations that took place in advance prepared the student community for the new arrivals: "That is they embraced them, you couldn't see any point of friction".⁵⁶ The Intercultural School, on the contrary, had a fixed set of procedures

in order to welcome its new members, with the principal acquainting both the child and her parents with the whole school at first and with the child's classroom consequently. According to Kostas "When a child comes to this school, how you first of all talk to her parents, either Greek or foreign, is very crucial."⁵⁷ This welcoming attitude on behalf of the principal permeated the entire school community and its procedures, according to him.

However, instances of prejudice were not absent altogether. Even though I did not have the opportunity to converse with community members who were sceptical about the arrival and integration of refugees, Helen painted a picture of the reserved reactions of her colleagues towards her students during our discussion. She made me understand that there was an overall reluctance on behalf of the staff regarding the integration of refugees in the school community, with teachers refusing to accept the students in their class and sometimes even hesitating to talk to them. Maria also referred to certain parents being opposed to the integration of refugees, resulting in them removing their children from that particular school. Although these prejudiced behaviours can be rooted in multiple factors which are not always straightforward (Green, 2018), it is important to consider the broader societal context where these emerge and the environmental forces that shape such behaviours that contain anti-immigrant undertones.

On the other hand, the implications of the economic state of Greece were also visible in practical matters, such as the poor-quality accommodation infrastructures available to refugees as well as the limited resources which were at the disposal of schools. The latter was especially true for the Reception Classes that were operating for the first time and were in need of support that was not adequately provided according to the teachers; insufficient counselling, a paucity of teaching material and no interpreters were some of the challenges the teachers had to deal with. Despite the imperative need for the development of cultural understanding through preservice and in-service training in multicultural education (Chisholm, 1994; Hamilton 2004; Szente, 2006), the teachers did not have access to such support. As a result, they were left feeling overwhelmed at

times and with no actual assistance throughout the academic year: “...they didn’t even come once to see what we are doing, how we are working, for us to tell them our problems...”⁵⁸, in Maria’s words. That being said, it should also be mentioned that the EU had provided the Greek state with financial support since the beginning of the refugee crisis to ensure that it was efficiently managed (European Commission, 2018). This then raises questions with regards to the ways this monetary aid was handled by the Greek state. The Intercultural School, although not untouched by the scarcity of resources afforded by the state, had been delivering multicultural education for multiple years and, as such, it had a stable support network in place for its students; experienced personnel, close bonds between school and families and extracurricular activities for its students all contributed to a more holistic approach towards the successful integration of the students (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). The example of the Intercultural School then denotes the interdependence between different systems as well as the effect diverse forces have on the adaptation of the individual, leading to the following section, the impact of the exo- and mesosystem on the microsystem of school and on the individuals immersed in it, the refugee students.

5.2 Challenges and Support Networks: An Interplay of Different Environmental Forces

Although operating within the same societal context, the Reception Classes and the Intercultural School manifested various differences in terms of the challenges they faced and the support they had access to and, consequently the reality they shaped for their refugee students. The mobility of the refugee population was one of the greatest challenges Reception Class teachers had to face, with constant modifications in the class composition and in the numbers of students attending. Mobility is an integral part of the very experience of being a refugee, and the way it occurs as well as the ramifications it has on the microsystem of school signify the interconnections across different settings. The premigration system and the state of war and conflict existent in that setting was the reason people sought refuge in Europe in the first place. For many families this migration journey was

not supposed to end in Greece as they aspired to settle in countries of -what they perceived as- better socioeconomic state. These events and perceptions that were elements of different settings had considerable consequences on the microsystem of school with constant disruptions of continuity impeding the teachers' efforts to deliver consistent education. As such, any progress achieved on a linguistic or behavioural level had to be re-established due to these disruptions.

The linguistic aspect in particular deserves to be explored in its own right as the acquisition of the language of the host community comprises a decisive factor for the successful adaptation of refugees to the new environment (Loewen, 2004, p.35). Its significance is highlighted through the major challenges that were reported by Reception Class teachers due to the communication gap that existed between them and their refugee students. According to Hayward (2017), the acquisition of the host community language promotes the emotional wellbeing of refugees as it allows them to share their concerns and emotions, mitigating potential feelings of anxiety. The numerous instances of aggressive behaviour described by the informants can then be partly explained by the inability of the students to express themselves as well as the inability of the teachers to communicate the rules that apply within the school, that would have allowed for conflict resolution. That becomes apparent through Maria's concern:

A fight breaks out. The children come and fight during recess. They tell me what happened. First of all, I don't understand what has happened...And even if I do understand... How can I explain to them how we should function, [how can I] solve the misunderstanding?¹¹

The language barrier at the Intercultural School on the other hand was easily overcome according to Lydia. Her student was placed in a mainstream classroom and was exposed to the Greek language on a daily basis through her classmates while she was also attending an intensive language course. As such, her language capacity readily developed. There is consensus among academia regarding the linguistic benefits of placing refugee children in mainstream classrooms (Loewen, 2004, p. 44). Helen, having experienced substantial linguistic and behavioural issues in class, also proposed for her students to be integrated in

regular classrooms the following year, contemplating on the benefits such an integration could yield on both ends, linguistic and behavioural.

The instances of problematic behaviours at the Reception Classes like the ones experienced by Helen were multiple, as delineated in the findings. Traumatism was used as one of the justifications behind such behaviours and aggression. To be able to assess trauma and the mental health of refugee children, extensive knowledge of psychological concepts and nuances is required. According to Hayward (2017), since teachers are not mental health professionals, they should approach the vulnerable group of refugee students with caution when trying to support their wellbeing so as to avoid reverse outcomes that can be harmful. As Georgia admitted: "That is, obviously, if they were examined by a specialist, he/she might have found things that I'm not capable of seeing"⁵⁹. However, even without that knowledge, the testimonies of the teachers, who were in daily contact with those children, shed light into the reality these potentially traumatised individuals experience at Greek schools and how they carry themselves in this new social reality.

According to Hamber (2019), trauma should be understood in relation to the context within which it is taking place. Lydia's example on the inconsistency between her expectations that she would meet a traumatised child and the reality of encountering a smiling individual point to the importance of the current social conditions in shaping the world of a potentially traumatised child. Lydia believed it was a combination of various environmental forces that shaped the refugee student's experience and allowed for her successful integration in the school community at large and in the classroom in particular; the openness of the teachers, the staff and the fellow students; their efforts to communicate with her despite the language barrier; the extracurricular activities offered, which promoted the students' socialisation outside the school life all contributed towards her smooth integration. At the same time, Helen's words on her personal explanation behind her students' lack of socialisation reveal the interaction between two proximal systems that of school and home, that takes place within Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem.

I simply believe that because they didn't, they weren't in touch with anybody else- because even at the accommodation site they were living in, they were only in touch with persons with ... mutual experiences and common language. Here at school they tried to preserve this.⁶⁰

In other words, those children were living at a temporary accommodation site, isolated from the local community, with the only opportunity to socialise being during school hours when they were again segregated from the rest of the school. On top of that, that particular school community was reluctant to approach and facilitate the integration of those students. The significance of the relationship between home and school that takes place within Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem then emerges. The benefits of a close bond between home and school (Hamilton 2004; Szente, 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012) can be deduced by what Bronfenbrenner calls a dual transition between two settings within a mesosystem, that is an individual does not enter a new setting alone, but is accompanied by a familiar other who is known to them from a different setting. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the developmental potential – in our case the integration process – is enhanced for the individual when this transition takes place in the form of a dyad and is not made alone. These links can occur in the direction of either setting, having a parent actively participate in the school community and/or a teacher pay home visits, and they require the maintenance of a balance of power so that both parents and teachers have a sense of control over their designated domains of activity.

For the Reception Classes this direct link between home and school was entirely absent despite the teachers being aware of the benefits such a bond could foster. The teachers had no knowledge of the situation occurring at the accommodation site and, as there was no interpreter available, any potential attempt for communication would be exceptionally hard. Maria referred to one example of why such a bond was deemed necessary:

I, for example, have a girl [in class] at the moment ... who has a disability, an intellectual disability ... Her mother might have wanted to tell me something, something I should pay attention to, something I should do. She doesn't know me. She trusts me with her child, but she doesn't know me.⁶¹

At the Intercultural School, on the contrary, there was an open communication channel available to parents that they could utilise - with the assistance of an interpreter in the case of refugees- to raise potential concerns and actively participate in the school community. The parents' sentiments were taken into consideration when it came to matters pertaining to their domain of interest, that is the particularities of the education provided to their children. That layer of support allowed for the refugee student to externalise concerns that were related to the content of the history book and were stemming from cultural differences, as explained by Lydia. The student shared her thoughts with her father who later transferred these to Lydia with the help of the interpreter. What is of particular interest, however, is the way Lydia responded to these concerns which, starting from the book content, extended to the mixed-gender nature of the Greek school. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), in order for the bond between home and school to be successful, a balance of power needs to be maintained and parents and teachers need to be in control of their own domains of activity. Lydia exercised that power as she explained to me during our discussion:

And I explained to him ... that, nevertheless, you are here at the Greek education system which is mixed-gender, and the Greek history and mythology is this. This is the state's official book for the third grade, and he needs to understand that all this is not something obscene because it is our history and culture ... He needs to accept, in order for his child to integrate, that there are boys and girls in class, and they are called to play common games.⁶²

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

The current study constitutes my first attempt at a research project and, as such, it is characterised by certain limitations that will be delineated below, along with a number of suggestions on future research. Considering I was a novice in research before conducting this study, most of the limitations of the paper were rooted in the research design and implementation process. As a result, these initial flaws were extended to the inability to provide answers to the research questions, leading to a revised research objective.

Though initially aiming to portray the social-emotional manifestations of refugee students within the Greek education system, the discussion with the

informants ended up outlining the refugee education experience in Greece on more general terms, shedding light on the impact a multitude of factors has on such an experience. This deviation from the original research objective started emerging already at an early stage and continued throughout most of the subsequent discussions with the informants. There were certain occasions when I had the feeling that the informants did not comprehend the concept of social-emotional competences or lack thereof. This might have been a result of poorly constructed interview questions or a different point of focus in terms of social-emotional competences on behalf of the teachers that was not in line with my own preconceptions prior to the interview. For example, when Helen was asked about her students' positive expressions of social-emotional competences she mainly focused on an unsuccessful learning process and did not mention potential existent features. The only exception was three female students who were presented as sociable by nature. Although informants were encouraged to ask questions in order to clarify potential ambiguities, no questions were raised about terminology. Instead of briefly discussing the nature of the study at a short meeting, it might have been helpful to set up an extensive meeting with the informants prior to the interviews to explicitly address terminology.

This inconsistency, nevertheless, gave me the chance to witness and contemplate on the various environmental forces that are involved in and actively shape the very essence of the refugee experience. By utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework as a foundation, I attempted to better understand and describe the refugee reality within the Greek education system, as experienced by the educators. The interplay between different ecological settings then came to light and once again elucidated the limitations of the present study. Since the research project was set in the primary setting of school and was informed by a specific group of people, the educators, many aspects that are crucial to the refugee experience and have an immediate impact on the individual were only briefly outlined and were essentially left unexplored. Therefore, this study has only scratched the surface of the sphere of refugee reality within the Greek context and the environmental factors that shape this

reality. Discussions with individuals from a variety of disciplines and settings, who are either directly or indirectly involved in the refugee experience, as well as with refugees themselves have the potential to construct a more holistic view on the issue of refugee integration into the Greek society.

Taking into account that a considerable amount of time has passed since the refugee educational project commenced within the Greek setting, teachers and educational institutions have had time to develop an understanding of their target audience and their particularities. Further research into practices that have worked and those that have not, as well as examples of schools with successful approaches can be utilised as a benchmark for the improvement of this educational project.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Consent Form

Έντυπο Συγκατάθεσης σε Έρευνα

Τίτλος Έρευνας: Η Αντίληψη των Εκπαιδευτικών σχετικά με τον Κοινωνικό και Συναισθηματικό Αντίκτυπο του Τραύματος σε Μαθητές-Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα

Η παρούσα έρευνα αποσκοπεί να μελετήσει την αντίληψη των εκπαιδευτικών σχετικά με τον κοινωνικό και συναισθηματικό αντίκτυπο του τραύματος στους πρόσφυγες μαθητές τους μέσα από ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις με εκπαιδευτικούς που δίδαξαν σε Τάξεις Υποδοχής στην Ελλάδα.

Η έρευνα αποτελεί μέρος πτυχιακής εργασίας που πραγματοποιείται στο Πανεπιστήμιο της Jyväskylä.

Η έρευνα ακολουθεί τον κώδικα δεοντολογίας της Φινλανδικής Εθνικής Επιτροπής Δεοντολογίας της Έρευνας 2.

	Όνοματεπώνυμο	Στοιχεία Επικοινωνίας
Ερευνήτρια	Μαργαρίτα Μαρμαρίδου	
Επιβλέπων Καθηγητής	Markku Leskinen	

- Ο/Η γράφων/ουσα,, συμφωνώ να συμμετέχω στην παρούσα έρευνα εθελούσια.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως παρόλο που συμφωνώ να λάβω μέρος την παρούσα στιγμή, μπορώ να αποσύρω τη συμμετοχή μου οποτεδήποτε ή να αρνηθώ να απαντήσω σε οποιαδήποτε ερώτηση χωρίς τον κίνδυνο οποιασδήποτε συνέπειας.
- Ο σκοπός και η φύση της έρευνας μου εξηγήθηκαν προφορικά και είχα τη δυνατότητα να θέσω ερωτήματα σχετικά με την έρευνα.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως η συμμετοχή στην έρευνα περιλαμβάνει τη συμμετοχή σε μία συνέντευξη διάρκειας 30-60 λεπτών.

- Καταλαβαίνω πως η συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα δε θα επιφέρει οποιοδήποτε άμεσο όφελος.
- Συμφωνώ η συνέντευξή μου να μαγνητοφωνηθεί.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως όλες οι πληροφορίες που θα παράσχω για την παρούσα έρευνα θα αντιμετωπιστούν με εχεμύθεια.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως σε οποιαδήποτε αναφορά αποτελεσμάτων της παρούσας έρευνας η ταυτότητά μου θα παραμείνει ανώνυμη. Αυτό θα πραγματοποιηθεί με αλλαγή του ονόματός μου και απόκρυψη εκείνων των λεπτομερειών που θα μπορούσαν να αποκαλύψουν την ταυτότητά μου ή την ταυτότητα εκείνων για τους οποίους μιλάω.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως αποσπάσματα της συνέντευξής μου μπορεί να παρατεθούν στην πτυχιακή εργασία της ερευνήτριας είτε ανώνυμα είτε με τη χρήση διαφορετικού ονόματος.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως τα υπογεγραμμένα έντυπα συγκατάθεσης και τα πρωτότυπα μαγνητοφωνημένα αρχεία θα παραμείνουν στο προσωπικό αρχείο και προσωπικό υπολογιστή της ερευνήτριας αντίστοιχα, στα οποία έχει πρόσβαση μόνο η ίδια, μέχρι την οριστική κατάθεση της πτυχιακής της εργασίας.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως το απομαγνητοφωνημένο κείμενο της συνέντευξής μου, από το οποίο θα έχουν αφαιρεθεί εκείνες οι πληροφορίες μέσω των οποίων θα μπορούσα να ταυτοποιηθώ, θα παραμείνει στην κατοχή της ερευνήτριας για δύο έτη μετά την οριστική κατάθεση της πτυχιακής της εργασίας.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως έχω το δικαίωμα πρόσβασης στις πληροφορίες που έχω παράσχει οποιαδήποτε στιγμή κατά τη διάρκεια που αυτές βρίσκονται αποθηκευμένες ως έχει αναφερθεί παραπάνω.
- Καταλαβαίνω πως είμαι ελεύθερη/ος να επικοινωνήσω με την ερευνήτρια για περαιτέρω πληροφορίες και διευκρινίσεις.

Υπογραφή Συμμετέχουσας/οντος

Ημερομηνία

Υπογραφή Ερευνήτριας

Ημερομηνία

[Αγγλική Μετάφραση- English Translation]

Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Study: Teachers' Perceptions of the Social-Emotional Impact of Trauma on Refugee Students in Greece

The current study seeks to understand teachers' perceptions of the social-emotional impact of trauma on their refugee students through semi-structured interviews with teachers who have been teaching in Reception Classes in Greece.

The study is part of a thesis research project conducted at the University of Jyväskylä¹.

The study follows the ethical code of the Finnish National Board of Research Integrity².

	Name	Contact Details
Researcher	Margarita Marmaridou	
Supervisor	Markku Leskinen	

- I, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me orally and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves one interview with a duration of 30-60 minutes.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all the information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any

details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation of the researcher either anonymously or with the use of a different name.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the personal file and Personal Computer of the researcher, which only the researcher can access, until the final submission of her dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the final submission of the researcher's dissertation.
- I understand that I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher to seek further clarification and information.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix 2 Interview excerpts in Greek

1. Κάναμε από την αρχή πολλές δράσεις με άλλες τάξεις με πάνω-κάτω στις ίδιες ηλικίες παιδιά.
2. ... στο οποίο διάλειμμα καθόντουσαν μονίμως μόνα τους.
3. ... που ήταν από μόνα τους πολύ κοινωνικά από τη φύση τους ... δέθηκαν με κάποια κοριτσάκια της τρίτης.
4. Συναντήσεις με γονείς δεν είχαμε. Δεν τους είδαμε τους ανθρώπου. Ποτέ.
5. ... επειδή τα παιδιά αυτά δε συμμετέχουν στην προσευχή.
6. Τους είχαμε αρκετά ελεύθερους στην αρχή, και να μιλάνε μεταξύ τους...
7. Δηλαδή αυτή η φορά σου λέω ήταν η πρώτη φορά που έκανα πρόσφυγες, τις προηγούμενες τρεις φορές είχα διδάξει σε παιδιά αυτά, Αλβανικής και Ρωσικής καταγωγής. Ήξεραν άπταιστα ελληνικά.
8. Και εξαρχής έπρεπε να βρούμε έναν κώδικα ... κοινό για όλους, γιατί ούτε οι πρόσφυγες μεταξύ τους μπορούσαν να επικοινωνήσουν.
9. ... είναι στην τάξη υποδοχής, το αντίστοιχο γλωσσικό μάθημα ταχύρρυθμα.
10. ... η επικοινωνία στην αρχή ήταν πάρα πολύ δύσκολη. Δηλαδή στην αρχή ήμασταν με παντομίμα.
11. Γίνεται ένας καυγάς, έρχονται τα παιδιά και μαλώνουν στο διάλειμμα. Μου λένε τι έγινε. Καταρχήν δεν καταλαβαίνω τι έγινε ... Και πες ότι καταλαβαίνω τι έγινε ... Πως θα τους εξηγήσω εγώ με ποιον τρόπο πρέπει να λειτουργούμε, να λύσω την παρεξήγηση;
12. Καταρχήν αλλάζει όλη η ισορροπία, ξανά να βρεις τους ρυθμούς της τάξης, ξανά να συστηθούν, ξανά να δεχτούν καινούρια μέλη.
13. Και ήταν ένα θέμα, όχι απλά το μαθησιακό και το γνωστικό κομμάτι, το κομμάτι του να μάθω πως λειτουργώ στο σχολικό πλαίσιο.
14. ... εγώ έχω μαθητή που είδε τη μητέρα του να ανατινάζεται από νάρκη ... Το παιδί αυτό όμως έχει θέματα επιθετικότητας.
15. Ένα στοιχείο που έχουν αυτοί πολύ έντονο είναι ότι αντιδρούν πολύ εκρηκτικά, πολύ εύκολα χτυπάνε ... Για εμάς αυτό δεν επιτρέπεται.

16. Γιατί εκεί που τελικά εντοπίζεται η δυσκολία δεν είναι στο γλωσσικό ... εν τέλει μέσα σε ένα- ενάμιση χρόνο το παιδιά μπορούν διαβάζουν.
17. Είχαμε κάποιες έτσι, πως να το πω τώρα...οδηγίες, όχι απλά γενικές, ε υπεραπλουστευμένες σε... Καμία ουσιαστική βοήθεια δεν είχαμε, ούτε σε διδακτικό κομμάτι, ούτε σε επίπεδο υλικού.
18. Δεν ήταν επιμόρφωση ... Τίποτα στην ουσία, γιατί δεν ήξεραν τι να μας πουν.
19. Και κάνουμε ο καθένας ότι νομίζει, προσπαθούμε να βρούμε φυλλάδια...
20. Μπορεί ο εκπαιδευτικός να μην έχει τη θέληση, να μην έχει την όρεξη, να μην έχει το χρόνο να καθίσει να ασχοληθεί.
21. Δεν έγινε προσπάθεια ... από άλλους συναδέλφους εδώ να πλησιάσουν αυτά τα παιδιά ... Και θεωρώ ότι ήταν ένα πολύ μεγάλο πρόβλημα το οποίο ήταν μόνα τους σε μία τάξη.
22. Και η αλήθεια είναι ότι όσο αυτό το πράγμα συσσωρεύεται, το σχολείο και η πολιτεία δεν έχει μεριμνήσει ειδικά για αυτές τις περιοχές, ενδεχομένως να ενδυναμώσει περισσότερο. Κάνει μια οριζόντια διανομή πραγμάτων σε όλους, λες και όλοι τα χρειάζονται.
23. Είναι η πρώτη φορά που διδάσκω πρόσφυγες με αυτόν τον τρόπο και δυσκολεύτηκα πάρα πολύ.
24. ... γιατί θεωρούσα ότι δε θα μπορώ να ανταποκριθώ.
25. ... γιατί κάποιες φορές φέτος δεν ήθελα ούτε σχολείο να έρθω.
26. Ήταν πολύ ενδιαφέρουσα χρονιά γιατί ήταν έτσι σαν πρόκληση ... Ήταν κάτι τελείως διαφορετικό σε σχέση με άλλες χρονιές, οπότε ήταν πάρα πολύ ενδιαφέρον.
27. Κοιτάξτε, δουλεύουμε τόσα χρόνια στο σχολείο πια, με παιδιά που είναι από άλλες κουλτούρες και από άλλους πολιτισμούς, που πλέον δεν αισθανόμαστε ότι είναι κάτι, κάτι ξένο.
28. Δηλαδή πάντα μάλωναν αυτά τα παιδιά ...
29. ... Αυτά τα παιδιά μου έδειχναν και μου δείχνουν με κάθε τρόπο την ευγνωμοσύνη τους, την αγάπη τους, με όποιον τρόπο μπορούν, ακόμα και

- το πιο μικρό ... Παίρνουν δηλαδή 10 μπισκότα, μου φέρνουν 1 και για μένα. Αυτό είναι απίστευτο ας πούμε συναίσθημα για μία δασκάλα, είναι καταπληκτικό.
30. Μάθανε να διαχειρίζονται πιο καλά τα συναισθήματά τους ...
31. Τα κορίτσια ... έχουν κάνει πολύ καλές φιλίες με κορίτσια Ελληνάκια και στο διάλειμμα θα αγκαλιάζονται.
32. Γιατί είδα ότι αναγκάστηκαν να παίξουν κάτι ομαδικό με μια άλλη τάξη ... και τους βοήθησε πάρα πολύ. Και για καμιά εβδομάδα μπορεί να μιλούσαν και λίγο με τα παιδιά. Μετά το χάσανε αυτό, πάλι, δε συνεχίστηκε.
33. ... Είναι κοινωνικότερα.
34. Έχω μόνο ένα παιδάκι το οποίο δεν είναι καθόλου κοινωνικοποιημένο... το οποίο ... πάντα είναι μόνο του.
35. Κι ήταν και τα ίδια τους πολύ κοινωνικά παιδιά, οπότε κι αυτά με αγκάλιαζαν, ερχόντουσαν κοντά μου, μου μιλούσαν, ενώ τα άλλα ήταν πολύ απόμακρα παιδιά.
36. ... τους λέμε όλη μέρα μη χτυπάτε μη χτυπάτε μη χτυπάτε. Κάτι το οποίο έρχεται σε σύγκρουση με τον πολιτισμό τους και με αυτό που ζούνε εκεί. Δηλαδή στο σπίτι μπορεί να χτυπάνε, η μαμά τους μπορεί να τους χτυπάει, μου το λένε.
37. ... αν ήταν πιο ανοιχτή σαν χαρακτήρας, και να μη μιλούσε τόσο καλά τη γλώσσα, θα κοινωνικοποιούνταν καλύτερα.
38. Δεν μπορώ να τις αποδώσω σε κάτι συγκεκριμένο. Απλά θεωρώ ότι επειδή ... δεν ερχόντουσαν με κανέναν άλλο σε επαφή ... Εδώ στο σχολείο προσπάθησαν να κρατήσουν αυτό.
39. ... μόνο και μόνο που στο τέλος της χρονιάς ήρθαν κάνα 2-3 φορές και μου μιλούσανε, είναι μεγάλο βήμα αυτό... Ένα παιδί τέτοιο να σου μιλήσει στα ελληνικά.
40. Εγώ τα έβλεπα, ήταν πάρα πολύ καλά τα παιδιά ... Παιζαν με τους συμμαθητές τους, μιλούσαν ελληνικά με τους συμμαθητές τους.

41. Δεν το έχω ξαναδεί, να με τραβολογάνε να πάω να ανοίξω την πόρτα για να φύγουν.
42. Όταν βλέπεις ένα παιδί να χαμογελάει καθημερινά, αναρωτιέσαι πόσο τρομαγμένο και φοβισμένο είναι.
43. ... καταλαβαίνεις από τις αντιδράσεις, από τις χειρονομίες της, ένα παιδί που εξωτερικεύεται συναισθηματικά και με άλλους τρόπους.
44. Όταν μια συμμαθήτριά της θα τη βοηθήσει, θα της δείξει με κάποιον τρόπο ότι την ευχαριστεί, είτε θα την κεράσει κάτι είτε θα της δώσει ένα δωράκι.
45. Και επειδή στο στάδιο που βρισκόμαστε δεν μπορούμε να τους διδάξουμε γραμματικές και συντακτικά, δεν το συζητώ δηλαδή, εμείς προσπαθούμε απλά να μάθουμε στα παιδιά αυτά να επικοινωνούν.
46. Προσπαθήσαμε να κάνουμε έτσι και τα θρανία ... να είναι σαν ομαδούλες, να αισθάνονται πιο άνετα.
47. Κάποια κοριτσάκια που, ξέρεις, είναι και στην εφηβεία τώρα, θα μου πούνε και 'κυρία εμένα μου αρέσει...' Δηλαδή έχουμε φτάσει να είμαστε και πιο φιλικά τα πράγματα μεταξύ μας ... Σε μια κανονική τάξη αυτό δε θα το έκανα. Όχι, δε θα καθόμουν να συζητάω ας πούμε τα προσωπικά τους.
48. Προσπάθησα αρκετές φορές, με χίλια παρακάλια- ξαναλέω, το οποίο ... να κάνουνε κοινά, είτε γυμναστική είτε κάποια καλλιτεχνικά ... Δεν υπήρχε προθυμία.
49. Σκέφτηκα ότι ίσως θα ήταν καλά να μιλήσω και με την ψυχολόγο που έρχεται στο σχολείο.
50. Τώρα άμα μπορούσαμε είχαμε επικοινωνία με τους γονείς όλη τη χρονιά και να κάναμε μία εκδήλωση, να φέρναμε τους γονείς στο σχολείο, να κάνανε δικά τους ας πούμε, δικές τους συνταγές οι μαμάδες να μας φέρναν στο σχολείο, να φέρναν οι δικές μας οι μαμάδες άλλα, δικά τους τραγούδια, δικά μας τραγούδια. Δηλαδή θα γινόταν ένα απίστευτο πράγμα.
51. Για να δεθεί η ομάδα και για να κατεβάσουμε λίγο τα πνεύματα.

52. Τους μίλησα για το ότι θα έρθει μια καινούρια μαθήτρια στο σχολείο, η οποία δεν έχει φοιτήσει σε ελληνικό σχολείο, η οποία είναι από τη Συρία. Τους μίλησα λίγο για το τι γίνεται στη Συρία και το τι θεωρούμε ότι είναι ένας πρόσφυγας.
53. Έρχεται ένα παιδί καινούριο, δεν το στέλνουμε στην τάξη κατευθείαν. Εγώ ο ίδιος προσωπικά θα πάρω το παιδί, θα πάρω το γονιό ... θα μπω μέσα στην τάξη μαζί του, θα το παρουσιάσω στα άλλα τα παιδιά. Θα είναι και ο γονιός μαζί μου να δει τι θα πω.
54. Πρέπει να αισθάνονται άνετα, πρέπει να αισθάνονται ότι μπορούν οτιδήποτε που τους απασχολεί να το πουν στο διευθυντή του σχολείου.
55. Υπάρχουν μέρες που τα παιδιά κάνουν σκάκι, κάνουν χορό, κάνουν θέατρο εκτός σχολικού ωραρίου και έχουν τρόπους να συναντιούνται και να συνεχίζουν την κοινωνικοποίησή τους πέρα από τα σχολικά διαλείμματα και από το σχολική ζωή.
56. Τα αγκάλιασαν δηλαδή, δεν έβλεπες κανένα σημείο τριβής.
57. Όταν έρθει ένα παιδί σε αυτό το σχολείο, παίζει μεγάλο ρόλο πρώτα απ' όλα πως θα μιλήσεις στο γονιό, είτε είναι Έλληνας είτε είναι ξένος.
58. ... ούτε ήρθαν να δούνε μια φορά τι κάνουμε, πως δουλεύουμε, να τους πούμε τα προβλήματά μας.
59. Δηλαδή προφανώς κι αν τα παρακολουθούσε κάποιος ειδικός ίσως να έβρισκε πράγματα που εγώ δεν μπορώ να δω.
60. Απλά θεωρώ ότι επειδή δεν ήρθανε, δεν ερχόντουσαν με κανέναν άλλο σε επαφή, γιατί και στη δομή που μένανε, ερχόντουσαν μόνο με άτομα τα οποία είχαν ... κοινά βιώματα και κοινή γλώσσα. Εδώ στο σχολείο προσπάθησαν να κρατήσουν αυτό.
61. Εγώ ας πούμε έχω ένα κοριτσάκι αυτήν τη στιγμή ... το οποίο έχει πρόβλημα, έχει νοητική ... μπορεί κάτι να ήθελε να μου πει η μαμά του, κάτι να προσέξω, κάτι να κάνω. Δε με ξέρει. Μου εμπιστεύεται το παιδί της, αλλά δε με ξέρει.
62. Κι εγώ του εξήγησα ... ότι παρόλα αυτά εδώ βρίσκεστε στο ελληνικό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα το οποίο είναι μικτό και η ελληνική ιστορία και

μυθολογία κατ' επέκταση είναι αυτή. Αυτό είναι το επίσημο βιβλίο του κράτους για την Τρίτη δημοτικού και θα πρέπει να κατανοήσει ότι όλο αυτό δεν είναι κάτι προκλητικό γιατί είναι η ιστορία και ο πολιτισμός μας ... Θα πρέπει να δεχτεί, για να ενταχθεί το παιδί του, ότι στην τάξη υπάρχουν αγόρια και κορίτσια κι ότι καλούνται να παίξουν και παιχνίδια από κοινού.