

**Educational Responses to Hate Speech towards Refugees in a School  
Context in Greece**

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I, Aikaterini Boutsia, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to explore the issue of Hate Speech within the school context in Greece and suggest teaching practices for tackling it. An initial study I conducted in December 2015 in Athens showed that teachers in Greece were not familiar with the issue of hateful rhetoric, neither was there a systematic educational approach to respond to this phenomenon. Therefore, action research was designed to develop successful teaching practices that help raise awareness about hate speech. The intervention took place in 2017 in two primary schools near Athens involving forty 11-year-old students. It consisted of experiential workshops based on the framework of the Council of Europe regarding Hate Speech, principles of human rights education and non-formal education methodology. Students explored misconceptions and stereotypes against refugees, working at the same time on the notion of hate speech itself. Relevant educational materials were also used and tested in practice with students. Inspired by Contact Theory, the workshops were followed by a joint activity between local school students and refugee children from a neighbouring school. Prior to the action research, two group interviews were conducted with refugees to understand and explore issues that they face in their everyday lives in Greece. An ultimate goal of this research was to identify and suggest successful methods and resources that the educational community in Greece could use when needed to tackle hate speech. The findings of this research show that successful teaching practices are those involving students mentally as well as physically, such as role-plays and games. Activities involving story-telling or narration of real stories of refugees also had great impact on students and helped the development of empathy towards refugees. Finally, the opportunity to communicate with refugee students from a neighbouring school enabled local students to develop a positive attitude towards their peer refugees.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all my students for the life lessons they have taught me over the years. I would also like to express my solidarity with those teachers who alone resist the limitations of traditional schooling. I hope this thesis will give them the courage to continue doing so. Additionally, I am very grateful to the people who participated in this study. Without them, this research would be devoid of content.

I am also deeply grateful to my supervisors, Dr Hugh Starkey and Dr Alice Pettigrew, who firmly believed in my research and guided me through this journey. Professor Starkey embraced and supervised my work from the very beginning. His always encouraging and insightful comments helped me find my voice as a researcher. Moreover, he kept urging me to involve myself with opportunities in academic work, which helped me sharpen my research skills and gain confidence. Dr Pettigrew, who joined the supervisory team later, also provided me with invaluable support, offering critical insights and showing genuine concern. The completion of this thesis is the result of their constant and compassionate support.

Thanks also go to Alexantra, Stella, Giannis and Ada whose doctoral journeys met with mine within the vibrant academic community of the UCL Institute of Education. They gave me important feedback and encouragement to persevere through the hard days. Unfortunately, the years of the Covid-19 pandemic that followed cut short our in-person meetings. Nevertheless, we found new ways to stay connected and support each other. In this unprecedented context, I also discovered new avenues to connect with other academics worldwide and received support from online communities like the Women in Academia Support Network (WIASN), to whom I am thankful.

Last but not least, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my husband, who always supports me and believes in me, and to my children, who unknowingly accompanied me in this doctoral journey and sparked my motivation anew to make it to the finish line. When I took up this research project, it was out of an individual professional interest. However, along the way, I created my own 'diverse' family, and this research acquired a whole new meaning for me. That is why I sincerely hope it makes its small contribution to the wider effort of making conservative societies a bit more open and welcoming to diversity.

## Impact Statement

This qualitative educational study combined the elements of hate speech, human rights education, refugees and primary school setting in a fruitful conglomeration to identify effective approaches and tools that Greece's educational community can employ when there is the need to tackle hate speech targeting the vulnerable social group of refugees.

The results of this study show that human rights education teaching practices that involve students both mentally and physically, such as role-plays and games, successfully raise awareness about hate speech. Moreover, teaching practices of story-telling and narration of real stories of vulnerable groups encourage the development of empathy in learners. This study also contributes to the body of literature regarding Contact Theory as it shows that creating opportunities for students of majority groups to interact with peers from minority groups helps to create positive attitudes towards the outgroups.

This study has a potential impact on professional practice as well as policy. On the one hand, it could serve as a guide for teachers and trainers wanting to mitigate hate speech in their classrooms, both in Greece and in other countries where practitioners face similar challenges. On the other hand, it could be of particular importance to stakeholders in the Institute of Educational Policy in Greece, where they develop policy documents and teaching scenarios to support the work of teachers. Moreover, it could provide feedback to the Council of Europe as this research demonstrates the efficacy of some of its published education materials regarding hate speech and human rights education, providing valuable evidence of how they were used in practice in a Greek primary classroom setting and highlighting benefits and potential limitations.

Finally, the results of this research have been shared with academic audiences both locally and internationally at conferences, sparking meaningful conversations. The findings will also be published in selected journals to reach a wider audience, especially those relevant to educational theory and practice.

## Acronyms

CoE - Council of Europe

ECRI - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

EDC - Education for Democratic Citizenship

EU - European Union

GD - Golden Dawn

HRE - Human Rights Education

NFE - Non-Formal Education

NGO - Non-governmental organisation

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ODIHR OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WGHRI - Working Group on Human Rights and Inclusivity

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# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter provides the background and scope of this research. It also presents the main research questions and highlights the rationale behind the aims and objectives of the thesis. The research has three distinctive but interrelated levels. The main part is dedicated to implementing a primary school intervention involving 40 eleven-year-old students. The intervention aimed to investigate educational practices for teachers and other practitioners who wish to challenge hate speech targeted towards refugees. As such, Chapter 1 sets the scene of the international and Greek sociopolitical context when the research was designed and implemented in the years 2016-2017 and describes my stance in the field as a teacher and a non-formal education trainer. Finally, it provides an overview of the thesis.

## **1.2 Statement of reflexivity**

I have been in the teaching profession for 15 years. I started out teaching English as a Foreign Language and gradually specialised in intercultural education and human rights.

An early interest in human rights education developed when I was studying for my Master's course in London more than a decade ago. There I had the opportunity to study this concept from a theoretical perspective. At the same time, I put it into practice while volunteering for the British Red Cross at an English grammar school. There, I ran after-school workshops with students regarding humanitarian issues. That gave me a perspective of how teaching in a school setting - even in the after-school club - could take alternative forms than the traditional one usually used within the regular classroom.

This dual role of combining formal and non-formal education continued for me for the next ten years. Not finding the space to work with my students inside the school as I was able outside it, led me to volunteer my time and run workshops for several non-governmental organisations and institutions like ActionAid, Doctors Without Borders, AIESEC and

European Commission (under the programme 'Erasmus+/Youth'). Within this context, I liaised with many school students and young people exploring topics such as poverty, human rights and interculturality. These professional experiences helped me consolidate essential training skills, such as understanding and facilitating individual and group learning processes, creating an inspiring and safe learning environment, and stimulating active participation.

While performing in the field, I was constantly updated with upcoming teaching philosophies and alternative practices. The most notable learning experience was the year-long 'Training of Trainers for European Youth Projects' funded by the European Commission. The successful completion of this training in 2014 qualified me as a non-formal education trainer, but above all, it changed the way I see education practice ever since. During this training, I got accustomed to alternative approaches to the learning process and its evaluation.

In the wider context of my effort to keep myself updated with innovative education practices and connect with other trainers around Europe, I also closely followed the Council of Europe's publications, trainings and recommendations in the field of education. It was in 2012 that I was invited to participate as a youth expert at a study session in Strasbourg about hate speech and racist propaganda online. There I was introduced to the concept of hate speech as defined by the Council of Europe (and discussed in further detail in section 1.3 below) and given a chance to explore its meaning and its repercussions in our everyday life.

My interest in this area grew when I witnessed elements of hate speech in Greece's political and social life in the following years. Being now aware of hate speech, I started recognising its patterns and presence first and foremost in the political sphere and on the news. Hate speech was one of the tools the neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn used extensively. Ultimately, they entered the Greek parliament for the first time in 2012. Greece soon saw a significant rise in hateful rhetoric with the unexpected influx of refugees from the Turkish borders in 2015. The mishandling of the situation on behalf of the Greek authorities resulted in the accumulation of a large number of refugees in certain geographical spots under precarious living conditions. In 2016 the Ministry of Education

made the first effort to incorporate some of the refugee children in mainstream schools. This initiative proved rather controversial and received diverse responses from the local communities (as discussed below in section 1.4.4).

Serving as a teacher in the school year 2016-2017 in the suburbs of Piraeus Port, I saw this topic being a controversial issue for my school community as well, that is, whether they would open their doors to refugee students or not. In January 2017, members of Golden Dawn invaded a primary school in the prefecture of Piraeus, attacking verbally and physically teaching staff and parents of the school. The intention was to intimidate the supporters of refugee education and avert future endeavours of placing refugee students in schools in the area. Similar incidents were recorded in other places in Greece as well. At this particular moment, I decided to gather my experience in non-formal education, human rights and hate speech and put them into practice in the context of a formal education setting, my school. The aim was to create an alternative way and space where my students could explore hate speech related to refugees and diversity and possibly connect with their peer refugees.

My interest in this area is both personal and professional. I argue that teachers need more support in tackling controversial issues in class, especially topics that are 'hot potatoes' for their communities. With this research, I tried to suggest one possible and practical way of how teachers could approach the topic of hate speech, focusing it then on a certain social group that suffers from it in their context. For my school, at that point in time, that social group was refugees.

All the aspects and notions hypothesised and tested in my research, I had the opportunity to verify in practice through my later work experience. Most notably when I joined a group of regional trainers in 2019 to support the Greek project 'Schools for All' orchestrated by the European Wergeland Center. There I used Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and Human Rights Education (HRE) (discussed further in Chapter 3) as a tool to mentor and support schools towards the integration of their refugee students. Finally, last year, the Ministry of Education appointed me as a Refugee Education Coordinator working in a refugee camp in central Greece. My duty was to facilitate refugee students' integration into schools in the area and, in a way, become the connecting link between

refugee students and parents and local school communities. This gave me an unprecedented insider's view of refugees' realities, needs and strengths.

### **1.3 Definition of hate speech within the scope of this research**

Despite the common use of the term 'hate speech', there is no universally accepted definition. For the sake of this research, I chose to adopt the term as defined by the Council of Europe in the Recommendation (97)20:

[...] the term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin (Rec(97)20, p. 107).

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, more efforts to define hate speech are considered, along with their wealth and limitations. However, I find that the definition put forward by the Council of Europe is solid and provides a good starting point. Moreover, it encompasses a multiplicity of situations (Weber, 2009). Furthermore, I appreciate the concerted effort made by this international organisation over the years to raise awareness about hate speech with its wider goal of protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It has produced several educational tools and approaches for the subject and has invested in informing young people about it.

### **1.4 Introduction to the research topic**

#### **1.4.1 International sociopolitical context**

The current situation in the globalised world revolves around a pandemic that affected people worldwide in an unprecedented way. Most notably, it caused unparalleled restrictions on personal freedoms on a global level. Among others, the pandemic showed that not all people are equally affected, nor do they have equal access to healthcare and other rights.



Europe finds itself in another challenging situation: the war on Ukraine, which has unforeseeable repercussions and threatens peace and stability on the continent and elsewhere. Before that, Europe was in the vortex of a serious economic crisis for over a decade. In this context, some European countries were obliged to adopt a series of austerity programmes to reduce their budget deficit. Such measures included substantial cuts in public expenditure and social welfare, cuts in salary and tax increases. These austerity measures were mainly propagated by neoliberal economists. In the long run, they proved counterproductive, devastatingly affecting people's lives and constituting an encroachment of fundamental rights (Fischer-Lescano, 2014, Chrysogonos et al., 2015). In 2017, the year my intervention took place at school, 112.8 million people found themselves at risk of poverty and social exclusion in EU-28, that is 22.4 % of the European Union's entire population (Eurostat, 2017). Moreover, in that same year, three EU member states had more than a third of their population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, one of them being Greece (34.8 %). Certain commentators claim that this situation led to the deterioration and violation of human rights during that period of crisis around Europe (Fekete, 2018, Markantonatou et al., 2018).

Within this sociopolitical context, the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe has sounded the alarm since 2011 for the rising support for xenophobic and populist parties around Europe. They note that in different parts of Europe, political parties have sprung up that give voice to popular prejudices against certain population groups. Such parties seem to impact mainstream politics and threaten democratic values by appearing to legitimise intolerance. In the same light, the INGO Conference, a body representing civil society in the Council of Europe, reported in 2015 - the year this research started - that the austerity measures posed a serious threat to democracy as a result of the violation of economic, social and cultural rights of people in Europe (CONF/PLE(2015)REC1). They expressed profound concern for the rise in political extremism and rang a bell to the threat this social impoverishment poses for European democracy:

Xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and racist acts and other acts of violence based on hatred of those who are different have increased substantially and threaten not only immigrants and vulnerable groups but the very foundations of post-war European society.

Unfortunately, this pattern recorded since 2015 continued and was exacerbated through the years to follow. Political leaders used hatred and intolerance to rise to power. At the time of writing this thesis, there was a four-year presidency by Donald Trump in the United States. He used hate speech flagrantly, and his campaigns were designed to construct the 'other' as threatening and invoke feelings of anger and resentment against minorities (Zembylas, 2022). His signature promise for winning the 2016 election was building a 'big, beautiful wall' on the USA – Mexico border to deter immigration (Rodgers, L., & Bailey, 2020).

Europe follows closely as politicians in many countries capitalise on the people's social fatigue and blame it on increasingly diverse societies. Such examples include Marine Le Pen in France, Viktor Orban in Hungary, True Finns in Finland and Golden Dawn in Greece. Moreover, the Brexit campaign was based on the slogan 'Britain first', consequently leading to the UK departing from the EU coalition. According to Human Rights Watch (2017) Europe seems to be swinging to the right as more people feel left behind and their concerns get disregarded by governments and elite groups. These hardships have given dangerous rise to populism, the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories, which led to a crisis in human values and dignity (Fekete, 2018). This context favoured the escalation of the usage of hate speech, which can lead to acts of violence when left unaddressed. Almost all countries around Europe have experienced minor or major events of violent crimes related to unaddressed hate speech. Some of the most notable atrocious incidents include the terrorist attacks at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo office and the massive shootings at the concert venue Bataclan in Paris, France. Such incidents were related to Islamic terrorism. On the other hand, we have incidents such as the murder of Jo Cox in the U.K., the young female British Labour Party MP, in June 2016 that was attributed to white supremacist motives. Similar were the motives of another white man who opened fire against youngsters on the Norwegian island of Utoya in July 2011, rendering one of the deadliest mass shootings by a single gunman in the world.

Along with the rise of political extremism in Europe, the use of hate speech has also risen. Hate speech poses grave dangers for the cohesion of a democratic society (European

Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2016). An a la carte approach to human rights by the new generation of populists contributes to the growing loss of legitimacy of democratic institutions (Human Rights Watch, 2017). ECRI (2016) calls on member states to identify the conditions conducive to the use of hate speech, as well as the different forms it takes and the harms it causes. These are important to be able to take measures to reduce or remedy the effects of hate speech because, if left uncurbed, it helps create the conditions for -or further fuels- increasing tension and intolerance.

Immigration tends to be perceived as a serious threat in Western countries by populists (Roupakias & Chletsos, 2020) and they treat rights as an obstacle to defending the nation from perceived threats and evils. They encourage people to accept rights violations of the 'other' and imply that rights are used at the expense of the safety and economic welfare of the presumed majority. Country monitoring reports of CoE have shown that there are still large gaps in promoting awareness about diversity and intolerance in contemporary societies (Jagland, 2015). At the same time, combatting forms of racism, xenophobia and nationalism should be strengthened.

The social groups mainly targeted by hate speech are those who suffer due to intolerance. Migrants and asylum seekers, along with Roma, LGBT+ communities and persons of certain religions are those suffering the most from the rising intolerance in Europe (Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe, 2011; Valentine & McDonald, 2004; RVRN, 2015). They suffer from poor representation in the media that spreads distorted images, half-truths and sweeping generalisations. As a result, negative stereotyping and prejudice get even deeper-rooted, causing a large population of people to suffer from it.

#### **1.4.2 Greek sociopolitical context**

Since 2008 Greece has suffered for more than a decade of recession, the largest in Europe since the end of World War II (Lapavitsas, 2012). The extensive austerity measures to address its fiscal problems drastically reduced the quality of life in the country. They caused the sharp decline of the welfare state and pushed many families to

the borderline of poverty by severely compromising their social and economic rights (Lumina, 2014; Chrysogonos et al., 2015).

Austerity measures had an impact on education as well. Between 2009 and 2014, severe budget cuts resulted in increasing school drop-out rates or limiting access to schools for vulnerable groups (Lumina, 2014). Some of the long-term impacts of austerity on the right to education were a deterioration in pupils' well-being and teachers' working conditions and impoverishment of curricula and school equipment (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018).

At the same time, many citizens lost their trust in the European Union and felt betrayed by the financial and political system (Saris, 2015). Demagoguery peaked in 2013 with the newly elected neo-Nazi political party of Golden Dawn (GD) throwing a series of violent attacks. This indicates the severity of those tumultuous sociopolitical times that Golden Dawn - which had a negligible percentage before the crisis - increased its popularity so much as to enter the Greek Parliament for the first time in 2012. It became the country's third biggest political force and managed to retain this percentage till the elections of 2015. In 2013 the Greek Ombudsman expressed strong concern about the increasing phenomena of racist violence, particularly in cases where it is coupled with organised and systematic action of extremist groups against members of vulnerable or excluded social groups, such as migrants and Roma, attesting the negligence of local authorities (The Greek Ombudsman, 2013).

A similar sociopolitical climate continued in the years to follow, with the Racist Violence Recording Network attesting to the familiarisation of the Greek society with incidents of violence and the targeting of people because of their diversity, noting an increase in recordings of attacks against refugees and migrants (RVRN, 2015) anew. Particularly Islamophobia and xenophobia were on the rise at that point in time. Markantonatou et al. (2018, p. 418) explain this rise as a need for a scapegoat, a new 'other' to blame for low wages and unemployment. Polls of that time show that Greeks were concerned about the 'refugee crisis' (Skleparis, 2017), and almost half of the Greek public would connect their presence with fear of the rise of criminality, an overload on public health and the burden to education (Kapa Research, 2016).

In 2013 two pivotal racist crimes were meant to drastically change the sociopolitical scenery: the murder by Golden Dawn members of a Pakistani worker, Luckman Sachzat, and a Greek musician and vocal anti-fascist activist, Pavlos Fyssas. After Sachzat's murder, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe visited Greece and in his report, he pointed out the state's negligence in dealing with racist violence and criminal activity of Golden Dawn (CommDH(2013)6). Despite many other Pakistanis and foreigners being attacked, and some even murdered, before Sachzat, this was the first case that went to trial and members of GD were sentenced for it. However, the indictment did not include racial motives. This only highlighted the difficulty of the Greek judiciary system in "considering racial motivation as an aggravating circumstance at the sentencing stage" (RVRN, 2014).

On the other hand, Pavlos Fyssas was the first recorded Greek victim of GD, and his murder forced Greek authorities to act (Fekete, 2020). He was stabbed to death in his neighbourhood in Keratsini, in the suburbs of Piraeus port. It took the murder of a Greek citizen to stir the police and the judiciary to initiate an investigation of such murders as the outcome of hate crimes. This murder was the start of exposing Golden Dawn's neo-Nazi ideology and dismantling their abhorrent practices.

This murder essentially paved the way for a long trial that began in April 2015 and exposed Golden Dawn as a criminal organisation. The trial ended in October 2020, and the guilty verdicts were indicative of GD's practices that had haunted the Greek society in the previous years: murders, attempted murders, and violent attacks on immigrants and left-wing political opponents. As reported by many media, this hearing was "the biggest trial of fascists since the prosecution of the Nazis at Nuremberg after the second world war" (Smith, 2020)

Given the sociopolitical circumstances of the time, in 2014, Law 4285/2014 was adopted to align domestic legislation with European Union rules. The new law, also known as 'antiracist law', criminalised denial of genocide, hate speech and other acts of racism. However, impunity for racist attacks continued in the following years and, along with it, attacks against refugees and immigrants (RVRN, 2014). ECRI's report (2015) for Greece notes that despite the anti-racism law, xenophobia and violence against certain vulnerable

social groups, especially immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, remained alarmingly high. The public and political dialogue was rife with by hate speech against those groups, who often become the target of racist violence. According to the same report, the actions of Golden Dawn had as result the escalation of xenophobic and racist incidents triggering racist hatred and fear, which was uncontrollable for a long time.

### **1.4.3 The refugee crisis**

The sociopolitical instability caused by the Syrian civil war, which started in 2011 and escalated in 2015, along with the Libyan civil war that rekindled in 2014, created, during that period of time, massive flows of refugees from these two countries venturing a passage to the EU. Due to its location, Greece has received a disproportionate number of asylum applications. In their desperate bid to reach Europe, refugees and migrants attempt dangerous border crossing from Turkey, through the Aegean Sea, to the nearby Greek islands. The peak year was 2015-2016, when the sea arrivals exceeded 850,000 (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018). Since then, the flow has been variable depending on the sociopolitical circumstances but never stops. In 2019, before the pandemic hit, 59,726 new arrivals were recorded (UNHCR Greece, 2020).

Freedom of movement within the EU is a fundamental right. However, in practice, the EU held a closed borders policy with slow progress on resettling refugees in other EU countries, thus rendering the EU's asylum system dysfunctional (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Moreover, European legislation like the Dublin Convention (1997) and Dublin II Regulation (2003) added to the closed border policy by throwing the responsibility for examining the asylum claim to the first EU state of entry (Rozakou, 2012). This became apparent from the reaction of various member states during the early years of the influx of refugees in Greece, which included some governments' refusals to accept refugees, the closing of borders and the rise of national sovereignty discourses, among others (Markantonatou et al., 2018).

The Geneva Convention (1951), ratified by 145 states, is the basic legal document relating to the status of Refugees. Among others, it establishes non-refoulement as a

basic principle according to which a refugee must not be returned to any country where their life or liberty is threatened (ibid., Article 33). However, in 2016 a joint statement was signed between the European Union and Turkey, according to which those migrants and asylum seekers who had entered Greece from Turkey after 20.03.2016 and whose application for asylum had been rejected should be returned to Turkey (Mijatović, 2018). However, different sources point out that Turkey cannot be considered a safe third country, according to international and EU law (Amnesty International, 2021; PRO ASYL, 2021).

This Joint Statement between the EU and Turkey did not manage to deter migrants and refugees from entering the EU soil, as perhaps hoped. It only blocked the so-called Balkan migration route resulting in thousands of vulnerable people being trapped throughout the Greek territory in degrading living conditions (EEDA, 2016). Moreover, it gave rise to unlawful practices on behalf of the Greek authorities to protect the European borders, like illegal pushbacks across the Greek-Turkish border and at sea (UNHCR, 2020; Council of Europe, 2020, par 53-60). The Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, after her visit to Greece in October 2019, commented: 'What they [the refugees] urgently need is that political leaders stop looking away and finally implement the measures that everyone is aware of, but no-one seems ready to embrace'.

With hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants stuck in Greece unwillingly and under no good conditions, social unrest started accumulating from both sides of the locals and the asylum seekers. Often this frustration manifested itself in the growing use of hate speech in both public and private spheres. This became especially evident on the islands that border Turkey which are traditionally the recipients of masses of distressed refugees. It is no coincidence that Golden Dawn notably increased its percentage at the 2015 national elections on the border islands of Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Samos, Leros, and Rhodes. This was achieved by taking advantage of the situation and spreading conspiracy theories about the 'planned' 'Islamization' of Greece allegedly orchestrated by a mix of enemies like Turkey, EU and USA. Golden Dawn also organised various racist attacks on the islands and protests to prevent refugees' children from joining Greek schools (Markantonatou et al., 2018).

#### **1.4.4 School context for refugee children**

As schools mirror society, hate speech is also present in schools. In their yearly report for 2013, The Greek Ombudsman reaffirmed the presence of racism and xenophobia inside and outside schools and thus encouraged sensitisation actions towards the acceptance of diversity, the strengthening of ties among the school community members and the relief of tensions through positive actions. Hate speech can create an environment in which it is difficult to learn or work, and members of the targeted groups may be disadvantaged (Leets & Giles, 1997; Cohen-Almagor, 2008). Matsuda (1993) found that racist hate speech could cause direct physical and emotional changes to the recipient of the message. Another impact, in the Greek context, is that racist speech and negative stereotyping result in children from certain social groups being deprived of their right to education. For instance, some schools in Greece continued to engage in separation practices at the expense of Roma children, despite rulings to end such practices by the European Court of Human Rights (ECRI, 2015). In addition, refugee and migrant children face many challenges in joining Greek schools (UNICEF-REACH, 2017; Vergou, 2019; Androusou & Iakovou, 2020).

Diversity is not always welcome at school, and the rights of 'others' are not always respected. Specifically, refugee children have the right to be at school, but they are not. Even though education is a key element for refugee and migrant children's social inclusion in host communities, still 48% of all refugee children of school age are out of school globally (UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, 2019; UNHCR, 2020). Their right to education, mandated under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is violated, and part of Greek society contributes to that (Stergiou & Simopoulos, 2019). That is why the 2015 annual report of RVRN concludes with calling the Greek state to actively promote tolerance and respect for diversity (RVRN, 2015). Specifically for the Ministry of Education it recommends 'promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue to lift stereotypes and prejudices' (p.36).

Trying to safeguard the right to education for refugee children residing in Greece, the Ministry of Education operated for the first year in 2016-2017 new educational structures to accommodate their needs. However, in some areas, strong reactions were raised by



the parents' associations and the representatives of the local communities. Among the various racist attacks by Golden Dawn members, the most notable was the invasion in January 2017 in a primary school in the prefecture of Piraeus. Headed by the Golden Dawn MP, Giannis Lagos, they attacked physically and verbally the teaching staff and parents of the school, despite the presence of students, in an effort to discourage them from accepting refugee students in their school. This is the geographical area where the school intervention of this research took place after two months (it started in March 2017). Similar incidents, though less violent, were also recorded in different parts of Greece.

Unfortunately, access to education for refugee children has faced more limitations in the years to follow. In a 2018 report, Commissioner Mijatović, expressed her worry about low school attendance rates of migrant and refugee children on the mainland of Greece and on the Aegean islands, and thus urged the Greek authorities to implement inclusive education programmes in mainstream schools to safeguard the right to education for those children as well (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018). However, even in the years to follow, the enrolment of refugee students in formal education dropped, even though the number of children increased. (GCR, 2020, GCR et al., 2022).

That is partly explained by the change in educational policy that followed the elections of July 2019. The hard-right conservative party of Nea Dimokratia won with an outright majority. The party took nearly 40% of the popular vote. Since then, the educational policy has moved in a more nationalist direction, not favouring the presence of the 'other' in schools. It also had a significant impact on refugee education and policy in general. The starkest evidence of that was the handling of the pandemic of Covid-19. Most refugee children were excluded from school for a whole year, between March 2020 and March 2021, even when schools would operate for the rest of the children. Unfortunately, in some cases, even local communities revolted at the likelihood of refugee children joining the schools as a possible threat to the health of others (Mayor of Chalkida, 2021).

The above details show that even after the intervention I implemented in the school context in 2017 – aiming to challenge hate speech towards refugees - similar interventions are very much needed even today. The larger attitude towards refugees remains negative as it was six years ago.

## 1.5 Education as a response to hate speech

As suggested above, the domain of education is an area where racism and discrimination may be present and harm children and society (Group of Eminent People, 2011). However, it is also a field that can significantly counter the same forces that cause racism and discrimination by using the restorative power that only education and school can offer (Freire, 1979; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000; Banks, 2017). That is why the political world in Europe adopted the Paris Declaration in 2015 to promote 'the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education' as a response to hate violence recorded at the time (EACEA, 2016).

Formal education settings, after the family environment, can impact our basic preconceptions regarding other groups of people. Apart from equipping people to participate more fully in society, they also affect how we assimilate or respond to knowledge and information regarding other groups of people. School teachers have the ability to help their students develop skills and competencies that will enable them to live together peacefully (Council of Europe, 2008; Group of Eminent Persons, 2011).

Even though hate speech has increased in familiarity as a concept for at least the past decade, a direct linkage to education is rare. Most of the educational manuals published until this research began (in 2015) would refer to school violence (UNESCO 2009, 2016) or hatred in school (Varma, 1993; Willoughby, 2015) and not to hate speech itself. The limited manuals published ever since would focus on the online dimension of hate speech (Tittley et al., 2014; Gagliardone et al., 2015). Even the Council of Europe's crown publication *Bookmarks* includes educational suggestions only for combating hate speech online. Moreover, most publications refer to young people and/or adults.

So, there are two gaps this research comes to cover. On the one hand, it aims to offer some practical experimentation on how educational practices can be used to combat offline hate speech. On the other hand, to use this type of intervention with young students at primary school level. There is little research, if any, on how young students could explore the concept of hate speech. It is mainly the U.S. academic context that offers some research in the context of formal education; however, most experiences come from

tertiary and less from secondary education (Kaplin, 1992; Leets, 2002; Wachs et al., 2022). In addition, I argue that it is important that the topic of hate speech to start getting discussed more widely, also in its offline real-life form, as in either case, it has real-life repercussions.

When someone tries to think of hate speech within the school context, they frequently think of bullying, which is a more acknowledged concept within the school community (the findings from the initial study, as described in Chapter 5, corroborate that). Even though there seems to be confusion between bullying and hate speech in the Greek educational community, hate speech is related, by definition, more to racial hatred, xenophobia and intolerance. Therefore, it may sometimes coincide with bullying; however, it is a different concept, it can have different motives and can lead to different results. More about this is discussed in Chapter 2.

A consistent hate speech approach has not been defined so far to tackle hate speech in the school context. So, in my effort to identify ways to address hate speech in education, I initially investigated the more developed field of school violence and bullying. There I identified good practices suggested by experienced researchers, like using teaching methods for tackling bullying on a curriculum level, such as participatory problem-solving and creative writing (Smith & Sharp, 1994b). In addition, helping students enhance their social and conflict-resolution skills builds on their resilience and helps them constructively respond to life's challenges (UNESCO, 2009). Overall, a whole school approach is an essential framework for interventions to operate successfully and maintain continuity (Smith & Sharp, 1994b). And the development of a non-violent school culture and a positive, non-punitive school environment to address violence in learning contexts are equally important (Harber, 2004; Osler & Starkey, 2005).

However, considering the difference between bullying and hate speech, I came to understand and suggest in this thesis that good practices from human rights and intercultural education can be helpful and effective in creating a way of responding to hate speech within the school context. A holistic approach within a human rights-based education could work equally well for responding to hate speech in school since it fosters inclusion, diversity, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination. Anti-bullying and

intercultural strategies all share a common characteristic: they are student-centred and aim to provide safe and welcoming student spaces. Moreover, the manuals mentioned earlier in this section that tackle hatred or hate speech all include educational suggestions that share the following core elements: involve others, develop tolerance, and use critical skills to dispel misinformation.

To discourage and prevent hate speech, it is vital to demonstrate the danger it poses (ECRI, 2016). Education is identified as a primary force to raise awareness about the dangers hate speech poses on democracy and pluralism. Instead of focusing on negative feelings -hatred in this case- it is preferable to engage with alternative pedagogical practices that affirm our common humanity and vulnerability with the other and promote deeper understanding and solidarity (Zembylas, 2015).

The cultivation of respect for diversity is also important when tackling hate speech. A way of securing respect for diversity in a society is by removing barriers to understanding. To achieve that, different communities should be supported to engage in dialogue, collaborative networks and constructive actions. One such example is 'servicing projects in the fields of education' (ECRI, 2016, Ep.38). Such activities should help build mutual understanding, promote mutual respect and help prevent conflicts between members of different communities. More specifically, educators and education authorities need to adopt a multi-perspective approach to teaching and learning that encompasses different perspectives (Group of Eminent Persons, 2011; GCR et al., 2022). That is where intercultural education could help (Gundara, 2000; Banks et al., 2005; Govaris, 2011).

At the same time, I suggest that human rights education can be utilised to tackle hate speech in schools, as it is a vehicle for social change, and I believe in the transformative power that it has (Osler & Starkey, 2010; Struthers, 2017; Faruque, 2019). A significant way that school education can play a key role in fighting racism and discrimination is 'by ensuring that human rights education is an integral part of the school curriculum at all levels and across all disciplines, from nursery school onwards' (ECRI, 2006, p.6). A human rights-based approach to education has the capacity to promote the core values such as democracy and tolerance, as well as act as a defence mechanism against racism, xenophobia and discrimination. This growing recognition of the important role of

education in responding to racism and intolerance led in 2010 to the adoption of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education by the Council of Europe member states (Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7). This Charter is a reference point for those involved in the education of citizenship and human rights and provides guidance and recommendations on promoting this kind of education. Starkey (2015) argues that schools are where young people can mix, work together, and develop a sense of community and belonging based on agreed values and principles, facilitating conflict resolution without resorting to violence. Therefore, he urges schools and local authorities responsible for schools to ensure that the Charter is known and implemented.

It is the principles of EDC/HRE that the intervention of this research was designed on, in an effort to test in practice how this could work within the school context of Greece. A stronger emphasis was put on students' intercultural competence, and features like empathy were brought to the forefront. Furthermore, they were given the opportunity to cultivate respect for diversity by engaging in intergroup experiences, as advocated by Contact Theory (Allport, 1954 / 1979). More details about the conception of education as a vehicle for tackling hate speech and the rationale behind the choices made for the design of the intervention are extensively discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

The Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 mandates that all member states should include Education for Democratic Citizenship and human rights education (EDC/HRE) in the curricula for all levels of formal, compulsory education and also review and update it so that it remains relevant and sustainable. The Final Report on the Implementation of the CoE's Charter on EDC/HRE (Kerr, 2012) showed that Greece had made little progress in that field. There was no shared working definition of EDC/HRE in the country, and the gap between policies and implementation was widened by the austerity measures that had led to cuts in staff, resources and services, as well as a lack of substantial monitoring and evaluation.

Greece may have elements of human rights education content scattered in the formal education curriculum; however, they are neither sufficient nor interconnected for a linear and sustainable advancement. In addition, there is no concrete guidance to teachers regarding EDC/HRE, and it is at their discretion whether and how they take it on board or

not. Even though the official state is not yet readily involved in the educational initiatives of the Council of Europe regarding hate speech and human rights, there are opportunities to include EDC/HRE practices within the formal educational context. Within the formal national curriculum, there is limited space for educational programmes implemented under innovative school actions, such as Health Education and Environmental Education Programmes, Flexible Teaching Zone and Research Projects. Under these programmes, axes of EDC/HRE could meet and intertwine with the school culture and the school routine. A characteristic of these programmes is that they offer an ideal space for the blending of formal and non-formal educational methodology (Ministerial Instruction 197708/21-11-2016).

In the school intervention that I designed and implemented in 2017, I used the Flexible Teaching Zone as a 'trojan horse' to introduce EDC/HRE classes that, at some points, even challenged the official school curriculum. This is an added value of this research as it demonstrates a specific way of bridging formal with non-formal education and also suggests a way to embed EDC/HRE in the formal curriculum.

## **1.6 Research questions**

Considering all the points made above, this thesis unfolded around the following research questions:

- i) To what extent is hate speech an issue for Greek schools?
- ii) Which EDC/HRE teaching practices more successfully raise awareness about hate speech?
- iii) Which EDC/HRE teaching practices help learners develop empathy towards refugees?

The aim of this research was to explore the issue of hate speech within the school context in Greece and suggest successful teaching practices for tackling it. The research was set up in three parts. The first part explored the situation in Greece regarding hate speech. It sought to find out whether hate speech was an issue for Greek schools and whether teachers and other education stakeholders were aware of it and equipped to tackle it. The

second part attempted to capture the voice of refugees living in Greece and their experiences with hate speech or other types of discrimination. The third part is the heart of this research. It considered the findings of the two previous stages and attempted a school intervention that took place in two Greek primary schools aiming to increase awareness about hate speech and the social group of refugees.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

The thesis comprises ten chapters. **Chapter 1** sets the scene for the research by providing information about the international and Greek sociopolitical context when the research was designed and implemented in the years 2016-2017. In addition, it describes my stance in the field as a teacher and a non-formal education trainer and how my expertise led me to follow a certain research path.

The literature review is divided into two chapters. The first one, **Chapter 2**, examines different manifestations of hate speech, the roots that cause it, as well as the groups it usually affects. In addition, it discusses the spectrum there is regarding its definitions that have implications on its boundaries and its interference with the right of the freedom of expression. Finally, it looks at Contact Theory as a possible way of countering hate speech. **Chapter 3** explores the potential of education to act as a restorative mechanism against hate speech. Transformative Learning Theory is discussed as a framework to facilitate this. Moreover, human rights education (EDC/HRE) is assessed as to how it could help mitigate hate speech and prejudice and related teaching methods are discussed as to how they could promote tolerance and increase empathy, with the ultimate goal being to be able to live together in diversity.

**Chapter 4** delineates the methodology followed to design and carry out the research. It discusses the three stages this qualitative research evolves around and comprises a discussion of sample choices and methods employed to collect data through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and field diary. It provides a brief explanation of Action Research as the main method of research and discusses why it was deemed most

appropriate for this context. Thematic analysis was used for analysing data coming from all three stages of the research. Furthermore, ethical considerations are included, and the researcher's positionality is discussed.

**Chapter 5** explores the realities of hate speech in Greek schools in an attempt to address the first research question, which was the extent of hate speech within Greek schools. More specifically, it seeks to trace features and kinds of hate speech in Greek schools by interviewing 13 education stakeholders in December 2015 in Athens. The outcomes of the interviews showed that there is a need to act against hate speech within the school context in Greece and that teachers in Greece were not familiar with the issue of hateful rhetoric, nor was there a systematic educational approach to respond to this phenomenon. It also informed my interest to focus on the group of refugees, which was a bone of contention and often targeted by hate speech in my school context, i.e. the two primary schools in Athens I worked as a teacher at the time.

After identifying refugees as a group vulnerable to hate speech in my school, I wished to understand better the issues refugees face in their everyday lives in Greece. Thus, **Chapter 6** highlights the realities of refugees in Greece and their experiences with hate speech. Two small groups were interviewed in February 2017, one with refugees living in the centre of Athens and one with refugees living in a refugee camp in the city's suburbs. The interviews' findings helped me learn more about refugees' living conditions, their experiences with discrimination and their hopes for the future. All this new insight informed the design of my intervention at school.

**Chapter 7** details the school intervention I designed and ran with forty 11-year-old primary school students near Athens between March and May 2017. This was implemented to address the rest of my research questions regarding successful EDC/HRE teaching practices for raising awareness about hate speech and the possibility of helping primary school students develop empathy towards refugees. My students participated in ten weekly experiential workshops. The first four explored hate speech and the following six



the myths and prejudices about refugees. In the context of these workshops, an exchange between local and refugee students was orchestrated.

**Chapter 8** presents the outcomes and findings of this intervention as they were recorded through forty questionnaires and eight in-depth interviews with students collected between March and June 2017. It delineates how students started their learning journey regarding their experiences with hate speech and their limited readiness to respond to incidents of hate speech. In addition, it depicts how students came out of their learning journey with increased awareness about hate speech and empathy for refugees.

**Chapter 9** is dedicated to students' and teachers' evaluation of the intervention. Namely, their feedback regards comments about the intervention's structure and the workshops' content. The most popular activities included role-play and story-telling, catering to students' various learning styles. Also, communicating with refugee students from a neighbouring school enabled local students to develop a positive attitude towards their peer refugees. Moreover, teachers discussed their overall experiences while participating in the intervention and made suggestions for improvement.

**Chapter 10** consists of a synthesis and critical discussion of the overall findings of all three research stages. It explains how the core aims of the research were achieved. Successful teaching practices were identified for raising awareness about hate speech, demonstrating how it is possible for primary school students to develop empathy towards refugees. Moreover, it includes some recommendations for teachers who might want in the future to address similar topics in their classes, earned through my self-reflection as a researcher. Finally, it concludes with suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2: HATE SPEECH**

### **2.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter presents the first part of the literature review. It examines different definitions of hate speech and their implications for the right to freedom of speech as well as the effort to regulate hate speech in different contexts. Moreover, it refers to manifestations of hate speech and the harmful effects it can have on victims and society. It also traces the roots of hate speech with the help of theories like that of Cultural Transmission and Group Identification, making special references to prejudice, identity and culture. Finally, it looks at how Contact Theory could be used to counter hate speech, which is further used during the school intervention.

### **2.2 Defining hatred and hate speech**

An alarming phenomenon that has been on the rise in recent years, both in Greece and in Europe, is the increase in the use of hate speech. Its manifestation has become increasingly perceptible both in the private and public sphere of speech, in printed, electronic and live communication (ECRI, 2016).

This research deals with the topic of hate speech because, given the sociopolitical situation as described in the previous chapter, it is the belief of the researcher, supported by international analysis, that if hate speech is left untreated it will eventually escalate to racist violence (Titley et al., 2014; United Nations, 2020). Hate speech can function as the excuse that motivates a perpetrator's hand, and if tackled at this early stage, there are better chances of averting violence and creating a more peaceful coexistence among members of society.

Before defining hate speech, it is worth exploring a bit the notion of hatred. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, in his treatise on 'Rhetoric' among other concepts, analyses the feeling of hatred and how it distinguishes from other emotions. He argues that the root

causes of hatred are anger, malice and defamation. He differentiates between anger and hatred commenting that while anger is always directed against an individual, hatred is also directed against categories of people. He continues to claim that while anger can be overcome over time, hatred is incurable. The purpose of anger, according to Aristotle, is to cause pain, because the one who is angry wants his reaction to be noticed. Anger is intertwined with sorrow and he who is angry, regrets and could, under the influence of many events, feel pity, because he just wants the one against whom he is angry to suffer the evil he did. On the other hand, Aristotle presents hatred as blind and rigid. The purpose of hatred is to cause harm and the presence of evil does not cause the slightest sorrow; he who hates, does not regret and is unable to feel the slightest pity because he who hates wants his enemy to cease to live (Aristotle, 2005, pp. 49-51).

Hatred is also a topic of discussion in contemporary academia. Cortese (2006) sees hate as a topic of sociological research, tied to stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and violence. He discusses how hate used to be used in a generic sense as an intense dislike or hostility, whatever its object. However, after the mid-1980s, it began to be used in a more restricted sense to characterize an individual's negative beliefs and especially feelings about the members of some other category of people based on their traits (ibid., p. 3). Parekh (2006a) disassociates hate from mere dislike, disrespect or disapproval. He suggests it implies hostility and a wish to harm or destroy a specific target group (ibid., p. 214). Similarly, other academics discuss hate as saying or doing something negative to targeted groups (Matsuda, 2013; Citron, 2014). Citron (2014) specifically connects hate with bigotry which causes damage to members of a group by conveying a message that they are objects that can be destroyed because they have no shared humanity to consider (ibid., p.16). All the aforementioned discussion of hatred in contemporary academia takes place within the scope of its linkage to the phenomenon of hate speech. Within this scope, Brown (2017) takes a spin on hatred as related to hate speech and talks about 'the myth of hate'. He disavows that something is hate speech only if it is incitement to hatred. He suggests opening up the ordinary concept of hate speech and associates it with other emotions, feelings or attitudes beyond strictly hatred or hate, such as for instance contempt, scorn or dismissiveness. In this case the hate speaker does not hate the object

of his speech but rather considers it unworthy of consideration and respect which in turn might cause them to disregard, avoid or shun that thing or person (pp. 439-440).

Like hatred, the term hate speech is tricky to define. There is no single definition of hate speech accepted internationally, partly due to the significant implication of any such definition with regard to potential limits of the right to freedom of expression as perceived by each society. Generally speaking, when using a broader definition, it is possible to grasp more harmful effects that hate speech might have on individuals or groups. However, due to its vagueness, it renders reporting more difficult. On the other hand, more strict and narrow definitions might omit hate speech that still needs to be tackled (Mozer, 2017).

Considering hate speech's growing visibility and significance for citizens' lives in societies in the past years, many international organisations and transnational institutions have tried to define it and thus capture its essence and possible harmful effects. The following section explores some of these efforts in chronological order.

### **2.1.1 Definitions of hate speech according to international organizations**

Council of Europe's Recommendation No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on 'Hate Speech' provides a solid definition of hate speech. Moreover, it explains in its preamble the context which paved the way for its formulation. It recalls the Vienna Declaration (1993) which highlights the resurgence of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and the escalating climate of intolerance; it reaffirms the importance of freedom of expression as expressed in the Declaration on the Freedom of Expression and Information (1982); it condemns incitement to hatred and all forms of intolerance in line with the Declaration on Media in a Democratic Society (1994); it regards the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) and Resolution (68) 30 of the Committee of Ministers (1968) on measures to be taken against incitement to racial, national and religious hatred. All the above key documents explain the context which paved the way for the drafting of this Recommendation (97)20 which includes a definition of the concept of hate speech, trying to provide its key features:

The term 'hate speech' should be understood to cover all forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance which is expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of migrant origin.

(CM / Rec (97) 20)

From the above definition, we understand that hate speech refers to the racist speech that promotes hatred towards individuals or groups based on their characteristics, such as religion, ethnicity, gender, and others. It is about an attack on the identity of the victim. Weber (2009) argues that it encompasses a multiplicity of situations, even though she ends up differentiating the categories of hate speech mainly to racial and religious. The added value in the CM/Rec 97 definition is that it recognises other forms of expression that hate speech may take other than speech. Even though the Recommendation primarily regards hate speech disseminated through the media, it opens to include other sources like images, songs, slogans, mobile texts and more. The definition also takes into account ideologies. Indeed, ideologies often serve as a basis for expressing hate speech, such as aggressive nationalism (Cortese, 2006).

The European Commission also tries to deal with the concept of hate speech. The European Commission's definition is based on the Council of the European Union's Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA. It states about hate speech:

1. Each Member State shall take the measures necessary to ensure that the following intentional conduct is punishable:
  - (a) publicly inciting to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin;
  - (b) the commission of an act referred to in point (a) by public dissemination or distribution of tracts, pictures or other material;
  - (c&d) publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivialising crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes as defined in Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court [and crimes defined in Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal appended to the London Agreement of 8 August 1945 – addition here is mine], directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin when the conduct is

carried out in a manner likely to incite to violence or hatred against such a group or a member of such a group

The specific definition is narrower compared to the Council of Europe's definition, and its main axis is 'public incitement to violence or hatred'. It also includes the denial of genocide and war crimes under hate speech. The reason that makes this Framework Decision important is the fact that it is binding for the member states of EU and finally makes illegal hate speech punishable.

Even though definitions of hate speech are usually related to ethnic diversity, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) highlights hate speech addressed to LGBT people (2009). In this context, hate speech refers to the incitement and encouragement of hatred, discrimination or hostility towards an individual that is motivated by prejudice against that person because of a particular characteristic, for example, their sexual orientation or gender identity. Furthermore, other FRA documents acknowledge the existence of hate speech in the context of discussing intolerance and the promotion of respect and diversity. What is interesting in FRA publications is a common pattern to relate hate speech to hate crime. This is very important to illustrate as it gives hate speech a context and showcases the importance to address it, since it has the alarming capacity to pave the way for hate crimes.

The United Nations' International Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination understands 'hate speech' as 'a form of other-directed speech which rejects the core human rights principles of human dignity and equality and seeks to degrade the standing of individuals and groups in the estimation of society' (United Nations, 2013). As here, we see in some international documents that the use of the term 'hate speech' is avoided in favour of more elaborate formulations such as 'the spread of discrimination and prejudice'. This perhaps mirrors the heavy contest around the concept of hate speech as it intersects with free expression, and its wide range may leave it open to manipulation, especially from those in power (Weber, 2009; Titley et al., 2014; Gagliardone et al., 2015).

Other international bodies refer to hate speech as well, even though approaching it from different perspectives. Another international organisation that adopts the hate speech definition provided by the Council of Europe is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) which has a warning function for serious non-compliance with regard to free media and freedom of expression. It acknowledges that there is not a definition universally accepted and proposes a ‘synthetic definition’ as follows:

Hate speech is a kind of expression designed to promote hatred on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, class/social origin, physical or mental disability.

- target of this speech can be one or more individuals associated with a group that shares particular characteristics; or the group itself
- protected characteristic is a common characteristic/feature shared by the group, such as “race”, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation or any other similar common factor that is fundamental to the identity

(Mihajlova et al, 2013, p.25)

OSCE also locates other forms of expression apart from direct speech that may constitute hate speech, such as public use of insulting symbols like swastika, burning flags and crosses, graphite, and others. Amnesty International (2015) comments that hate speech is more than just the expression of ideas or opinions that are hateful. It requires a clear showing of intent to incite others to discriminate, be hostile toward or commit violence against members of the group in question.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), as an entity within the Council of Europe also aligns with the CoE’s definition of hate speech but examines it through the lens of freedom of expression. In a Factsheet (2016) about hate speech the ECHR draws on cases it has dealt with in the past concerning the exclusion from the protection of the European Convention on Human Rights. From the cases selected it becomes clearer which practices and manifestations of expression and speech are not tolerated under the freedom of expression. According to the Factsheet, remarks that were excluded from the protection of Articles 10 (Freedom of expression) and 17 (Prohibition of abuse of rights) were considered as conflicting to the Convention’s underlying values because they were found to propagate ethnic hate, negation and revisionism, racial hate, religious hate and threat to the democratic order. An added element here is that through the illustrated

cases, there is also reference made to hate speech expressed in other forms, apart from direct speech, like in OSCE's definition above. The ECHR has imposed restrictions on the protection afforded by Article 10 to statements and/or practices that were found guilty of apology of violence and incitement to hostility, circulation of homophobic leaflets, condoning of terrorism and war crimes, denigration of national identity, display of a flag with controversial historical connotations, incitement to ethnic, national, racial discrimination or hatred, incitement to religious intolerance and insult of State officials.

As years progress, the definitions of hate speech become more encompassing. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) – a human rights monitoring body specialising in the fight against racism and discrimination in Europe - also based on the CoE's position (CM / Rec (97) 20) to describe hate speech in their General Policy Recommendation No.15 (2016) as:

[...] the advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatization or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of "race", colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status

This is an inclusive phrasing of hate speech which includes other traits than the common ones that need to be protected, such as colour, age and language. It is worth noticing that sex and gender are broken down in more components (gender identity, sexual orientation) and while setting the scene for this recommendation it mentions as a background a Europe that suffers, among other, from gender-based discrimination, sexism, homophobia and transphobia. Moreover, it is worth noting that the word race is put in inverted commas and an explanation follows that ECRI rejects theories based on the existence of different races, since all human beings belong to the same species (ibid., p.3).

Considering the above definitions, the main elements that constitute a basis for hateful comments directed against a person, or a particular group of persons are their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, age and sexuality. Even though the term 'hate speech' is not universally recognised, the efforts to define it are useful because they serve to



publicly recognise and reject the prejudice motivating 'hate speech', increase understanding of its impact and therefore allow for more effective response to it. On the other hand, its use can be abused to justify unnecessary restrictions on the right to freedom of expression or also result into increased policing or surveillance of discourse, if misused by people in positions of power (Article 19 Organisation, 2015). Regarding the last argument, a functioning democracy could be the answer to safeguarding the delicate balance between free speech and hate speech. Not trying to define it at all would equal to looking the other way allowing bigotry and hatred to flourish unchallenged.

### **2.1.2 Definition of hate speech within the scope of this research**

In the context of this research, I chose to adopt the term as captured in the Council of Europe's Recommendation (97)20. Even though it was one of the early definitions framed, it is quite encompassing and has influenced the work of other international organisations in this direction. Moreover, it opens to forms of expressions other than speech, including online communication. In addition, it is relevant in the Greek context as Greece is a member state of the CoE and therefore is ethically and legally bound by its declarations and recommendations.

Furthermore, I appreciate the concerted efforts by the Council of Europe through the years to raise awareness about hate speech in its wider goal of protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Even though other international bodies had tried to capture the essence of hatred and hate speech before, the CoE was one of the first transnational institutions to deal with the topic of hate speech per se, put it high on its agenda, run awareness campaigns and produce educational tools and materials to tackle it. The Council of Europe has invested in informing young people about hate speech and it was through these efforts - the No Hate Speech youth campaign, more specifically - that I also got sensitised about the topic and decided to step into this research.

The No Hate Speech youth campaign was launched in 2012. The No Hate Speech Movement served as an umbrella for the national campaigns growing across Europe involving young people online and offline, with a special focus on human rights education, including schools. The No Hate Speech Movement shares the Council of Europe's definition, but it adds further specifications of hate speech, to make it clearer and more inclusive of other contexts where hate speech can be manifested:

[...] Other forms of discrimination and prejudice, such as antigypsyism, christianophobia, islamophobia, misogyny, sexism and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity fall clearly within the scope of hate speech (Keen et al., 2016)

## **2.3 Hate speech vs free speech**

Freedom of expression is the foundation of democracy. It should be possible to articulate freely and publicly a wide range of ideas, opinions and beliefs. However, equally essential is the right not to be discriminated against. Treating categories of people unfairly is opposing to the democratic principle of equality. This effort for balancing the two is also depicted in the main international human rights treaties.

The milestone document of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) makes clear reference to the importance of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, through Article 19. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and impart information and ideas through any media. In the same document, we can see Article 7 making explicit reference to equal protection for everyone against discrimination and against any incitement to discrimination. Moreover, Article 29 foresees limitations to the exercise of rights and freedoms for securing and protecting the rights and freedoms of others within a democratic context.

A second human rights manifesto, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), also makes explicit reference to the right to freedom of expression, through Article 19. The same article highlights that this right carries special duties and responsibilities. It recognises also certain restrictions it might have to undergo, if necessary,

for the respect of the rights or reputations of others and protection of national security and public order. The Covenant also highlights throughout its document the need for protection of individuals from discrimination on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin (Articles 4, 24, 26). Article 20 makes explicit reference to prohibition by law for any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Another important document of international law, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, 1965), calls the States Parties to condemn any form of dissemination of ideas or theories based on the superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin (Article 4). It also identifies as punishable offence the incitement to racial discrimination, hatred and acts of violence. At the same time, and when non-discrimination is guaranteed, the Convention refers also to the importance of the enjoyment of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (Article 5, viii).

The Council of Europe follows the same pattern of advocating for freedom of speech, highlighting, however, the dangers of hate speech. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR, 1950) legitimates the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference (Article 10, par. 1) but cautions it might be subject to restrictions or penalties as prescribed by law when deemed necessary in a democratic society (Article 10, par. 2). Again, Article 14 serves to remind that for the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms of the Convention, the non-discrimination clause has to be secured.

The common ground between all these declarations is that the right to freedom of expression and opinion bears special duties and responsibilities (Mihajlova et al., 2013) and should be exercised in a manner consistent with the rights of others (ECRI, 2016). Due to its broad scope, the freedom of expression may also include expression of opinions and ideas that others may find controversial or offensive. Therefore, it is important to note the conditions under which free speech can be considered as 'hate speech'. The different forms of hate speech are defined in relation to the protected characteristics listed in international and

domestic laws. Only when an idea or opinion incites hatred or violence can it be restricted. In some exceptional cases, even censorship can be authorized, subject to a fair hearing (Amnesty International, 2015). However, a weak spot of punishing hate speech is the difficulty to prove the causal relationship between a hateful speech and a hate crime (Zoumpoulakis, 2015). In addition, responses to hate speech that include censoring offensive viewpoints are often counter-productive as they fail to address the roots that drive to hate speech. Conversely, the adoption of positive measures to increase understanding and tolerance is considered more effective (Article 19 Organisation, 2015). The United Nations suggests that the effort to promote more peaceful, inclusive, and just societies should help to address hate speech and underlines that more speech, not less, is necessary in this effort (United Nations, 2020).

Whether hate speech should be punished or not and whether that violates the freedom of expression of people or not, is a contentious topic. Many believe that posing any limitations to free speech equals to censorship, however, there is also the counterargument: If whole groups of people feel discouraged by hate speech and stop expressing themselves, then this poses a threat to pluralistic democracy. Hate mongers will prevail and whole groups will be sentenced to silence (Fladmoe & Nadim, 2017). Therefore, freedom of expression will be compromised, and democracy will again be in danger. That is why it is crucial to be able to identify and curb hate speech.

All in all, possibly the answer to the dilemma free speech or hate speech, should be to find a delicate balance between exercising the fundamentally important right of freedom of expression while at the same time respecting and safeguarding the equally important dignity of all human beings. That would be a real win for truly democratic and pluralistic societies.

### **The difference between the United States and the European Union**

The balance between free speech and protection from discrimination is managed quite differently between the United States and the European Union countries (Boyle, 2001). The

U.S. is known to advocate freedom of speech and reject any criminalisation of hate speech, while the E.U. considers the groups affected by this rhetoric as vulnerable and advocates their defense, criminalising public hate speech (Banks, 2011; Zoumpoulakis, 2015).

In the United States the freedom of speech and expression is strongly protected from government restrictions. Stemming from the First Amendment of the American Constitution, there is a genuine unwillingness to restrict free speech and lawmakers may not pass any legislation that unnecessarily limits the freedom of speech (Boyle, 2001). This US commitment to free speech has significantly undermined the collaborative initiatives of the Council of Europe to curb hate speech (Banks, 2011).

In Western Europe there is greater inclination to limit freedom of speech, if the right to be free from discrimination is at stake. For instance, in many European countries the public denial of the Holocaust is a punishable offense, while in the United States, it is not (Boyle, 2001). Europe's concern with hate speech and especially organized hate groups is understandable, given that it has suffered from recurring ethnic violence and conflict, escalating even to genocide. In this light, Germany bans organisations of neo-Nazi groups and neo-Nazi websites. Regulating hate speech can be seen as a way of curbing ethnoviolence and intergroup hostilities. Moreover, the willingness to regulate hate speech may come as a result of it threatening equality and human dignity, principles on which European countries are based (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004).

Waldron (2012, p. 102) makes an apt remark regarding the above discussed difference between the U.S. and the E.U. He comments it is half true that Europeans are more receptive to laws prohibiting groups defamation than Americans due to historical reasons. Even though indeed Europe has to deal with issues of free speech against a background of Nazism and Holocaust, it doesn't mean that Americans do not carry such historical burdens. He reminds that the United States has historical memory of institutionalised racism and segregation by having on its own shores one of the most vicious regimes of slavery, supported by the very Constitution that claimed to guarantee civil rights. Moreover, the U.S. has living memory of racial terrorism as expressed by Ku Klux Klan through actions like

lynching, church-bombings and cross-burnings, from 1867 to the present. That is why Waldron rejects the view that regulating hate speech violates the First Amendment and damages a free society. He purports that hate speech should be regulated in an effort to include members of vulnerable minorities and as part of the wider commitment to human dignity.

## **2.4 Online and offline hate speech**

Hate speech tends to seem as potentially less harmful when it happens online, as it seems less 'real'. However, hate speech doesn't exist independently in the online world; it has real effects in the offline world for its victims. The Council of Europe's definition of hate speech, by including the phrase 'all forms of expression', recognises as hateful more forms of expression other than speech. This includes online activities, thus inferring that 'cyberhate' qualifies as hate speech. Cyberhate can be expressed in more ways than just text, like through videos, photographs, online games, social media fora and more having a greater impact on conscious and subconscious behaviours (Keen et al., 2016).

A striking difference between online and offline hate speech is that while face-to-face hate speech can reach a certain limited amount of audience, online harmful comments can be multiplied instantly and spread worldwide, thus magnifying the harm (Waldron, 2012). In addition, social media platforms allow space for multiple offenders to target one person, as it is easier for them to find each other and impose collective harassment. After all, hate speech doesn't exist independently in the online world, it can manifest hand in hand with online harassment or cyber-bullying.

Another element that makes hate speech potentially more dangerous online than offline, is the myth of anonymity and impunity (Keen et al, 2016, pp. 149-150). Many users believe that because they can have a fake identity, it is easy to hide their trail and produce or reproduce hate speech without punishment. However, all online actions can be ultimately traced to their agents, depending how far law enforcement is willing to go. This is why the above-mentioned European Commission's Framework Decision is important. It currently

forms the basis of the Code of Conduct that monitors IT companies' removal rates of online hate speech. Yet, transnationalism may pose a difficulty to monitor and tackle online hate speech (Mozer, 2017). When perpetrators reside in international contexts, it is difficult to fully tackle the produced hate speech on a national level (Banks, 2011).

Overall, online hate speech is as serious as offline hate speech, as it has real life consequences.

## **2.5 The harmful impact of hate speech**

Regardless of the narrowness or broadness of definitions regarding hate speech, the harm of it is very real and hurtful for its victims. The purpose of this type of speech is to degrade or wound rather than communicate ideas or information (Kaplin, 1992). It attacks the dignity of a group or a person on the basis of their identity and it has a negative impact both for the victims as well as for society as a whole.

Individuals or groups targeted by hate speech become vulnerable and are more likely to get isolated from society and feel like they don't have a place in it. Apart from the risk of alienation, there is also the risk of radicalisation (ECRI, 2015). Even though victims are not to account for the abuse of their attackers, some victims may internalise the abuse and take the blame on themselves, especially when hate speech goes unpunished (Citron, 2014). Some victims even resort to disguising their identity in order to prevent future abuse (Citron, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2004). Mane (1993) claims that at primary school the most common expression of racism is racist name-calling. Some children may experience it every day and other children less frequently but name-calling remains for all children 'the most hurtful form of verbal aggression from other children' (Troyna and Hatcher, 1992, p. 195, in Mane, 1993).

The harmful effects of hate speech on individual victims can have physical manifestations like high blood pressure, headaches and insomnia (Cortese, 2006) and/or mental symptoms

like feelings of fear, insecurity, guilt and loss of self-confidence and self-esteem (ECRI, 2015). Sometimes mental harm can have fatal consequences, like in cases where online hate speech has led the targeted individuals to commit suicide (Keen et al., 2016). That is why the damage to the reputation of a person is important to note as there is a differentiation between offence – hurt feelings- and ‘dignity’ which refers to a person’s entitlement to respect and appreciation in society, without fear of being degraded or treated as pariah (Waldron, 2012). Finally, in the use of non-verbal hate speech, like in the case of insulting symbols like cross-burning, the threat of physical harm is implicit in the speech (Waldron, 2012).

Society at large is also impacted negatively by the presence of hate speech. When hate speech is uncurbed, it can cause damage to democracy and pluralism. It can isolate individuals and social groups from society and discourage them from participating in public dialogue, thus losing pluralism. Moreover, hate speech can be used to stereotype a group and then use that stereotype to justify atrocities, such as slavery and genocide (Cortese, 2006).

The concern that hate speech can escalate to something more dangerous, if left unanswered, is not new. Allport's Scale of Prejudice (1954) provides a measure of the manifestation of prejudice in a society. It consists of five steps starting with ‘antilocution’ and escalating to ‘genocidal extermination’. Antilocution could be identified with hate speech, and it refers to negative verbal remarks against an outgroup. Antilocution may not be harmful in itself, but the scale describes that if prejudice is left untreated, it can develop to extreme danger. Individuals at one stage of Allport's sequence may never move to the next, however, increased activity in any of the steps makes it more likely that an individual will move to the next level (Ponterotto et al., 2006).

In the same light, and in response to the question where the hate of genocide comes from, the Anti-Defamation League (2016) created the Pyramid of Hate which shows that elements of hate speech such as belittling jokes, slurs and ridicule, if left uncurbed, can escalate and pave the way for bias-motivated violence leading even to atrocities such as genocide. The



United Nations has recognized the alarming trends of hatred around the world, as well as the potential of hate speech to act as a precursor to atrocity crimes, thereby, it proclaimed 18 June as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, to be observed annually (A/RES/75/309).

Finally, Cortese (2016, pp. 7-9) suggests that not all hate speech remarks are equally serious. He differentiates between offending comments and incitement to violence, also between intentional and unintentional discrimination. Therefore, he proposes a four-stage model of the development of hate speech severity. The model endeavours to classify discriminatory statements from least severe to most severe:

#### Stage 1: Unintentional Discrimination

This stage refers to everyday micro-transgressions, events of discrimination usually committed by members belonging to the majority group. Even though it might end up offending minorities, it is not intentional.

#### Stage 2: Conscious Discrimination

This stage refers to discriminatory speech that aims to defame minorities. Since the intent here is a fact, the emotional distress inflicted could justify legal action. This is where the perceived harm in hate speech is important. In order to stand in legal action, Cortese suggests that the plaintiff must meet four basic criteria: that of intent, extreme and outrageous behaviour, causation and severe emotional distress.

#### Stage 3: Inciting Discriminatory Hatred

This form of hate speech is more severe than that of Stage 2. It aims to generate feelings of hatred for minorities and is often spoken out in public.

#### Stage 4: Inciting Discriminatory Violence

This type of hate speech clearly incites violence against minorities and constitutes criminal behaviour.

For stages 1 and 2 of hate speech, Cortese suggests that education is the major intervention aiming to help the offender realize that what was said was stereotypical, discriminatory, or hateful, and why so. Likewise, in stage 2, education is again the major intervention. In addition, at this point institutions – such as an individual school, for example - could possibly take measures for prohibiting hate speech. In some cases, also legal action is possible. However, for stages 3 and 4 he admits that ‘education is not likely to change the attitude of an established bigot’ (p. 8).

Considering the harm done by hate speech on both individuals and society as whole, I decided to engage with this topic as it is rarely addressed within school contexts, even though education seems to play a crucial role for countering it, especially if addressed early on.

## **2.6 The roots of hate speech**

Hateful expressions comprise of a double meaning: the primary intent is to incite fear and degrade an outgroup, while simultaneously providing affirmation to in-groups who share the same harmful outlook (Waldron, 2012). Cortese (2006) suggests that ‘hate is a result of both culture (cultural transmission) and self-interest (group identification)’ (p. 3). Drawing on social psychology literature, this section will explore a bit further these two notions and their components.

### **2.6.1 Group Identification Theory**

Group identification refers to a person’s sense of belonging to a particular group. Self-identity is primarily shaped by the sense of belonging to groups.

Identities are not static. They are dynamic, multiple and constantly evolving (Banks, 2006). It is possible to distinguish between personal and social identity. Personal identity

is made up of individual qualities, such as skills, beliefs, habits and personality, that define the person, whereas, social identity is made up of shared features, like race, gender or citizenship, that are shaped by societal influences (Jenkins, 2008). These features can be used to divide and categorise people into specific groups (Jost & Hamilton, 2005). Our identities have a great influence on how we experience the world and how we are treated by those around us (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Farmer & Maister, 2017). Many prejudices and biases stem from negative feelings attached to certain identities and hence to certain groups of people (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

As children grow, they start realising themselves as individuals who are members of particular groups. As they develop their own identity, they also develop social identities deriving from the groups they identify with (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014). This happens through communication, both verbal and nonverbal. Once identified as an in-group member, they are more likely to refer to outsiders with derogatory terms reflecting negative stereotypes. This happens because group identification is largely based on social comparison. People tend to feel good when they associate with groups that have relatively high prestige in social stratification (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, they tend to boost their self-confidence by boosting the status of any group they identify with (ibid.).

The role of parents in the transmission of racism to children is crucial as they are the most important people in a young child's life, and they influence their first experiences (Mane, 1993). Parents can convey social attitudes to their children both by direct tuition and indirectly by organising their children's social life. Children observe their parents and can perceive how others are treated by adults in powerful positions. Thus, they get to learn from their parents who is considered 'good' or 'bad', welcomed or unwelcomed (ibid.).

Group-Identification process can easily give way to ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the notion that one's group is superior to others derived from a biased judgement provided by one's culture that attributes disparaging characteristics to another culture (LeVine, 2015). Children from early on learn to make a distinction between the group they belong to and all others. They typically show preference for their own group and its culture and initially their limited social-cognitive capabilities lead them to dichotomous categorisation

of social information, which only later becomes more flexible (Aboud & Levy, 2000). They tend to adopt the group's ideology as their own and display preference for in-group members. Accordingly, they are likely to adopt prejudice against other groups which are prevalent within their group's ideology. Individuals' sense of power and self-esteem is elevated either by adopting an exaggerated view of the value of their own group or by downgrading the value of other groups (Cortese, 2006, p. 5). Hence, when pride in one's own group becomes excessive, it gives rise to hate speech and prejudice (ibid.).

The double message of hate speech mentioned in the beginning of this section targeting both outgroups and in-groups serves to propagate and increase hostility, creating a dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', thereby intensifying existing tensions (Waldron, 2012; Gagliardone et al., 2015). This dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them' appears to reinforce groups' identity and legitimacy (Latour et al., 2017).

### **2.6.2 Cultural Transmission Theory**

Cultural transmission has two basic elements: reproducing stereotypes and social distance. Children learn hate speech and prejudice the same way they learn other aspects of society's mainstream culture. For instance, Mane (1993) claims that the way racism permeates culture, through books, toys and representations in media allows white children to associate 'positive' with white skin and 'negative' or 'bad' with black skin.

Allport defines prejudice as 'an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization' (Allport, 1954, p. 9) representing thus both affective and cognitive components. Williams (1999, p. 281) describes prejudice as a 'prejudgment of individuals on the basis of some type of social categorization'. Thus, a prejudiced person comes in a situation with ideas and preconceptions about other people's characteristics accompanied by positive or negative predisposition toward these characteristics. It is this negative evaluation of traits considered acceptable within a specific culture which results in creating hostility and conflict among groups (ibid., 1999).

Prejudice and biased intergroup attitudes do not concern only adults, but children also show signs of prejudice and bias towards social groups at a young age, due to their early process of categorisation and identification of people (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014).

Stereotypes play a major role in prejudice (Jost & Hamilton, 2005) and hate speech (Keen et al., 2016). They are overgeneralised beliefs that members of one group have about the traits of members of other groups. Williams (1999, p. 281) describes stereotypes as a cluster of traits attributed to individuals as representative of a group and specifies that this cluster comprises of cognitive judgements, linked to certain behavioural expectations, but also entails evaluation of good/bad and superior/inferior. Children can easily assume, either through instruction or by accident, that members of other groups possess certain clusters of distinctive characteristics, either favourable or derogatory.

Exploring the nature and origins of children's racial attitudes, Bigler and Hughes (2009) claim that certain environmental conditions need to be present in order traits such as race to become salient for children and provide the basis for racial prejudices and stereotypes. Salience is not enough in itself, though. Factors such as minority status, group labeling, implicit or explicit racial segregation need also to be present. Once the above-mentioned conditions make race a prominent feature, children are more likely to categorise newly encountered individuals by this feature and facilitate the formulation of racial stereotyping. Moreover, they suggest that there are both external and internal mechanisms that influence the formation of racial stereotypes and prejudice. External mechanisms include explicit and implicit attributions to social groups. Explicit attributions are related to explicit information children get from their surroundings describing the attributes of various racial groups. Such stereotypic messages will be integrated into children's racial group concepts (ibid., p.192). Another external mechanism includes implicit attributions which is implicit information children can get from their cultures associating certain races to certain social roles. This can happen even through children detecting nonverbal behaviour of adults towards members of other social groups. All the above factors, Bigler and Hughes (2009) posit, have the capacity to fuel the formation of prejudices and stereotypes.

Social distance also supports hate speech and prejudice. Social distance refers to the degrees of understanding, acceptance and intimacy that usually characterises relations

between different groups, especially ethnic and racial groups (Cortese, 2006). The more unfavourable the stereotypes about a group, the more reluctance there is for social contact between that group and the members of the group that hold such beliefs.

Overall, cultural transmission is used as a mechanism of sharing concepts and information within members of a group. As such, it is also used to pass on hate from one generation to the other (Cortese, 2006). However, in this process, hate is considered normal and expected, while respect for diversity as deviant behaviour (Levin, 2002).

## **2.7 Countering hate speech**

Actions that are used to respond to hateful arguments, can be considered as 'counter actions' against hate speech. Prejudice and negative stereotyping are the basis of hate speech (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Cortese 2006; Latour et al., 2017). That is why it is important to respond to prejudice with facts that will enable people to see other pieces of the same picture and hopefully reach different conclusions or interpret things otherwise (Latour et al., 2017).

One reactive approach to hate speech is 'counter-speech'. It constitutes a short-term response and helps to debunk myths and stereotypes. It may take many forms. It can be a comment, an image, a post, a poem, or a video. The purpose of counter-speech is to deconstruct prejudiced and malicious hate speech by offering facts and arguments as response to hateful content (Gagliardone et al., 2015). When engaged in counter-speech, someone needs to pay attention to target the argument expressed and not the perpetrator as a person (Mozer, 2017). The aim is to make clear that hateful comments are not acceptable.

A more proactive approach to hate speech includes 'counter-campaigns'. When combined with counter-speech, they can have an amplified impact on the mindset of people, as it adds to the public debate and exposes hate speech as harmful and not tolerated (Keen et al., 2016; Latour et al., 2017). Counter-campaigns are a form of long-term counter-speech activities. They are usually long in duration, large scale, and advocate repeatedly for a hate speech issue (Titley et al., 2014). They require a lot of

planning, effort and often resources. Counter-campaigns – when well-planned and well executed - can be quite effective, reach wider audiences and even have a measurable impact (Mozer, 2017). One such campaign was the ‘No Hate Speech’ campaign instrumented by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and launched in 2012. The No Hate Speech Movement served as an umbrella for the national campaigns growing across Europe involving young people online and offline, with a special focus on human rights education.

However, in the long run it is mainly education that is suggested as one of the most effective methods to counter hate speech (United Nations, 2020); especially the type of education which aims to reduce prejudice and mitigate negative stereotyping, the two basic components that breed hate speech.

### **2.7.1 Countering hate speech through education**

Mane (1993) suggests that racial prejudice in children appears to be entirely learnt. As such, it could also be unlearned, if the conditions of learning are understood and reversed.

The strengthening or weakening of any of the above-mentioned factors, i.e., group identification and cultural transmission, could influence children’s level of racial prejudice and stereotyping (Bigler & Hughes, 2009). This knowledge can be particularly useful for individuals and institutions who care to prevent stereotypes and prejudices as it points out the factors that help them develop in children.

According to social psychology literature, educational interventions can be successful when they target the cognitive, behavioural and/or affective components of prejudice (Stephan et al., 2004). To reduce prejudice and related negative emotions in school contexts, Stephan and Mealy (2012) propose that the corollaries of prejudice need to be modified. According to them, some of the psychological processes that hold the potential to reduce prejudice include: social recategorisation, a process that aims to develop a common group identity that encompasses both in-group and outgroup members; self-

regulation which leads people to regulate expressions of verbal aggression and prejudiced behaviour; threat reduction, that is managing to reduce perceived threats that outgroup members can cause physical or emotional harm to the in-group; changing stereotypes and cognitive-emotional empathy.

Breaking down negative stereotypes can prove very difficult as people need to be willing to consider different options. A way of starting to challenge stereotypes is by noticing closely stereotype-disconfirming behaviours in multiple members of the outgroup, occurring in multiple contexts (Stephan & Mealy, 2012). Intercultural education provides information about breaking down stereotypes (Govaris, 2011) and opportunities for interaction between groups provide chances to observe behaviours which challenge beliefs about the perceived outgroup homogeneity (Dovidio et al., 2005; Schofield, 2012).

Below, I will focus a bit more on cognitive-emotional empathy, as more relevant to my research.

### **Cognitive and Emotional Empathy**

Empathy is one of the antidotes to prejudice and stereotypes (Batson & Ahmad, 2009; Farmer & Maister, 2017). Cognitive empathy takes place when someone takes the role of a member of the outgroup and views the world from their perspective. This way s/he gets to understand their practices, their values, even their perception of his/her own in-group (Stephan & Mealy, 2012). Emotional empathy occurs with the experience of emotions of outgroup members as their own (ibid., 2012). Both types of empathy are a powerful tool for humanising members of outgroups, thus reducing negative attitudes and perceived threats (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

Batson and Ahmad (2009) agree that empathy has the potential to improve intergroup relations. They have identified four different empathy states which help foster positive intergroup attitudes in different ways. They are distinct but related as they can lead to one another. Two cognitive/perceptual states are related to perspective taking and include



'Imagine-self perspective', i.e., imagine how one would think and feel in someone else's situation, and 'Imagine-other perspective', i.e., imagine how an outgroup is thinking and feeling. The two affective/emotional states include 'Emotion matching' when someone feels as another person feels and 'Empathic concern' when someone feels for another person who is in need. They further suggest that if the two perspective taking empathy states of 'Imagine-self perspective' and 'Imagine-other perspective' are combined, these processes together can boost the elimination of obstacles that hinder mutual understanding and respect between groups and increase the empathic concern.

Empathy is strongly related to altruistic values (Persson & Kajonius, 2016) influencing both actions and attitudes. Humanising individual members of an outgroup and feeling for them could reduce intergroup conflict (Batson & Ahmad, 2009). The empathy–altruism hypothesis (Batson et al., 2015) claims that empathic concern for a person in need can genuinely inspire altruistic motivation to relieve this need. This hypothesis has the potential to contribute to improving intergroup relations, as creating empathy for an individual of a marginalised group can generalise positive attitudes and concern for the whole group and generate action on behalf of the group (Batson et al., 2002). The effects of empathy even extend to fictional group members (ibid.).

Using empathy as a technique for creating compassion for the plights of discriminated groups can be very helpful (Batson et al., 2002), especially in the context of education. That is why it is important for educators to be aware of the different shades of empathy, i.e., cognitive versus emotional empathy, as devoting time to only talk about the needs of others but not allowing students to experience and feel those needs might not make much of an impact (Persson & Kajonius, 2016).

Empathy, in the context of education, can be activated by personal narratives of members of other groups. Regarding hate speech and education, counter-narratives serve to dispute or disprove a biased, hostile belief or argument commonly expressed (Latour et al., 2017). Some people engaging in counter-narratives suggest the use of 'alternative' or 'positive' narratives as a way of establishing a new agenda, and not only reacting to hate

speech. An example of counter-narratives is to tell a story about an individual who has been the victim of hate speech, either online or offline, and use it to disseminate information about the problem and build empathy for those targeted by hate speech. Online, someone could share sites or posts which highlight positive characteristics of common target groups and/or create 'mythbusting' list of arguments for groups commonly targeted by hate speech. More on counter-narratives will be discussed in the next chapter.

One more effective way of reducing prejudice, breaking down negative stereotypes and increasing empathy is provided by Contact Theory.

### **2.7.2 Contact Theory**

Contact Theory is a theoretical framework that has been used to explain how prejudice can be reduced by improving social contact between members of majority and minority groups. It is also referred to sometimes as 'contact hypothesis'. It proposes that 'contact between members of different groups can improve relations between them if the contact occurs under certain conditions' (Schofield, 2012, p. 446).

The American sociologist Robin Williams (1947) shortly after the atrocities of World War II, reviewed the research available up to that time and suggested 102 propositions on intergroup relations that could help mitigate prejudice towards other groups when certain conditions are met. Such conditions included –among others- the two groups sharing similar status, as well as providing situations that encourage personal contact between members of the different groups with the focus of interaction being upon a common interest, goal, or task (Williams, 1999).

Gordon Allport (1954) built on William's work and in his book 'The Nature of Prejudice' suggests intergroup contact hypothesis as a means to address prejudice and decrease bias at the individual level (Dovidio et al., 2005). He argued that such contact was crucial for improving relations between members of different, even conflicting, groups, provided that the intergroup interaction meets the following key conditions: equal status within the

situation for members of all groups; cooperation toward common goals; no intergroup competition and the support of relevant authorities.

One of the main challenges to the contact hypothesis is whether or not the positive interaction with an outgroup can be generalised beyond the initial contact to other situations, the entire outgroup or other outgroups (Brown & Turner, 1981; Hewstone & Brown, 1986 in Pettigrew, 1998). Pettigrew (1998) responded to this criticism that for generalisation across situations the cumulative effect of repeated optimal situations is important in order to change the competing attitudes of outgroups. For generalisation from the outgroup individual to the outgroup and from the immediate outgroup to other outgroups, he explained how group saliency, categorisation and recategorisation play a role in extending acceptance to other groups. Within this discussion, Pettigrew (1998) added a fifth condition to the Contact Hypothesis: the 'friendship potential', which refers to the power of cross-group friendships to reduce prejudice. The friendship condition requires all four Allport's conditions to be present and 'implies close interaction that would make self-disclosure and other friendship-developing mechanisms possible [...] for extensive and repeated contact in a variety of social contexts' (ibid., p. 76).

Even though the theory dates back, there has been a renewed interest in intergroup Contact Theory by researchers in recent decades and this work has helped evolve the hypothesis into a developed theory (Pettigrew, 1998). Pettigrew & Tropp's (2006) meta-analytic review of 515 relevant studies found that intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice and confirmed the Contact Theory's applicability to a broad range of groups and settings, even though initially it was devised for racial and ethnic encounters. The researchers claim that Allport's theory describes the optimal conditions that enhance the positive effects of intergroup contact. However, these conditions are not essential for positive outcomes to be achieved through intergroup contact, they are mostly facilitating conditions that enhance a positive outcome (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). The researchers traced cases of contact with no claim to these conditions which still had positive effects emerging between contact and prejudice. Moreover, the conditions under which the contact occurs impact the direction and the amount of change (Schofield, 2012).

Over the past decades considerable work has been done on the processes through which contact may improve intergroup relations. Among others, it was demonstrated that 'the impact of contact is mediated through processes such as increased knowledge about the outgroup, reduced anxiety about interacting with them, and increased empathy for outgroup members' (Schofield, 2012, p. 447).

Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) further explore the process of how contact diminishes prejudice. They tested meta-analytically the three most studied mediators of contact hypothesis and their results showed that enhancing knowledge about the outgroup, reducing anxiety about intergroup contact, and increasing empathy and perspective taking do have mediational effect for reducing prejudice through contact. However, the mediational value of simply knowing more about the outgroup does not seem to be as strong as empathy and anxiety reduction. The implication for that is that possibly initial anxiety must first be reduced with intergroup contact before increased empathy and knowledge of the outgroup can contribute effectively to prejudice reduction. This is especially more relevant for the majority group than for members of minority status groups, as the majority group members tend to have less interaction with high-identifying minority members before the intergroup contact situation and this may reinforce their anxiety (Mana, 2019; Christensen & Kerper, 2013).

The concept of Contact Theory has been applied in various contexts, including educational, social and law domains. Contact Theory is particularly relevant to education as it forms the basis for many awareness and education intervention programmes whose goal is to alter attitudes, that is improve behaviour towards people who are different (McKay, 2018). Beelmann and Heinemann (2014) have examined several research reports of structured interventions aiming to reduce prejudice or promote positive intergroup attitudes in children and adults. They found that out of the variety of different approaches employed the strongest effect was noted by interventions based on direct contact experiences combined with social-cognitive training programmes developed to promote empathy.

However, it is particularly interesting that Contact Theory can be effective even if the intergroup contact is not direct. An effective form of indirect contact is extended contact, that is 'knowing that an ingroup member is friends with an outgroup member' (Vezzali et al., 2014, p. 315). Cameron et al. (2006) demonstrated the effectiveness of 'extended contact' as an intervention to reduce negative outgroup attitudes toward refugees to school children aged 5 to 11 years old. Moreover, Zhou et al. (2019) engaged in a meta-analysis that covers 20 years of research on the extended contact hypothesis verifying that knowing that members of a group have cross-group friends can lead to more positive attitudes towards the outgroup, independently of direct friendship. In addition, electronic contact has been tested for improving intergroup relations and evidence shows that carefully designed electronic contact programmes can successfully decrease intergroup bias and promote intergroup harmony, for instance, between Christian and Muslim students in Australia (White & Abu-Rayya, 2012) and Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland (White et al., 2019). Thus, research shows that effects can be produced also without direct contact between majority and minority members, as long as other conditions are met.

Finally, Contact Theory has been used to improve intergroup contacts other than ethnic or religious ones. For example, Rillotta and Nettelbeck (2007) and McKay et al. (2015) tested the Contact Theory in awareness interventions between nondisabled and disabled students and found that students who received information about people with disabilities and were engaged in meaningful interactions with them, showed greater positive attitudes towards outgroups with disabilities.

In conclusion of this chapter, education is a long-term way of countering hate speech but also by far the most effective. It is important to tackle hate speech, through education, when it is on its rise and not well rooted (i.e., stages 1 and 2 of Cortese's model, discussed above). Education can enhance awareness raising about hate speech. Training sessions related to hate speech topics, could enable learners to learn more about the general problem of hate speech online and offline, its impact on common target groups, as well as methods of dealing with it (Keen et al, 2016). An important element of education is that

it can help dismantle prejudices about particular target groups by unmasking the impact it can have on targeted groups and individuals. Without recognising the mechanisms that facilitate perpetuation of exclusion and discrimination we will never be able to tackle and change them (Brander et al., 2004).

Education plays a significant role in helping people live together in a peaceful coexistence. The next chapter explores how education can act as a mechanism to promote tolerance and intercultural understanding, contributing, therefore, to the countering of hate speech.

## **CHAPTER 3: EDUCATION AS A MEANS TO COUNTER HATE SPEECH**

### **3.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter presents the second part of the literature review. As an educator myself, I am committed to human rights values, and my aim in this research is to identify a successful educational way to combat hate speech. Before embarking on my action research project in class with my students, I tried to capture what other scholars have identified as effective strategies and practices for dismantling prejudice. Therefore, Chapter 3 explores the potential of education to act as a restorative mechanism against hate speech. Transformative Learning Theory is discussed as a framework to gear this effort. Moreover, human rights education (EDC/HRE) is assessed as to how it could help mitigate hate speech and prejudice. In addition, related teaching methods are discussed as to how they could promote tolerance towards each other, increase empathy, and ultimately living together in diversity.

### **3.2 Education promoting social values**

Education systems worldwide aim to socialise students and prepare them for participation in society (Banks, 2017). In the past couple of decades, there has been tension between the neoliberal ideologies which led the increasing commodification of education on the one hand and a more humanistic conception of education on the other (Apple, 2005). Teacher-student relationship turned into a customer relationship with issuing of certifications which is vital for the survival of a person in a capitalist context (Giroux, 2014, p. 5). In such a transactional context, the competition between students increases, and critical learning is weakened by memorization practices, rote-learning and examinations (ibid., p.6). Moreover, in a capitalist context, the school serves to reproduce social

inequalities as it is designed to cater for the needs of a specific type of student (McLaren, 2015). In addition, formal schooling has the potential to be harmful to children and their wider societies by either being violent towards them, or by reproducing and perpetrating violence, or by not doing anything positive for them or their families (Harber, 2004, p. 8). In the same light, education provided by Greek schools tends to reproduce the current status quo and follow a monocultural approach.

Scholars in the field of Sociology of Education have revealed the mechanisms behind the power that school has to reproduce inequalities in society. Bourdieu (1966 / 2013) sheds light on a very important factor that explains the reproduction of social inequalities. He points out that each family transmits to its children a certain cultural capital and a system of values that significantly influence the child's behaviour towards the institution of school. Inequality, according to the author, and the difference in school success are a consequence of the possession or not of a specific cultural capital, which is determined by social class. Good school performance is directly related to the possession of cultural capital, that of the educated class, which essentially expresses the formal and dominant culture of the education system. Moreover, Bernstein (1971 / 2003) highlights the linguistic codes families bequeath to their children. Those who acquire 'elaborated' linguistic code from their families, usually from the middle and upper classes, learn to cope with ambiguous meaning and ambivalence, which helps them adapt to school more easily. However, at the same time, Bernstein approaches pedagogy as a means, not only of reproduction but of interruption and as a place of thought of the 'unthinkable' as education is never completely controlled. Schools have the potential to challenge the relations dominating the larger society (Apple, 2013) and education can be seen as a vehicle for social change (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Bourn, 2021).

Apart from the potential of education to interrupt the dominant social reproduction, it also has the capacity to promote social values like tolerance, empathy and social justice (Adams & Bell, 2016). Particularly about social justice, Fraser (2008) proposes three distinct but overlapping dimensions for understanding and approaching matters of justice in education. Socio-economic injustice refers to maldistribution or class inequality for



some social groups, cultural injustice arises when there is a misrecognition of cultural values or status inequality of certain groups and political injustice appears when there is no equal voice in decision-making for certain individuals or groups. Being aware of these three principles of justice helps pursue parity for all in these three levels and promotes justice in schooling policy and practice, especially for marginalised groups (Keddie, 2012).

This potential of education to promote social values is important for educators who wish to break the conservative cycle of knowledge-making. They can help students learn how to identify and critique injustice and inequalities in the world. This critique should be followed by possibilities for action to make the world a more just and humane place (Banks, 2004). However, critique without hope may leave learners without agency (Freire, 1979).

The rise of extremism, xenophobia and intolerance in recent decades has been posing serious threats to our societies (ECRI, 2016). For that reason, education is increasingly recognised as a defence mechanism against such phenomena and as a major contributor to social cohesion, social justice and peace (Diez Villagrasa, 2012). The UNESCO report (1996) of the International Commission on Education identified numerous tensions that the world will face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which will also affect education. As a response to face these tensions the Unesco Commission suggested four pillars of learning: learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. The pillar of 'Learning to live together' was recognised as the foundation of education. It emphasises the importance of understanding and appreciating our growing interdependence. It signifies that education should strengthen learners' ability to manage conflicts in a peaceful way, respect pluralism, develop an understanding of other people and encourage the implementation of common projects. The other three pillars are not to be disregarded as they provide the basis for learning to live together.

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (2012) recognised that today's curricula and learning materials are to a large extent outmoded and 'often reinforce stereotypes, exacerbate social divisions, and foster fear and resentment of other groups or nationalities' (p. 20). Thus, he called out for the need for goals and methods of education

to change in order to prepare students to face the future challenges of the interconnected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Education First, 2012). More specifically, he asked for education to be transformative, correspond to today's needs and help people to create more just, tolerant and inclusive societies.

More specifically to hate speech, education is an important means we have in our hands to counter hate speech. Its power lies in the fact that it can promote prejudice reduction. Thus, it can help narrow the gap between 'us' and 'the other'; question the stereotypes that have been passed on to us through cultural transmission; shorten the social distance by reconsidering the 'superiority' of the group we identify with (Mane, 1993; Cortese, 2006; Bigler & Hughes, 2009). Since hate speech is based on prejudice, fear and bias, education can help tackle it by promoting tolerance towards the 'other', increasing empathy and ultimately enabling us to live together (Osler & Starkey, 2010).

The educational philosophy of Critical Pedagogy provides ways to critique structures that are often taken for granted, even the ones that exist within the school. Along the same line, Education for Democratic Citizenship/Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) aims to promote the core values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law which can potentially lead to a fairer, more cohesive society.

*Since there is not a consistent hate speech approach defined so far to tackle hate speech in the school context, the long-researched field of Critical Pedagogy and the more recent paradigm of EDC/HRE could provide a starting point and offer good practices for combating hate speech.*

The section below discusses Critical Pedagogy as a pedagogical approach that could enable learners to view the social world from a different lens and challenge existing inequalities as agents of change.

### **3.3 Critical Pedagogy**

This research examines the scope of Critical Pedagogy as some of its principles are adopted for the study of the field, i.e. the school intervention.

Critical Pedagogy provides a philosophical and educational framework for understanding the relationship between education and power. The origins of Critical Pedagogy can be traced back to the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who believed that education should be used to challenge and disrupt oppressive social systems. He developed a liberatory pedagogy that focuses on empowering learners to critically examine and challenge the power structures that shape their lives (Freire, 1979). Since then, Critical Pedagogy has been widely adopted and adapted by educators and scholars around the world, particularly in the fields of education and sociology (Giroux, 1980; McLaren, 1995; Jerome & Starkey, 2021).

Critical Pedagogy is an approach to education which sees school as a place of reproduction of social relations but at the same time as a space of resistance and change.

Under the prism of Critical Pedagogy, education should aim to unveil the social construction of knowledge and help students understand the structure of power relations and the different forms of oppression (Giroux & Filippakou, 2020). Important theorists of Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1979; Giroux & Pena, 1979) define this process as the 'emancipation' process of the learner. A truly liberating pedagogy makes it possible for the oppressed/learners to overcome their oppressive condition and pursue their own liberation by engaging with critical reflection (McLaren, 2015), becoming more open to the perspectives of others, less defensive and more receptive to new ideas (Freire, 1979).

Social transformation is something that Critical Pedagogy aims for, and transformative learning facilitates this process. The transformative process involves critical reflection, questioning dominant social and cultural norms, and empowering learners to become agents of change (Bajaj, 2018). Transformative learning theory, developed by Jack Mezirow, suggests that learners undergo a transformation process when they critically

examine their assumptions, beliefs, and values, leading to new perspectives and ways of thinking. This theory is rooted in the idea that learning is not just about acquiring new knowledge but about critically reflecting on one's own experiences and assumptions in order to create meaning and transform one's worldview (Mezirow, 1991).

Critical thinking is a central skill to transformative learning. Critical thinkers need to view thinking as a means of empowering and reorganising the human will (McLaren, 1994, p. xiii-xiv). Critical reflection also promotes social justice by encouraging students to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and examine critically the social and cultural norms that shape their lives and finally engage in transformative action to challenge and change these norms (McLaren, 2015).

At its core, Critical Pedagogy aims to challenge traditional forms of teaching and learning that reinforce existing power structures and inequalities in society (Giroux, 1980). This includes questioning dominant narratives, deconstructing social norms and values, and promoting dialogue and engagement with diverse perspectives. A curriculum serving these learning aims should be in place. It is vital to adapt school curricula to meet the challenges of globalisation and multiculturalism by promoting democracy and pluralism, as well as equity and integration (Banks et al., 2005).

Traditional curricula tend to have a theoretical and informational orientation, emphasising rote-learning and ethnocentric tendency (Apple, 2005). In contrast to the traditional curricula, the curriculum in Critical Pedagogy is not focused on the delivery of knowledge, but rather on the development and application of knowledge and skills. However, for knowledge to become critical, it must first be made meaningful and relevant to the students (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Students cannot be treated as empty vessels or vaults in a bank to be filled (Freire, 1979). Critical Pedagogy challenges learners to examine the systems in which they live and to question the status quo (Giroux, 1980). It encourages learners to think critically and to take responsibility for their learning. The curriculum should include a variety of activities and strategies to help students develop their critical thinking skills. These might include discussions, debates, simulations, and

hands-on activities (Adams & Bell, 2016). In addition, the curriculum should include strategies for engaging learners in social action and social change (Giroux & Filippakou, 2020). Finally, Critical Pedagogy encourages teaching based on dialogue, relationships, and mutual understanding.

Within the Critical Pedagogy framework, teachers are seen as practitioners who have the capacity to expand their role to more than deliver the conventional school curricula (Bourn, 2021). They play a central role, as their actions, attitudes and beliefs are integral to the process of learning and to build students' critical thinking skills. Based on the idea that power and knowledge are related, and that knowledge is not neutral, teachers should foster an environment of open exploration, in which students can explore their own situated perspectives and develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1979; Giroux & Filippakou, 2020). Thus, teachers can be mediators between the stimuli coming from the social environment and the processes that take place during the educational process (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Moreover, teachers should also provide students with opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue and problem-solving around authentic questions.

Teachers can conceptualise and design their teaching in such a way to help learners create their own understanding of the world around them by using alternative teaching methods in the context of transformative education (McLaren, 1995) and motivate them to take action to promote social, economic and political justice.

Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) discuss the social function of educators as intellectuals and distinguish four categories: transformative, critical, accommodating and hegemonic intellectuals. 'Transformative' intellectuals include those teachers who employ pedagogies that give voice to their students and treat them as critical agents. They use dialogue, make knowledge meaningful and critical and therefore emancipatory. They view school as a territory linked closely to power and control. That is why they treat students as critical agents (McLaren, 2015), they try to help students develop a commitment to overcome injustices and change themselves. Teachers may move in and out between

these categories, so this classification doesn't serve so much as to characterise teachers as individuals, but rather serves to identify forms of ideology and social practice that any individual teacher might take up, habitually or mindfully. The 'transformative' approach of teaching, as delineated above, is the most effective within the scope of Critical Pedagogy.

EDC/HRE is based on principles of Critical Pedagogy (Jerome & Starkey, 2021). As such, it can be used as a means by which learners can deal critically with everyday reality and discover effective ways to participate in the transformation of their world. Goals for EDC/HRE programming have the potential to be transformative and behaviourally oriented. In the Freire spirit, as Tibbitts (2007) argues, HRE calls for a critique of political and social circumstances marked by inequalities in power and justice.

Considering the Greek educational context, the Greek curriculum follows the pattern of traditional school curricula that reproduce the existing social patterns (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 1997). Even though it was revised in 2012, it remains anachronistic. However, teachers who are inspired by the ideals of Critical Pedagogy can find opportunities in the existing curriculum to sharpen the critical thinking of their students and provide opportunities to challenge the current inequalities around them.

I started out this research by exploring the extent and characteristics of hate speech in Greek schools, answering, thus, my **first research question** (further elaborated in Chapter 4). In the belief that teachers are agents of change and have a scope for initiative, the **second research question** of this thesis was formulated: '*Which EDC/HRE teaching practices more successfully raise awareness about hate speech?*'. The main goal was to test and suggest a different teaching approach embedded in the mainstream school.

Though Freire views the purpose of education as the liberation of the oppressed, Nicholls (2011) took a spin on this legacy and suggested the teaching of such a liberatory pedagogy in spaces where the elite receives education, in universities and colleges, for instance. In such contexts where students may be more likely to be oppressors, Nicholls suggests that the challenge is to teach empathy and solidarity with the oppressed, who usually are not present. In my case, I was also involved with the education of the majority

group, thus, educating the privileged about oppression made sense to me. Therefore, I formulated my **third research question**: *'Which EDC/HRE teaching practices help learners develop empathy towards refugees?'*

The section below discusses EDC/HRE in more detail and highlights how it can contribute to the transformation of learners' perspectives and actions. An important note to make here is that Education for Democratic Citizenship is not exactly the same as Human Rights Education regarding scope and focus but is closely related and mutually supportive. Hence, in this research, the term EDC/HRE is used interchangeably with 'human rights education' (HRE).

### **3.4 Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE)**

Adopting a rights-based approach to education, based on principles such as non-discrimination, inclusion and empowerment, can contribute significant added values to both learners and society. Among others, it contributes to positive social transformation:

A rights-based approach to education that embodies human rights education empowers children and other stakeholders and represents a major building block in efforts to achieve social transformation towards rights-respecting societies and social justice.

(UNICEF, 2007, p.12)

Critical pedagogues recognise education as a political act emancipating students as critical thinkers and transformational citizens (Giroux, 1980; Osler & Starkey, 2002; Banks, 2009). As such, EDC/HRE can be used in a Critical Pedagogy framework and can contribute to transformative education, as its ultimate purpose is to empower learners to exercise and defend their rights and play an active part in democratic life (CM/Rec(2010)7). Both domains employ critical thinking as the main vehicle for change. The process of teaching EDC/HRE is inevitably critical, as even democratic states still face social injustices and inequalities. That is why EDC/HRE connects critical thinking to democracy. In a democratic context, especially in diverse societies, people need to know

how to engage in a dialogue and take responsibility for their own thoughts and arguments in an atmosphere of mutual respect (Nussbaum, 2006). The key document of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education mentions: 'Democracies are demanding systems, depending on their citizens' active involvement and support – an attitude of informed and critical loyalty' (Gollob et al., 2010) and emphasises the importance of active participation of students and their fundamental freedoms.

Below follows a discussion of both terms in more detail.

### **3.4.1 Human Rights Education (HRE)**

Numerous human rights instruments worldwide uphold the right to education and rely on knowledge and education to fulfil their objectives. Notably, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognises in its preamble that teaching and education can promote respect for the rights and freedoms of people, thus, education about human rights is essential.

Human Rights Education provides the space to connect education with human rights. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2006) acknowledges that 'human rights education based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, tolerance and respect for diversity can play a key role in combating racism and intolerance in general' (p.4). Human Rights Education is all about helping people to develop to the point where they understand human rights and fundamental freedoms and feel that they are important and should be respected and defended (Amnesty International, 2007). Moreover, introducing learners to the values and concepts of HRE from a young age is an effective means of challenging negative attitudes towards human rights (Struthers, 2016).



A landmark for Human Rights Education has been the Vienna Declaration, which followed the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993. This document introduced and established HRE as a component of strengthening the understanding and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The way was paved for the proclamation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing) to promote a common understanding of basic principles and methodologies of HRE, to provide a concrete framework for action and to strengthen partnerships and cooperation from the international level down to the grassroots.

In 2011 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. It is a ground-breaking document because it is the first instrument dedicated specifically to HRE (Brander & Keen, 2012). The declaration acknowledges everyone's right to know about human rights and have access to human rights education and training. It identifies three levels of human rights education and training: Education *about* human rights, that is, knowledge and understanding of human rights principles; Education *through* human rights, which includes learning and teaching respecting the rights of both educators and learners; Education *for* human rights, empowering learners to exercise their rights and uphold the rights of others. The declaration is a powerful tool for raising awareness about the importance of HRE as it urges the states and relevant authorities to ensure the promotion of human rights education and training and enable the engagement of relevant stakeholders by providing the necessary resources.

The growing recognition of the role that education can play in protecting society from human rights violations and contributing to social cohesion is reflected in the Council of Europe's (1997) launch of an initiative for Education for Democratic Citizenship 'with a view to promoting citizens' awareness of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society'. This initiative played an important role in paving the way for the adoption of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in 2010 (Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7). This is a landmark document for people working with EDC/HRE as, among other fields, it also supports promoting this type of education in

school systems. Specifically, it urges the member states to include Education for Democratic Citizenship and human rights education 'in the curricula for formal education at pre-primary, primary and secondary school level as well as in general and vocational education and training' so that every person within their territory will be provided with the opportunity to receive education in EDC/HRE. The member states that ratified the Charter, including Greece, committed themselves legally to enable its promotion. The Charter provides guidance and recommendations on how to promote this kind of education (Diez Villagrasa, 2012).

Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights (Osler & Starkey, 2010). Even though education is a right in itself, it also has the ability to violate human rights, especially when imposed on minorities to distort their identity. That is why Katarina Tomasevski (2006), a former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, developed the '4-As scheme'. She called for governments to make education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable. Availability refers to governments' obligation to offer free and compulsory primary schooling and provide corresponding infrastructure to facilitate it. Accessibility calls for barriers of all kinds of discrimination to be lifted so that disadvantaged learners can complete compulsory education. Acceptability requires education content to be relevant and culturally appropriate so that quality is safeguarded. Adaptability is the last and perhaps 'utopian' stage (ibid, p.103) and requires education to adapt to the needs of the learners, instead of learners adapting to it, and evolve according to the needs of society. While Tomasevski's work is undoubtedly important and influential, Klees and Thapliyal (2007) express some concerns about it. For instance, they claim that the role of civil society networks advocating for public education is barely acknowledged and the parental rights in primary education are insufficiently examined. Moreover, they note that she pays insufficient attention to secondary and higher education. An answer to this latter concern could be that early, and primary education is the foundation of education and lifelong learning. So, it is important to safeguard this step first if there is to be a realistic discussion about the rest of the construction and evolution of education. The '4-As scheme' is a good

point to consider if we want education to serve as a right in itself and also help safeguard the rest of people's rights.

Bander and Keen (2012) comment that the right to education includes the right to human rights education, and Markus and Rios (2018) propose that multicultural education is a human right since quality education and cultural diversity are internationally recognised rights. Building on this way of thinking, I would argue that the right to education also includes the right to EDC/HRE in the sense that EDC focuses on empowering people to exercise their democratic rights and safeguard a democratic way of life in their societies.

### **3.4.2 Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC)**

Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education refers to education, training, dissemination, information, practices and activities which encompass three dimensions: the cognitive dimension (learning "about" democracy and human rights), the participative dimension (learning "for" democracy and human rights) and the cultural dimension (learning "through" democracy and human rights) (Gollob et al., 2010).

Education for Democratic Citizenship and human rights education are closely inter-related and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices. While human rights education concerns the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives, Education for Democratic Citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation (Charter on EDC/HRE, 2010).

Education for Democratic Citizenship aims to empower young people to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law (Charter on EDC/HRE, 2010).

Democracy and human rights are interconnected in that each is somehow dependent on the other and incomplete without the other (Brander & Keen, 2012). Even though the infringement of all human rights can potentially undermine democracy, there are three human rights which are intrinsically connected with the concept of democracy. The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion for everyone (Article 18, UNDHR, 1948) is fundamental as it discloses every person's right to ownership of their thoughts and beliefs, thus, helping democracies grow stronger. The right to freedom of opinion and expression of an individual, including the right to exchange information uninhibitedly (Article 19, UNDHR, 1948), ensures the pluralism of views and helps democracies remain current. Finally, Article 20 (UNDHR, 1948) safeguards the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, facilitating different voices to be heard and considered.

The word democracy is composed of the Greek words 'demos' and 'kratos' which mean 'people' and 'power' respectively, assigning, hence, the meaning to democracy as the power of the people. Democracy's viability is largely dependent on the participation of the people who compose it. Democratic participation can be encouraged or stimulated by education. Particularly so, if practices are adapted to a media and information society and aim to strengthen the understanding and judgement of individuals (Delors & Unesco, 1996).

Dewey (1916 / 2009) believed that schools can and should help to foster a sense of democracy amongst students. He stressed the need for an education based on democratic dialogue which provides experiences of democracy such as experiences of participation, critical thinking and civic engagement. Democracy is a learned behaviour. As such, education needs to have a clear orientation as to what kind of democratic citizens it hopes to cultivate (Harber, 2004, p. 137). Dewey suggested that education can play a role in creating a just and equitable society by creating citizens with a shared sense of purpose who challenge inequalities and look beyond their schools and national borders. Osler and Starkey (2005) argue that connecting democratic education to national identity is problematic. That is why they suggest a new type of citizen to be envisaged – the cosmopolitan citizen- recognising allegiance to both the nation and the world as

equally important. Moreover, they pay special attention to the Convention on the Human Rights of the Child and encourage schools that want to be more democratic and inclusive to treat students as citizens now and not as 'citizens-in-waiting'.

This is in accordance with the realm of Critical Pedagogy which calls for viewing schools as democratic public spheres, that is, as sites where students get empowered and learn the skills needed to live in a democracy (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985); schools that teach students about social responsibility and engage them in meaningful dialogue and action unattached to the needs of financial and labour markets (McLaren, 2015). This could be actualised by students actively participating in the learning, questioning the learning process, criticising classroom meanings, thinking critically and dialectically and understanding the interconnections in the world (Giroux, 1980). In this light, educators should create the conditions for this type of learning to take place and use the 'language of democracy', a language that is not an instrument of intimidation and violence but rather a vehicle for engaged and informed agency exposing oppression and giving hope that an alternative future is possible (Giroux & Filippakou, 2020).

### **3.4.3 Implementation and assessment of EDC/HRE**

Looking for ways in which EDC/HRE could build a new educational model to be used by all member states of the Council of Europe, regardless of their different educational systems, the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) was created. It was published in April 2018 and it is believed it can help implement the objectives and principles of the EDC/HRE Charter more effectively and also play a role in bringing EDC/HRE closer to teachers' practice (Barrett, 2020).

RFCDC is composed of 20 competences sub-divided into four categories. The underlying notion is that if students are offered, during their school life, knowledge and experience in the Competences for Democratic Culture included in the Reference Framework, they would have the possibility to become active, democratic citizens and participate effectively in a culture of democracy.

Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC) are subdivided into Values, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and Critical Understanding. *Values* include sets of general beliefs that are necessary for participating in a culture of democracy in its full dimensions, such as valuing human rights and diversity. *Attitudes* describe the overall mental orientation an individual adopts towards someone or something else and include, among others, openness to otherness, respect, and tolerance of ambiguity. *Skills* are the abilities necessary to deeply understand, activate and critically use the knowledge we acquire and apply it to our daily lives. These include, among others, analytical and critical thinking skills, conflict-resolution skills, and empathy. Finally, *knowledge and critical understanding* refer to the information and elements that are necessary to understand ourselves, language and communication and the world. The Competences for Democratic Culture are complemented by scaled descriptors, and learning outcomes for all these competences refine the expected results of using the model in educational contexts. They serve the purpose of supporting the development of CDC in learners by offering them the possibility to assess their current level of each competence and identify areas for further development. They also serve as a reference for the educators to help them design, implement and evaluate relevant educational interventions. More details on each competence and its respective descriptors can be found in Volumes 1 and 2 of RFCD (Barrett et al., 2018a & 2018b), and guidance for their implementation in Volume 3 (Barrett et al., 2018c).

The acquisition of CDC is a lifelong learning process and not a linear progression to ever-increasing competence in intercultural and democratic processes (Barrett et al., 2018a, p. 20). It is the choice of an individual which competence and to which level they aspire to develop, and that is why the context needs to be acknowledged and considered.

Even though a culture of democracy requires citizens to acquire a range of the competences described above, they are not sufficient for democratic participation to occur (Barrett, 2016). Suitable institutional structures and procedures need to be in place to support active civic engagement. Otherwise, they can act as inhibitors for intercultural

and democratic actions that citizens may wish to undertake. Moreover, it is necessary to adopt measures to tackle structural inequalities, especially for members of disadvantaged groups, or else this will lead them to civic disengagement and alienation, irrespective of their levels of competence (ibid., p. 17-18).

Assessment is an important aspect while implementing EDC/HRE. Through evaluation, the efforts of teachers gain credibility towards the educational authorities but also give teachers the opportunity to see if their practices have results, and if not, why and how to change or modify them. Students are also given the opportunity to monitor their own progress and, along with other activities, improve their ability to take responsibility for their own learning.

Traditional school assessment methods may be useful in evaluating the cognitive part of human rights teaching, but they are less useful in assessing skills and attitudes. Thus, educators involved with EDC/HRE have been led to develop assessment techniques that enhance skills and attitudes in their teaching. Involving students in evaluating themselves and their classmates is primary, as it encourages them to take more responsibility for their behavior. To avoid confusion and conflict, it helps to have discussed in advance and, when possible, to have determined jointly the evaluation procedures and goals.

Teachers can use a range of approaches to assessment. However, the more experienced they become in EDC/HRE implementation they will want to move from summative to more formative types of assessment. Summative assessment usually focuses on the knowledge dimension through comprehension tasks and tests. It doesn't assess students' progress over time or their active participation (Brett et al., 2009, p. 46). On the other hand, formative assessment can help students identify and celebrate their achievements in EDC/HRE. It encourages students to own their learning by building on knowledge, skills and participation and using them in subsequent work or projects (ibid.). Formative assessment strategies include student self and peer assessment and methods such as portfolios, reflection journals, collaborative projects, researching a topic, and more. In either case, for assessment to be embraced by learners, it needs to abide by some

principles, which include validity, reliability, equity, transparency, and practicality (Barrett et al., 2018c). That is, assessment should be fair and respectful, it should accurately describe a learner's level of achievement of the intended learning outcomes, it should produce consistent and stable results, provide clear information about the assessment, and consider the practical constraints that may apply in any given context (ibid., pp. 54-58).

Within the scope of EDC/HRE, schools can also be evaluated as to what extent human rights permeate their curriculum, school ethos, overall climate, and management. Moreover, it is assessed whether democratic procedures exist in the various informal and formal structures of school life and culture.

#### **3.4.4 Intercultural competence to facilitate and promote EDC/HRE**

In culturally diverse societies, democratic processes require intercultural dialogue (Barrett et al., 2018a) based on open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different cultural affiliations (Council of Europe, 2008). That is why intercultural literacy is considered a vital skill in multicultural societies, almost as basic as reading and writing skills (Banks, 2004). It consists of skills and abilities that enable learners to view knowledge from multiple perspectives and use knowledge to guide action geared to creating a more human and more just world (Banks, 2004).

In the domain of education, the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe (2011) recommend that intercultural competence should be a core element of school curricula. Therefore, they urge the educational community to adopt a multi-perspective approach in teaching and learning that encompasses different perspectives. Regarding the definition of intercultural competence, Deardorff (2006) reviewed the work of multiple intercultural scholars and noted that there is a preference for a definition broader in nature. The top-rated definition that emerged captured intercultural competence as: 'the ability to



communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes' (ibid., pp. 247-248).

Intercultural competence consists of the following components (Barrett 2011; Huber & Reynolds, 2014): *Attitudes*, like respect for and curiosity about other cultures and the willingness to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. *Knowledge and understanding* include knowledge of practices and products of other cultural groups, but also awareness of one's own cultural affiliations; awareness and understanding of stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination. *Skills*, like that of interacting with people from other cultures, the ability to consider different perspectives, to display empathy and cognitive flexibility. *Actions* that may entail communicating effectively during intercultural encounters, cooperating with individuals from other cultures on shared activities and ventures and challenging cultural stereotypes and prejudices. A more detailed list of the components of intercultural competence, particularly those that can be developed through education, can be found in Huber (2014, pp. 19-22). It is important to note that intercultural competence never gets complete; it can always be enriched by continuing different experiences of encounters with other cultures (ibid., p. 17). In addition, Barrett (2011) argues that the relationship between intercultural competence and the various components it comprises have not been fully established and calls for the need to investigate empirically questions like how the different components are cognitively and affectively interrelated and how each of them develops within the individual learner.

In the European context, the term 'multicultural' with reference to education is used to describe learning about other cultures so as to produce acceptance or tolerance of those cultures, while the term 'intercultural' goes beyond passive coexistence and aims to develop a 'way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of *understanding* of, *respect* for and *dialogue* between the different cultural groups' (UNESCO, 2006, p. 18). Similarly, in the Greek academic context, the equivalent translation of the term 'intercultural' is used in relation to the field of education (Govaris, 2011; Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). For these reasons, the term 'intercultural' has been chosen for this thesis over the term 'multicultural'. However, it is understandable that in

other contexts, like in the United States paradigm, the term 'multicultural education' corresponds to what is named 'intercultural education' in Europe (Banks, 2013). That is why the term 'multicultural' will be used when there is a reference to other authors who utilise it in their work.

Brander et al. (2004), discussing intercultural learning, which takes place in formal education settings, suggest that school has a double role as an agent of intercultural education. On the one hand, the school's role is toward minority students to make them feel welcome and develop programmes to address their basic needs, like learning the local language, but also helping them incorporate into the mainstream culture without losing their identity. On the other hand, the school needs to help students from majority groups to learn how to live together with others in a positive and respectful way. That entails that school curricula should include intercultural elements that give students the knowledge and ability to recognise inequality and racism, reject ethnocentric views of cultures or permit the hierarchy of different cultures, respect cultural differences and oppose discrimination (pp. 43-45). Connecting this notion to the field of Critical Pedagogy, which suggests learners of privileged backgrounds to be taught about the mechanisms of oppression (Nicholls, 2011), in intercultural learning, the majority groups also need to start questioning negative stereotypes and prejudice and understand how power relations work in societies.

For education to play a role in opposing any form of racism, it should deviate from a monocultural approach. Monocultural education imprisons students in the narrow perspectives of their own cultures, thus, impeding them from accepting the diversity of the world as part of the human condition, and, worse, feel threatened by others' values, beliefs and ways of life (Parekh, 2006b, p. 226). Conversely, a common curriculum should be in place based on universal principles, offering opportunities for learners to explore the similarities, differences and interconnections between cultures, helping, thus, to overcome the dichotomy between 'them' and 'us' (ibid., pp. 227-230).

Gundara (2000) also calls for reconsidering fundamental human rights values implicit in other cultures so that human rights are not perceived as 'Western' term and thus easier rejected by 'others'. Likewise, human rights education shouldn't be constructed in purely 'Western' terms, therefore, more likely to be rejected by 'others'. That entails that relevant educational initiatives need to be developed considering religious and cultural diversities (pp. 152-153). However, he warns that such teaching cannot be very effective if students are marginalised outside the school by state policies and religious pressures (p.145).

In this equation, teachers play a significant role. They should be equipped to deal with xenophobia and abstain from overt or covert racism; moreover, they 'ought to organise their classrooms so that children with different competences and levels of cultural distance can learn from each other' (Gundara, 2000, p. 69).

Our globalised world becomes increasingly interconnected, through the interdependencies developed. That is why Banks (2006) calls for schools to address diversity thoughtfully in a world context where globalisation and nationalism co-exist. He argues that an essential goal of education in multicultural nation-states is to help students develop a delicate balance of their multiple identifications (Banks, 2004). It is not yet a commonplace our sense of belonging to the common group of humankind. Many people remain entrenched in their personal group identifications. For that reason, Banks (2011) explains that in modern diverse societies, citizens should be able to maintain ties with their cultural communities and participate effectively in a common national culture. At the same time, they should be facilitated to strengthen and clarify their identifications with their cultural communities, nation-states, and the global community.

If students are enabled to understand their role in relation to others, this could facilitate the democratisation and pluralism of society as it allows the inclusion of the 'other' and the integration of marginalised groups (Banks et al., 2005). Teachers in EDC/HRE should also bear in mind the diverse identifications and allegiances (Banks, 2006) their students have through their multiple identities with different communities at cultural, national and global levels. Acknowledging and strengthening them will enable students also to

strengthen their sense of global citizenship and respect for human rights and social justice (Osler & Starkey, 2010).

To facilitate teachers' role in this direction, Banks (2006) developed a typology of Stages of Cultural Identity and proposes teachers to use it as a framework to facilitate their students reach higher levels of cultural development and develop clarified identifications. It consists of six stages, starting from Stage 1 (Cultural Psychological Captivity), describing the individual's internalisation of cultural self-rejection and low self-esteem and progressing gradually till Stage 6 (Globalism and Global Competency-Cosmopolitanism), where individuals internalise commitment to human rights and justice and work to attain them. The author notes that students need to reach Stage 3 (Cultural Identity Clarification) of this typology, for them to display readiness to embrace other cultural groups or attain thoughtful identifications and internalise human rights values.

All in all, we could argue that intercultural education is closely related to and supportive of both Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). Since intercultural competence involves action, among other elements, equipping learners with intercultural competence through education empowers them to assume responsibility and create the conditions to live together in peace (ibid., pp. 21-22). Given that EDC aims to empower learners to act for their democratic rights valuing diversity, and HRE to empower learners to build and defend a universal culture of human rights in society (CM/Rec(2010)7), we could safely infer that intercultural competence accounts for one of the key objectives for both EDC and HRE. Moreover, both multicultural education and human rights education share a belief that cultural diversity is essential for the realisation of human rights, democracy, and social justice (Markus & Rios, 2018).

Below are discussed the alternative roles teachers can have within the scope of EDC/HRE.

### **3.4.5 The role of teachers in EDC/HRE**

The overall teaching and learning framework within the EDC/HRE goes beyond the narrow traditional boundaries of formal education. Hence, the same applies to the role of the teacher. Teachers need to move away from the traditional classroom practice we usually find in formal education, where teachers transmit knowledge to the students and in turn, they are expected to learn things by heart and often unquestioningly (Freire, 1979).

Knowledge within the EDC/HRE is produced through the interaction and experiences of the individuals involved and, therefore, each point of view is respected and is equally discussed. To a large extent, the knowledge content arises from collective processes. Therefore, the distinction between teacher and student is not strict, and the role of teacher or student can be assumed by anyone. The role of the teacher is to support students' active learning (Gollob et al., 2010, pp. 46-47; McLaren, 2015).

Handing over some of the power that the educator has as a traditional teacher will help students lighten and participate more. This kind of pedagogical relationship requires recognising children as subjects who develop relationships and exchange knowledge, which does not happen often in traditional schools. At the same time, in such a context, coercion, enforcement, competition and scoring are absent resulting in authoritarian elements that characterise teaching being softened. As a result, communication is cultivated, no matter how different the participants may be, due to the absence of competition or forms of coercion (Freire, 1979).

The fact that knowledge within EDC/HRE is built collectively does not mean that the presence and the role of the teacher are redundant. On the contrary, the presence of a person with the experience and skills to structure the above-mentioned learning climate and offer the appropriate stimuli is considered necessary.

In this context, teachers take on the role of 'facilitator' through social skills that they are required to have developed as an element of their pedagogical work and goals. A

prerequisite for this is for the teacher to embrace anti-dogmatic pedagogy and have the appropriate knowledge of rights and their social context (Giroux, 2018). Moreover, it is essential to have developed those social skills that they need to inspire the learners and apply in teaching practice, such as dialectical skills, cooperation, acceptance and respect for diversity. Such skills are usually acquired through appropriate training and education, but sometimes teachers lack such opportunities (Tomasevski, 2003; Androusou & Iakovou, 2020). However, skills for promoting social inclusion, respect for diversity and conflict management should be part of the teachers' education as well as of the teaching and learning process in schools (Jagland, 2015).

Another role for the teacher who delivers EDC/HRE could be that of 'mentor', inspiring interest in what they do with their honest attitude and actions. It's crucial to develop the skills of a good listener who knows how to ask the right questions, encourage each participant, repeat what has been said, clarifying it to avoid misunderstandings. Good mentoring skills will allow them to know how to manage conflicts, use them for the benefit of the participants, emphasise and highlight the essence of the problem and how to resolve it (Malikiosi 2001, pp. 17-28 & 65-29; Bonnell et al., 2011, p. 103). Most importantly, a teacher needs to possess empathy. Through empathy, they will be able to develop trust and a sense of safety within the classroom, which is a precondition for producing knowledge.

In addition, it is essential to respect the personality and learning style of each student (Readon 1995, pp. 17-22). The teacher should allow students to cope with problems and not offer ready-made solutions; act as a source of information at debriefing or when asked but not impose personal knowledge on students, rather allow them to explore (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). Also, allowing students to self-facilitate their discussions sometimes contributes to them taking ownership of the safe space (Bonnell et al., 2011). The teacher also observes the process to identify potential difficulties and learning needs to plan accordingly for the subsequent EDC/HRE lessons and select appropriate forms of teaching and learning.

Regardless of the different teaching styles that each teacher may ultimately choose, it is important to acknowledge that their teaching will inevitably involve shortcomings and pitfalls. Thus, it helps to resort to self-reflection to constantly strive to discover them and improve. What is most important is their conscious and deliberate willingness to implement EDC/HRE.

Another competence that educators who engage with EDC/HRE need to possess is the ability to teach controversial issues (Brett et al., 2009, pp. 42-44). As EDC/HRE requires learners to explore real-life issues that affect them and their communities, controversial and sensitive issues might arise for discussion. The teacher needs to feel comfortable so as not to avoid such discussions. They need the confidence to encourage students to express themselves assertively while respecting the viewpoints of others. In this direction, creating a climate of trust and mutual respect, framed with clear ground rules, will contribute to students opening up and participating more effectively (Bonnell et al., 2011). Moreover, teachers need to be aware and sensitive about whether and how they -as teachers- will express their own views on controversial topics, paying attention to avoid bias in their teaching.

Teachers themselves need to model and promote the values that underpin EDC/HRE (Brett et al., 2009; Barrett, 2020). That includes valuing the opinions of others, listening to students' perspectives, being open and fair to all students, involving them in the shaping of rules and using respectful language to reject inappropriate behaviour, but not the students themselves (Brett et al., 2009, pp. 40-41). In addition, a way of modelling democratic attitudes and behaviours is by involving learners in the decision-making process regarding their own learning and using activities that are based on cooperative group work (Barrett, 2020, p. 11).

### **3.5 Non-Formal Education**

Non-formal Education (NFE) is a field of learning that allows teachers to develop all the roles and qualities described above pertinent to EDC/HRE, as well as Critical Pedagogy. Non-formal learning was brought into the spotlight with the Lisbon Strategy and was

embraced since then by various international organisations on a European level. The Charter on ECD/HRE (2010) refers to non-formal education as playing a central role in learning in Education for Democratic Citizenship and human rights education. Thus, it is the main vehicle for delivering EDC/HRE training workshops.

The Recommendation CMRec(2010)7 by the Council of Europe defines non-formal education as ‘any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting’. The same Recommendation differentiates formal education as the structured education system taking place at institutions from pre-primary school up until university level, leading to certification. Even though the above definition does not make it clear, NFE is both structured -in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support- and intentional -from the learner’s and trainer’s perspective- (COM(2001)681, 21.11.2001), as perhaps opposed to informal learning which occurs in non-planned learning situations, like in the family or a museum visit. Non-formal education programmes are usually short-term, recurrent, individualised and flexible (Fordham, 1993). Moreover, in NFE, – as provided by, for example, local communities, NGOs, youth work, adult education and social work – intercultural competence is a pedagogical goal pursued through the deliberate inclusion of specific activities for learning (Huber & Reynolds, 2014).

Given the new territory that NFE represents as opposed to the long-standing tradition of formal education, it is rarely recognised at the same level and value in people’s minds. One of the factors contributing to that used to be the lack of recognition and valorisation of the competences acquired through non-formal learning (Brander & Keen, 2012). However, as the recognition and use of NFE grows through the years, its certification has also progressed. A good example of that is “Youthpass” (see <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>).

As formal educational systems tend to adapt too slowly to the socio-economic changes and the contemporary interdependent world educational needs, non-formal education will keep gaining ground and compensating for this sluggishness (Smith, 2001). With its wide range of methodologies and flexibility, NFE seems to be able to adapt easier to the



constantly changing needs of societies and individual learners (Brander et al., 2004). *It is acknowledged as a fundamental dimension of the lifelong learning process.* Therefore, CoE calls for supporting non-formal education and learning initiatives to

encourage young people's commitment and contribution to the promotion of values such as active citizenship, human rights, tolerance, social justice, inter-generational dialogue, peace and intercultural understanding

(CMRec(2003)8)

In the last two decades, the voices of education experts increase that highlight the importance of crossing boundaries between formal and non-formal education and synchronising educational activities to create new learning environments that provide learners with new sets of opportunities (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). The European Commission has identified since 2001 the need for building bridges between formal and non-formal learning, given the complementary character of the two (White Paper COM(2001)681, 21.11.2001). In this light, pilot joint schemes were developed and funded under the programmes Socrates, Erasmus and Leonardo Da Vinci to help build bridges between non-formal and formal systems. The Council of Europe also recommended that the governments of member states promote dialogue between actors of formal and non-formal education/learning (CMRec(2003)8) and moved in this same direction with the funding of programmes like Pestalozzi and supporting resource centres like the European Wergeland Centre. Beyond those initiatives, the call for creating further joint projects, including schools and non-formal learning providers, remains still current. The specific thesis aims to contribute towards this direction by suggesting initiatives that could be undertaken by teachers themselves in order to build bridges between formal and non-formal education. Moreover, it ventures to adapt activities contained in NFE manuals (like *Bookmarks*) for school use.

### **3.5.1 Experiential learning**

Experiential learning is a key pedagogical approach in non-formal education. Dewey (1938 / 1997) emphasises the importance of providing learning experiences that are meaningful to students' lives and the need for students to be actively engaged in their

learning. David Kolb's theory (1984) about learning through experience suggests that there are four phases in the specific learning process. Phase 1 is doing a planned activity, thus experiencing an event. Then follows Phase 2 with reflection on the experience. Learners share reactions of how they felt about what happened and discuss insights gained from the experience. This is also known as 'debriefing'. Phase 3 discusses patterns that came out of the experience and how that relates to what participants already know and how it connects to the world around them. This is also known as 'evaluation'. Phase 4 invites learners to put into practice what they've learnt, either by taking action against a problematic situation or by changing old behaviours.

Experiences earned from the activities implemented in NFE, through role-plays, for instance, present a problem for the learner to deal with. However, in order to gain from this experience, it is essential to reflect on what happened and why it happened. Moreover, the experience is consolidated if practice follows. Through this process, it is understandable that the learner is put in the centre of the learning as s/he is the meaning maker. Participants are invited to make meaning out of what they were taught or what they experienced and relate it to their practical reality (Dewey, 1997). In this sense, experiential learning is open-ended, and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, which is why ambiguity is often experienced (Brett et al., 2009). Learners should feel free to disagree, and the facilitators should be open to contrasting ideas and adjust their work to participants' realities (Brander et al., 2004; Struthers, 2016).

Experiential learning is also the cornerstone of human rights education because the core skills and values that permeate it cannot be taught, rather, they need to be experienced and practised (Brander & Keen, 2012). Learning through experience helps participants to get a deeper understanding of how human rights spring from people's needs and why it is important to safeguard them. HRE starts from what people already know and their experiences and opinions so far, which form a base to explore further new knowledge and ideas (learning *about* human rights). However, this is not enough in itself. HRE encourages learners through cooperative learning to learn from each other, develop critical thinking, tolerance and respect (learning *through* human rights). Eventually, it

supports people to transform their new experience into action and demonstrate in practice their respect for human rights and rejection of injustice and discrimination (learning *for* human rights) (UNDHRE, 2011).

### **3.5.2 Teaching methods**

Non-formal education uses experiential activities to serve the learning objectives it sets. Specific methods or techniques are usually employed to comply with the principles of HRE. Brander and Keen (2012) suggest the methods used in *Compass*, the core educational manual of the Council of Europe, are called 'activities' because they keep learners mentally and often physically active. However, they have clear educational goals and are used with a purpose in mind.

The most common methods used in human rights education are the following:

#### **Group Work**

Many activities are based on group work. Group work or teamwork requires people to work together to complete a task combining their skills and talents (Brander & Keen, 2012). In cooperative learning, group work is important to be task-oriented, that is, to have a clear question to be answered or a clear problem to be solved and the end product of the teamwork to be communicated to a targeted audience. That provides a clearly defined framework where participants can work more efficiently and learn through the process. Group work improves social skills like communication, cooperation and conflict resolution skills (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). Group members working in cooperative tasks soon realise that in order to work effectively, they need to work in a democratic way and listen to others' views, consider different perspectives, involve others in decision making and show empathy (Baines et al., 2015). Working in teams reinforces learning through exploring new ideas and analysing new information together. Moreover, when people actively participate in something, their commitment to it increases (Brander et al., 2004).

Bonnell et al. (2011) implemented a large-scale, in-depth research into teaching methods that could be used to build resilience to extremism and used in a general classroom setting. The researchers, among others, studied 10 in-depth cases of relevant projects and interventions and identified some key ingredients that are important for resilience-building teaching activities. One of them was the provision of a safe space for dialogue and positive interaction for young people. All the cases studied involved group work or discussion, and, in most cases, both elements were present and conducive to an effective outcome.

## **Discussion**

Discussion plays a pivotal role in non-formal learning. It can happen in pairs, in smaller or bigger groups and in plenary. The important stage of 'debriefing and evaluation' in non-formal activities is based on discussions. Discussions are also an integral part of HRE because, through discussion, participants learn to express themselves and hear the opinions of others, analyse information and think critically (Brander & Keen, 2012), therefore, practising their democratic skills.

Open debates in classes help develop tolerance of other views. However, there is the risk of offensive views being raised as well (Taylor et al., 2021). Even though this risks making the classroom unsafe for some, it also provides an important opportunity for these odious views to be challenged openly by teachers and peers and possibly subvert them, whereas, if stricter rules apply on speech, this might cause students to withhold their real opinions (Callan, 2011 in Taylor et al., 2021).

Taylor et al (2021) researched how schools and teachers see and use classroom activities to address violent and hateful extremism. One of their findings was that the teachers need to be supported to use pedagogies that facilitate discussions about controversial and sensitive issues allowing for respectful disagreement and the asking of difficult questions. This way, they will be able to engage students in constructive discussions to address extremism (Taylor et al., 2021).

Discussion has also been used in the form of 'intergroup dialogue' in educational endeavours to bring together students from different groups to promote social justice (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). Also, a phenomenological investigation of a community intergroup dialogue programme suggested that dialogue has important potential for intercultural understanding and social change (De Turk, 2006). Finally, Griffin et al. (2012) describe an intergroup dialogue programme in four public high schools and suggest that intergroup dialogue is a promising model of practice that critical multicultural pedagogues can use to engage young people in thinking critically about social inequalities and working collaboratively toward social justice.

## **Drama**

Drama is suggested by experts as a powerful pedagogical method of learning about, through and for human rights (Hassi et al., 2015). It allows participants to explore issues involving the whole person, both mind and heart. It is a very efficient technique as it appeals to people of all learning styles and provides an outlet for expressing feelings, thoughts and creativity that might otherwise not be expressed (Brander et al., 2004).

Two very common forms of drama used in non-formal learning are role-playing and forum theatre. A role-play is a short story played by the participants based on their personal experiences to act out a situation, but they mainly improvise. Role-plays enable participants to experience challenging situations in a safe environment. Hence, it is an effective learning tool to understand a situation better and inspire empathy towards the people portrayed (Brander & Keen, 2012) by enabling students' genuine emotional responses (Hassi et al., 2015).

Forum theatre is an interactive form of role play. It presents a short play in which the main character faces oppression or a problem and is unable to deal with it. After the initial act-out, the play is performed again, inviting the audience to intervene and suggest alternative ways of how the protagonist can act to overcome the problem. Actors explore the result of the audience's suggestions creating a theatrical debate which generates a sense of empowerment, especially if the theme is relatable to the lives of the audience (Boal, 2013). Forum theatre is a useful tool for delivering HRE, especially when exploring ways

of resolving conflicts or overcoming problems (Brander & Keen, 2012). It has the capacity to create solidarity and encourage empathy by exploring different aspects and possibilities (Von Berg, 2023).

All forms of drama need to be used sensitively as they have the power to affect people emotionally. Therefore, time needs to be given to participants to get out of their roles and always ensure there is a safe space to discuss afterwards the feelings and thoughts that came up through the process.

Hassi et al. (2015) see human rights education as an important context for applying pedagogical methods as the above. They ran an action research project to study and further develop a holistic and participatory model of human rights education by applying a process drama method developed by the Finnish National Committee for UNICEF. They tested the model in collaboration with teachers and students in two secondary schools in Finland. Their findings show the potential power of drama-based pedagogy to engage students in active collaboration, creativity, and powerful experiences, which fostered the learning about child rights in regular school classrooms. Moreover, a larger scale research was conducted by the DICE (Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education) project (2010) involving almost five thousand young people aged 13-16 years in twelve countries. Their results suggested that students who regularly participate in educational theatre and drama activities are, among others, more active citizens and more empathic (they have concern for others). In addition, they are significantly more tolerant towards both minorities and foreigners than their peers who had not been participating in theatre and drama programmes. Finally, Vitsou and Kamaretsou (2020) also used drama techniques in an action research project to improve peer relations in a class of refugee children in Greece and reported that at the end of the intervention, students had developed their critical thinking and empathy skills which facilitated collaboration and the bonding among group members.

## Story-telling

Narrative is the way in which humans organise information, and story-telling is the means by which that narrative is communicated (Daniel, 2012, p. 3). Story-telling is central to learning as it engages multiple literacy skills, including researching, writing, presenting and more (Matthews, 2014). Moreover, it helps children make sense of themselves and the world around them, it helps them structure their thinking and gives shape to their experiences (Daniel, 2012). When students become storytellers, they draw on their own imagination and linguistic skills to create the story told.

Another value of storytelling is that it can enhance multiperspectivity. Especially, the construction of narratives by the learners, either real or fictional, helps participants decenter from their own norms and beliefs and take the perspectives of other people involved in the story (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). In this way, it gives voice to the vulnerable and enables their story to be heard by presenting a unique snapshot into another person's experience (Matthews, 2014). That often evokes empathy as well. Empathy can be induced even for fictional characters and through that positive attitudes towards and concern for an outgroup can be stimulated (Batson et al., 2002). That is why narratives can also be used to address hate speech which is based on prejudice and negative stereotyping (Latour et al., 2017). There is a recognised need for creating and disseminating alternative, comprehensible and positive narratives about those stigmatised by misinformation and negative stereotyping (ECRI, 2016).

Human rights education also uses narratives as a pedagogical tool (Osler, 2015). Within this context, counternarrative strategies are used to question the hegemonic narratives that prohibit structural inclusion of certain groups and in some cases to challenge 'common-sense ideological discourses that deny the worthiness of migrants and minorities to be accepted as full citizens' (Starkey, 2021, p. 230).

Cameron et al. (2006) evaluated the effectiveness of a school intervention derived from the extended contact hypothesis which aimed to improve outgroup attitudes of primary school students towards refugees. In ten primary schools, they ran intervention sessions (15-20 min each) once a week for six weeks which entailed reading friendship stories to

the children which involved in-group members who had close friendships with refugees (outgroup members). They found that the intervention led to more 'inclusion of other in the self', which led in turn to a more positive outgroup attitude.

In conclusion, all the pedagogical methods discussed above are used in the delivery of EDC/HRE and are closely connected to the philosophy of Critical Pedagogy. The main aim of this research was to test in practice alternative educational methods in an effort to sensitise learners about hate speech and refugees. Therefore, the intervention implemented in school contained all the methods analysed above and the impact they had on students.

Diverse research was discussed earlier that has either used the above methods to promote human rights in schools, or tackles hate speech -mostly in tertiary education-, or uses human rights education to empower refugees. However, there is little -if any- evidence of research that combines all three elements: human rights education, hate speech and refugees. That is why the research project I undertook has its own significance as it attempts to cover this gap. Moreover, primary education is significantly under-researched compared to secondary and tertiary education, and when research takes place, it is for a limited amount of time. So, an added value of this thesis' research is that my field of investigation was primary school, and as an 'insider', I was able to acquire access for a ten-week intervention.

All in all, Europe's face has changed dramatically during the past few decades and our societies have become more interconnected than ever. In our increasingly interdependent world, a big challenge we face is to transform our societies from multicultural to genuinely intercultural. For that reason, we need to work on understanding and dismantling prejudice and stereotypes and our actions need to show commitment to bring about change. Inspired by this intention, I designed the educational initiative I undertook with my students at school and described it in detail in Chapter 7.

The following chapter explains all the methodological decisions made that led to the educational intervention at school.



## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter presents the methods used to explore this thesis's research questions, which arose from reviewing the current literature and my experience as an education practitioner. This qualitative research unfolds in three stages. The sample choices and methods for collecting data for all three stages are discussed elaborately. Special attention is paid to Action Research as it was deemed the most appropriate for conducting the intervention at school. Thematic analysis was used for analysing data coming from all three stages of the research. Finally, ethical considerations and the positionality of the researcher are explored.

### **4.2 Overview of the Research Approach**

As discussed in the Introduction chapter of this thesis, during the years that the socioeconomic crisis was escalating in Greece, I noticed a more frequent expression of hate speech and populist views expressed at school by students and teaching staff. Therefore, I needed to take an active role as a teacher myself and find a way to put the issue of hate speech for negotiation in my classroom. Falk & Blumenreich (2005) comment that '[r]esearch about a personal burning question has, for many teachers, fostered their self-efficacy and given them a sense of possibility that they never had before' (p. 180). In this light, I hoped that I would foster my self-efficacy as a teacher-researcher by pursuing a personal burning question, which for me is school hate speech.

Many discuss that the philosophical underpinnings of a researcher need to be voiced out front as the research design, data collection, and analysis will be influenced by these beliefs (Koshy, 2010). Ontology concerns an individual's preexisting assumptions about reality and their perspective on the world (Baldwin, 2014), while epistemology is concerned with an individual's perception of what knowledge is and how it is acquired (Östman & Wickman,

2014). Together, ontology and epistemology capture the researcher's knowledge and the way they acquire it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Considering the qualitative nature of my research, I follow a naturalistic, interpretive paradigm, in the sense that I care to investigate individuals and institutions in a specific context and generate knowledge regarding that specific situation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that the interpretive, naturalistic approach entails that 'researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (p. 3). However, in the action research paradigm, there is also an emphasis on changing something rather than simply investigating it.

Östman and Wickman (2014, p. 375) also argue for a concept of epistemology in education that is more social and transactional, entailing on-going communication, action, and practice, and as such inevitably includes values. Considering that the main part of my research relates to an educational intervention, the 'rights-based epistemology of pedagogical research' (Starkey et al., 2014, p. 429) is relevant here. On the one hand, Starkey et al. (2014) refer to ethical reflexivity and call for researchers to be as explicit as possible about the inevitable presence and influence of values in knowledge production and on the other hand, they point out the teacher-researcher's instrumental role in communicating children's perspectives on their educational experiences. I took into consideration of both while designing and implementing the research as depicted in more detail below.

#### **4.2.1 The research aims and research questions**

Drawing on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 regarding hate speech and in Chapter 3 regarding education as an effective means to tackle hate speech, I formulated the following three Research Questions:

- i) To what extent is hate speech an issue for Greek schools?
- ii) Which EDC/HRE teaching practices more successfully raise awareness about hate speech?
- iii) Which EDC/HRE teaching practices help learners develop empathy towards refugees?

Before starting the main research, I needed to investigate if and how hate speech affects Greek schools. After seeing there is indeed a need for coping with hate speech in the Greek school context, I focused on my own school context, where I identified refugees as a potential group to be targeted by hate speech. Therefore, I designed a school intervention based on EDC/HRE principles. The primary objective was to explore to what extent and under which conditions can EDC/HRE mitigate hate speech in my classroom practice. Thus, I set out to investigate which teaching practices more successfully raise awareness about hate speech and whether it is possible to use them to facilitate primary school students to develop empathy towards refugees.

Below follows an overview of the stages in which this research unwound:

### **Stage One**

To address the first research question and to ensure that my perception that hate speech is an issue in Greek educational context was sound, I sought out different types of education professionals and made some preliminary interviews. I interviewed 13 education stakeholders in December 2015 in Athens. More details about the participants as well as a full report of the results of the interviews are presented in Chapter 5. The outcomes of the interviews showed a need to act against hate speech within the school context in Greece and that teachers in Greece were not familiar with the issue of hateful rhetoric, nor was there a systematic educational approach to respond to this phenomenon. The interview results also informed my interest in focusing on the group of refugees, which was often targeted by hate speech in my school context, i.e., the two primary schools in Athens I worked as a teacher at the time.

### **Stage Two**

After identifying refugees as a vulnerable group to hate speech in my school, I wished to understand better the issues refugees face in their everyday lives in Greece. Thus, I set out to explore the realities of refugees in Greece and their experiences with hate speech. In this second research stage, I interviewed two small groups of refugees in February 2017, one with refugees living in the centre of Athens and one with refugees living in a refugee camp

in the city's suburbs (see section 4.4.4 of current chapter). The interviews' findings, presented in Chapter 6, helped me learn more about refugees' living conditions, their experiences with discrimination and their hopes for the future. All this new insight informed the third stage of my research: the design of my intervention at school.

### **Stage Three**

To respond to the second and third research questions, I developed and ran an action research school project aiming to identify successful EDC/HRE teaching practices for raising awareness about hate speech and the possibility of helping learners to develop empathy towards refugees. The intervention occurred between March and May 2017, and forty 11-year-old primary school students participated. The intervention comprised ten weekly experiential workshops exploring hate speech and prejudices related to refugees. In the context of these workshops, an exchange between local and refugee students was orchestrated.

## **4.3 Action Research**

I decided that Action Research was the most suitable approach to address the above research question. Action research is appropriate for teachers who are not ready to accept the problems they face by the day (Altrichter et al., 2008). They prefer reflecting on them, experimenting with new ideas, and seeking solutions and improvements. It empowers teachers to change classroom practices using their 'insider' knowledge (Manfra, 2009). In this light, I decided to utilise my knowledge and expertise as a qualified non-formal education trainer and experiment with designing an action research project based on non-formal learning, situated, however, within a formal education context. The ultimate goal was to seek a solution to the problem I had identified of hate speech expressed by some of my students towards refugees.

This particular type of research is popular among researchers interested in studying teaching practices in the classroom when the main motive of their research is to create positive social

change (Tavares, 2016). This approach uses consensual, democratic, and participatory strategies to encourage people to reflect on their problems or specific issues that affect them or their groups (Berg, 2007). An important feature of Action Research is that the actual work does not end when the project ends, but researchers continue to look back, evaluate and improve their practice (Cohen & Manion, 2011).

#### **4.3.1 Definitions of Action Research**

The most eloquent definition of action research comes from a protagonist of the 'movement', John Elliott (1991, p. 69): action research is 'the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it'. The vital aim of action research, according to Elliott, is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge.

Within the educational setting, Bassey (1981) describes action research as 'an enquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate and then to change, in order to improve educational practice' (p. 93). Elliott (1991) and McNiff (1993), two prime researchers who also contributed to the application of action research within the educational setting, voiced it as a different form of research to traditional, scientific approaches to research.

Over the past decade, action research has increased its popularity among practitioners in education (such as teachers, administrators, and policymakers) who wish to gather information about the teaching and the learning process (Zeni, 1998; Mills, 2011). Within the school context, action research supports practitioners in providing a better quality of education by finding ways to improve the quality of their teaching practices (Koshy, 2010). Moreover, action research is considered ideal for classroom-based or school-based research, as it has the capacity to engage teachers directly in the improvement of the educational practice, thus contributing to teacher empowerment, their professional growth and school improvement overall. In contrast with traditional educational research that seeks answers through a scientific method, action research is aligned with reflective teaching, thus

allowing teachers to enquire systematically about their own practices, methods, students, and assumptions in order to improve their quality and effectiveness (Mertler, 2014).

Many scholars have attempted to describe the steps or stages followed in an action research project (Mills, 2011; Koshy, 2010; Altrichter et al., 2008). All of them discuss how the stage descriptions are not solid. On the contrary, they suggest that the process tends to be cyclical, offering the flexibility to skip or rearrange a step if needed. Here I choose to refer to Mertler's four-stage procedure, as it is broad enough to include my intended research goals but at the same time not too vague to leave me unguided. So, the four stages include (pp. 29-30):

1. The planning stage
2. The acting stage
3. The developing stage
4. The reflecting stage

Over the first stage, the teacher-researcher identifies a problem, for which s/he gathers more information and reviews the related literature. Based on that evidence, follows the design of a research plan. The acting stage comprises the implementation of the research plan, data collection, and analysis. During the developing stage, an action plan is expected to be developed after the analysis and interpretation of data is taken into consideration. This is the 'action' part of action research, as Mertler puts it (2014, p.36). It is the proposed strategy to counteract the problem identified earlier. The reflecting stage involves communicating the results with others in the educational community and reflecting on the process, that is, critically examining one's own practice. This is where the teacher-researcher assesses the effectiveness of the project and determines possible future revisions. However, the teacher-researcher is advised to engage in reflective practice throughout the research project and adapt their decisions and actions according to the current needs.

These features make action research the ideal means to explore my field of interest. Many education practitioners and researchers worldwide have chosen this method to test their practice in schools. For instance, in primary education, action research has been used to improve geometry teaching and learning in Indonesia (Mutaqin et al., 2021), enhance active pupil participation in Greece (Katsenou et al., 2013) and enhance pupil voice and

educational engagement in England (Simpson, 2018). In secondary education, it has been used to improve literacy skills in secondary schools in Greece (Tsafos, 2009) and England (Wood, 2017), support teachers' work against racism and anti-Semitism in Norway (Lenz, 2017) and more. Finally, action research has been used for the professional development of future teachers in tertiary education (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2013; Rajic, 2017; Androusou & Iakovou, 2020).

Moreover, examples from Latin America show that action research can be used to investigate issues of democracy and human rights (Tavares, 2016). In addition, action research can be employed as a method by an individual teacher in their classroom but also can be adopted as a practice by a whole school or cluster of schools collaborating with other actors in wider contexts, for instance, to achieve local school system reform in a London Borough (Dudley et al., 2020) or enhance teachers' educational innovation in a province in India (Chand et al., 2020), or fosters teachers' role as researchers in Chile (Guerrero-Hernández & Fernández-Ugalde, 2020).

#### **4.3.2 Participatory Action Research (PAR)**

Action research (AR) in education is applied in different ways and called by different names depending on the scope and approaches of the researchers. Among other forms of research, AR is closely related to Participatory Action Research (PAR). Studying the similarities between the two approaches, Morales (2015) refers to PAR as AR's cousin (p. 158, 161). Some of Participatory Action Research's main characteristics can be found in the following definition:

[PAR] combines aspects of popular education, community-based research, and action for social change. Emphasizing collaboration within marginalized or oppressed communities, participatory action research works to address the underlying causes of inequality while at the same time focusing on finding solutions to specific community concerns.

Brydon-Miller & Maguire (2009, p. 254)

In PAR, as in AR, the problem is identified by the people who believe that the problem is relevant to the local setting and that the solution lies within the same setting without the intention of generalising its results (Morales, 2015). One of the aims of PAR is to empower

people and produce knowledge and action directly useful to them. PAR is mentioned as the legacy of Paulo Freire in Anderson et al. (2007). Freire in Latin America engaged in 'thematic research' projects with a dual purpose: to help participants acquire a skill (i.e. literacy) and engage in social critique and action.

Moreover, PAR can make an important contribution to the field of education by facilitating teachers to address broader social justice issues in their own schools (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009). Schools provide a fundamental site for social change efforts, and PAR can boost critical practitioner inquiry (ibid., 2009). Practitioners have the opportunity to use critical approaches to reveal and address broader systems of inequality within schools or communities. PAR helps to create settings where students, teachers and parents can work together to create positive change. In the same way, I looked forward to inspiring my students to social critique and social action to the extent their age permits.

Action research is also connected to teacher professional development (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2013; Vaughan, 2020). In the same light, PAR shares common features with AR, such as reflective practice, active participation and problem-solving. They both go through the planning, action, reflection and evaluation stages. Therefore, their combination can enhance research for action, action for research and enhance teacher professional growth (Morales, 2015). Creating knowledge while solving problems in classroom settings and reflecting on classroom teaching and student learning boosts the professional development of teachers (Calderhead, 1988; Hine, 2013).

Though my planned Action Research project was mostly devised by me, there was a strong element of PAR manifested in two ways. First, I tried to include the voice of hate speech victims. Since part of the student workshops were constructed around the topic of refugees, a group of refugees served as informants for me. Focus groups with refugees helped me get a better insight into what was happening in their community and acquire information about their views and experiences of hate speech (Gibbs, 1997). Their views and comments were taken into consideration in order to design the student workshops. Secondly, students were also consulted during the cycles of action research. Their evaluation was actively



sought after throughout the intervention (Starkey et al, 2014). Apart from the final questionnaire, where students could offer their evaluation of the intervention, students gave their written feedback after Cycle I commenting on changes and/or additions they would like to be incorporated in Cycle II. Moreover, their decision was followed regarding how to contact their peer refugees and disseminate the results of their work produced during the intervention.

#### **4.3.3 Sample of students participating in the action research intervention**

The sample for this research was forty Fifth Grade students of two classes in schools where I worked that school year (2016-2017) as an English teacher. Since this was small-scale research, I used non-probability samples, namely 'convenient' sampling. This sample was not representative but proved sufficient to draw some qualitative conclusions. In addition, as a researcher, I did not intend to generalise the findings beyond the sample (Cohen & Manion, 2011).

The area where schools were located was the district of Keratsini, a suburb of Piraeus Port. The geographical area of Keratsini presents a certain research interest. It is an industrial area near the largest port in the country, Piraeus. It is mostly inhabited by working-class people, who have been facing chronic unemployment since the deterioration of industries in the area. At the same time, the rise of the extreme right enjoyed high levels in recent years there. It is not a coincidence that the murder of Pavlos Fyssas by members of Golden Dawn in 2013 occurred in this geographical area. Therefore, apart from the 'convenient' sample, the survey population presented research interest regarding the attitudes that students develop towards hate speech issues. Another important factor for choosing a sample from the specific schools was that a refugee camp had recently opened in the area, and refugee kids were about to join the school community. This prospect was received with mixed reactions from the local community, mirrored in the students as well.

It is important to customise interventions to the developmental stage of the children (Aboud & Levy, 2000; Cameron et al., 2006). The particular age of the students chosen to participate in this research is characterised by rapid growth that allows them to increasingly understand the complexity of social relationships around them and acquire personal attitudes on various issues. The importance of this age has been captured by scholars like Piaget (Piaget & Weil, 1951), who points out the child's ability to think creatively, use abstract concepts and imagine the result of specific actions.

Moreover, Beelmann and Heinemann (2014) support that majority (high-status) children show an increase in the level of prejudice against minority children (low status) at younger ages and a subsequent decrease is noticed up to the age of 10. This decrease can be owed to emerging sociocognitive abilities (Aboud, 2008 in Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014), which indicates that it can be beneficial to train the majority children in these abilities at this age to promote natural development. On the contrary, minority children seem to increase their prejudice against majority children at an older age, but a later decrease is not observed. This implies that majority and minority members can benefit from applying different kinds of anti-bias interventions for each group at different developmental stages. In my case, the above knowledge was taken into consideration, and the intervention was designed to cater to the needs of my students, who belonged to the majority group. All of them were between the ages of 10 and 11, so the training aimed to promote the natural development of anti-prejudice abilities.

#### **4.3.4 Design of the intervention**

In Chapter 2, the Stage-developmental Model of Hate Speech Severity suggested by Cortese (2006) was discussed. Each stage was supplemented by the proposition of strategies for intervention. He pointed out that when hate speech is in stages 1 (offending minorities, but not on purpose) and 2 (intentionally denigrating minorities), education is the major intervention and has the capacity to help individuals realise why this type of speech is discriminatory and hateful. Many of my students, before the intervention, would stand in

Stage 1 regarding hate speech directed towards refugees and few of them in Stage 2. Therefore, it was deemed crucial to create and implement the action project cycle at that point in time, aiming to remedy the hate speech expressed unintentionally -and in a few cases consciously- by members belonging to the majority group.

In Chapter 3, Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) was suggested as a suitable educational response to tackle verbal discrimination in schools, hence hate speech. Therefore, all student workshops were designed following the principles of EDC/HRE. I consider it the most comprehensive way of tackling hate speech at the root because it highlights the democratic dimension as pivotal and bestows trust in human rights to safeguard school peace and harmony. Moreover, EDC/HRE provides a teaching approach that facilitates those educators who wish to challenge the existing curricula in their schools and overturn existing negative attitudes towards groups of people in their school community. The activities were chosen in line with some of the main principles of Critical Pedagogy, like critical reflection of personal experiences and questioning of dominant narratives.

When this intervention was designed, the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture was not published yet. Consulting it in retrospect, it was evident that the key competence I gave importance to as an educator and aimed to develop with my students was that of empathy (in all three levels of proficiency). However, given that the intervention was conceived and designed bearing in mind the dual goal to sensitise about hate speech as well as refugees, the actual implementation involved more competences –even if it was in more basic levels of proficiency-, such as valuing human dignity and human rights, openness to cultural otherness, civic-mindedness, cooperation and conflict-resolution skills, and knowledge and critical understanding of the world.

All workshops were designed following Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which is a predominant pedagogical approach in non-formal learning (explained in detail in Chapter 3). Likewise, most of the activities used in the intervention come from the Council of Europe's publications *Bookmarks and Compasito*, which structure their activities according to Kolb's

theory. Therefore, each learning session included a planned activity, followed by a discussion of the insights gained from experience, reflecting on what participants already knew and finally, trying to put into practice what they had learnt. An effort was there for activities to include an intercultural element. This happened by using incidents in our area, not sticking to knowledge itself, but instead trying to cultivate empathy towards the people involved and respect for diversity (Brander et al., 2004). Phase 4 was sometimes more prominent in activities like in the Fourth Workshop, where learners produced some messages of solidarity to victims of hate speech. However, some tasks did not have a clear Phase 4. This was mainly due to time constrictions the formal curriculum imposed on our intervention, which is extensively discussed in different parts of this thesis. However, there was a conscious choice on behalf of the researcher to follow up the whole intervention with the communication opportunity between local and refugee students. This opportunity was, in a way, our chance to 'put into practice' things we learned throughout the intervention and possibly alter some of our previous beliefs (i.e., that refugee students may not be welcome in our class).

The overall educational intervention lasted about three months, from March 2017 to May 2017. It expanded over four calendar months because there were some holiday breaks and teacher absences in between. Every class had a weekly workshop lasting about two hours. The school intervention was implemented during the Flexible Teaching Zone of the official school curriculum and was added to the students' weekly timetable as an officially approved educational project by the local Education Directorate, as well as the Ministry of Education.

#### **4.3.5 Cycles of Action Research**

##### **Cycle I**

For the first cycle of my action research project, I designed four workshops relevant to hate speech and implemented them in class with my students. We explored the freedom of expression in a democratic context (rights, freedoms, responsibilities and obligations within

this context), as well as the causes and effects of hurtful language. Moreover, we touched upon the forms of hate speech, the groups that it usually affects and the consequences it can have on individuals or groups who are targeted. Finally, we studied examples of online hate speech.

The first workshop was based on an activity adapted from *Compasito*, a flagship educational manual by the Council of Europe, which is a starting point for educators willing to work on EDC/HRE with children aged 7 to 13. The other three workshops related to hate speech were based on activities drawn from the educational manual of the Council of Europe called *Bookmarks*. It was designed to support the No Hate Speech Movement and aims to equip educators and young people with the skills to recognise and address hate speech in the online environment, both inside and outside the formal education system. Both manuals include a substantial theoretical background and practical activities to engage children and young people to recognise and address human rights issues and hate speech in their own environment.

All the chosen activities have a low level of complexity and are suitable for the age group 10-12, as well as group size of up to 20 participants. More details on activities are available in Appendix V).

## **Cycle II**

Between the two cycles, students were asked to complete a brief evaluation form recording their experiences from the first cycle (for more details, see Chapter 7). Their answers, combined with some information I had gotten from completing the Initial Questionnaires, helped me identify needs and formulate the second round of action research.

Cycle II complemented the work done in Cycle I by focusing on hate speech that targets refugees. Bigler and Hughes (2009) introduce developmental intergroup theory (DIT) to explain how certain factors can influence children's levels of racial prejudice and students'

exploration of the related stereotyping (discussed in detail in Chapter 2). They also propose that DIT can prove valuable for guiding interventions aimed at tackling racial stereotypes and prejudices by elucidating the factors that strengthen their development in children. As such, I took into account those factors and tried to weaken some of them in my school intervention. For instance, the external mechanisms of explicit and implicit attributions that are likely to fuel children's racial stereotypes and prejudice, include explicit and implicit information that children pick up from their surroundings (adults, peers, media) that link attributes to certain races. One such example in our case was that refugees in the nearby camp are dirty and that their kids have lower learning skills, thus they will lower the learning process at school, if they join the morning classes, therefore, they are not welcome. In response to these explicit and implicit messages my students received from their surroundings, I tried to break these messages into pieces and challenge them individually with my students through the second cycle of workshops.

Hence, five workshops were designed to facilitate students explore the related misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices that burden this group. A further aim was to increase empathy for refugees' experiences and familiarise students with their reality. The activities for these workshops were chosen driven by the idea that I should not only focus on the negative side of things, like trauma and human rights violations but also show 'possibilities for solidarity and acknowledgment of common suffering with the other' (Zembylas, 2015, p. 12).

More specifically, the workshops including the activities of the theatrical play, the game 'The Sun and the Birds' and the stories of refugees were chosen specifically to work on the empathy perspective of students. Participating in these activities students could gain insight into how members of those groups subjected to prejudice beyond the experience might feel (i.e. develop an 'imagine-self perspective') enabling them to comprehend with more sympathy the plight of discriminated people (i.e. adopt an 'imagine-other perspective') and thereby be motivated to ascribe more positive feelings and behaviours towards them, including empathic concern (Batson & Ahmad, 2009), as discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

The workshops related to refugees were based on activities I selected by adapting original ideas coming from the following manuals: UNHCR booklet 'They are not just numbers', ActionAid Hellas' educational material for the Global Week for Education 2017 and Soma Ellinikou Odigismou's (=Greek Scouts) 'Refugee flows, human rights and interculturalism'. All three manuals were developed for students' sensitisation about refugees.

More details on adapted activities can be found in Appendix V. I chose mixed activities on purpose, also coming from the Greek context, so as to test and suggest to teachers that such a practice is feasible. All the chosen activities involve a low level of complexity and are suitable for the age and size group of my students. The very last workshop was again an activity selected from *Bookmarks*, as I wanted to wrap up the intervention by making the connection of the second cycle to the first one.

### **Action taken**

Based on Contact Theory discussed in Chapter 2, but also following the principles of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, discussed in Chapter 3, as well as Mertler's fourth stage of the action research procedure, presented earlier in this chapter, it was deemed crucial for the series of workshops to be followed-up by a common activity with peer refugee students.

Children with higher levels of cross-race contacts are likely to have less biased racial attitudes than other children (Bigler and Hughes, 2009). They explain that this possibly happens because environments with racial segregation tend to increase the salience of race to children, while racially integrated environments can decrease this salience and subsequent racial categorisation (ibid.). As in the neighbourhood context of my school there was a kind of segregation between local and refugee population, I tried through this meeting opportunity to narrow the gap and offer my students with more opportunities to have cross-race encounters.

The initial purpose was for my students to meet with refugee students from a neighbouring school and run an activity together. However, this was not possible, so we opted for exchanging letters and artworks between the two groups of students with the mediation of their teachers. Detailed information on this communication opportunity between the two student populations can be found in Chapter 7.

### **Evaluation of the Cycles**

As the intervention was designed based on EDC/HRE pedagogical principles, relevant evaluative methods were employed. In EDC/HRE paradigm, teachers and students may be involved in assessing themselves (self-assessment) or be assessed by others. Reflecting on one's own teaching or learning can be facilitated through journals, logbooks, or portfolios. Moreover, both students and teachers may assess the learning process as well as the learning achievements. The *learning process* includes checking students' learning process and the teacher's selected activities to achieve certain objectives. It can be assessed through observations, tests at different phases, and complemented by other means like individual conversations about completed tasks. The *learning achievements* can be evaluated through tests, quizzes, and problem-solving situations to assess the acquired knowledge and competencies (EDC/HRE Vol I, 2010, p. 95-102). Examples of evaluation methods can also be found in published works of teachers who have dealt with EDC/HRE. Such examples include 'Team Participation' for skills assessment, 'Open Minds' for attitude assessment and 'Adoption of values' for self-assessment (Michaelis, 1988).

In this light, I set aside special time for the evaluation of the workshops and the presentation of the outcomes of the specific intervention. The educational process was evaluated by the students and teachers involved through questionnaires, interviews and short mid-intervention evaluation forms. In addition, I kept reflecting on the actual process by recording thorough field notes after each workshop. The dissemination of the outcomes was decided by the students. A publication in the school newspaper was opted for, considering the time limit ahead of us.



## **4.4 Data Collection**

Data collection methods commonly used in action research include questionnaires, interviews, field notes and systematic observation (Webb & Ibarz, 2006; Baumfield et al., 2008; McAteer, 2013).

### **4.4.1 Questionnaires**

I developed questionnaires to be completed by my students before and after the intervention to help me establish a baseline so that comparisons of pre- and post-intervention results could be drawn (Angelo & Cross, 1993). On the one hand, questionnaires, as a method for data collection, are suitable for collecting initial background information on attitudes and perceptions and establishing a baseline (Silverman, 2013); on the other hand, there is always the danger that respondents might try to provide the responses they believe you expect from them (Cohen & Manion, 2011). That is why there was a concerted effort not to introduce a bias in the way I formulated the questions, and I paid special attention to the open-ended questions, considering the analysis to follow.

There is some skepticism expressed by some scholars over the use of self-report instruments (often used in pre- and post-testing) in intercultural research (Deardorff, 2006). This is understandable since the impact of an intervention may be the result of a combination of factors and difficult to capture in only one moment in time. Instead, it was suggested by top scholars that multiple assessment methods are preferred, with interviews and case studies receiving the strongest support (ibid., 2006). In the case of the present study, pre and post questionnaires were not the sole method to assess the outcomes of the intervention, but it was complemented by multiple other methods, such as interviews, focus groups and field diary.

## Initial Questionnaire

The Initial Questionnaire was given to students to fill in before the intervention to record how students started the learning journey.

Both classes completed it in early March 2017 in their classrooms, and special time was allocated during one of our English lessons. I assured students that the questions' completion was anonymous and that there was no right or wrong answer. Then they were invited to check the response that best suited their reality. I collected minimum demographic data, namely gender and school class they belonged to, as there were two classes of students participating. Gender was recorded as there was an initial thought that perhaps the data from the questionnaires might make more sense if analysed according to it. However, gender was not a defining factor under these circumstances.

The main aim was to capture a sense of their stand regarding hate speech before the intervention began. More specifically, I tried to investigate whether students were familiar with the term hate speech and record their potential personal experiences around it, online and offline. I intended to gather information on how they understood some aspects of the school world around them, their possible experiences with hate speech and their responses to it. The main body of the Initial Questionnaire consisted of 9 questions, most closed questions but also a few open-ended ones.

The two last questions included one vignette, each with a hypothetical incident of hate speech. Finch (1987), one of the first researchers to suggest the introduction of vignettes in social research, described them as 'short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond (p.108). Through the years, the vignette technique has gained ground in qualitative research. Inviting participants to respond to fictional but true-to-life scenarios facilitates the exploration of research participants' views and attitudes and the collection of empirical data on behaviours that are difficult to observe directly (Jenkins & Noone, 2020). Among others, it also allows the comparison of perceptions and experiences of a certain population over time (ibid., 2020).

For the full Guide to the Initial Questionnaire and a detailed rationale behind the formation of the questions, please see Appendix IV.

## **Final Questionnaire**

The Final Questionnaire was given to students to fill in after the end of the intervention. Both classes completed it in early June 2017 in their classrooms during the last teaching hour we had allocated for the specific project.

Whereas the Initial Questionnaire had as a main aim to record the existing students' experiences with hate speech and their familiarity with the concept, as well as their initial ability to respond to instances of hate speech, the Final Questionnaire aimed to record any shift in students' familiarity with the term and readiness to respond to hate speech incidents. At the same time, since its completion followed the intervention in class, another aim was added: assessing the intervention itself. Furthermore, since half of the intervention was dedicated to refugees, an additional goal was to look for a possible increased awareness about refugees. The questions between the two questionnaires differed as the focus was different. However, some of them, like the hypothetical scenarios asking students to respond, were similar in both questionnaires, enabling, thus, the comparison between the before and after stances.

Again, I collected minimum demographic data, namely gender and school class they belonged to. The main body of the Final Questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, mostly open-ended. This was contrary to the Initial Questionnaire, where most questions were of a closed type. Open-ended questions were used to capture the thoughts and opinions of students more accurately by providing space for a more in-depth, varied expression. Students' answers were sought regarding the overall evaluation of the intervention, their familiarity with hate speech and possible responses to it, as well as awareness about refugees after the intervention.

For the full Guide to the Final Questionnaire and a detailed rationale behind the formation of the questions, please see Appendix IV.

## 4.4.2 Interviews

### Students' Interviews

After the end of the intervention in class and the completion of the Final Questionnaire on behalf of the students, I ran some in-depth and face-to-face interviews with a sub-sample of the students. The aim was to gather some more detailed information regarding their experiences during the class workshops, as well as shed some light on some of the answers I received in the questionnaires. Moreover, it was my intention to elaborate further on their overall impression of the intervention, as well as their understanding of hate speech.

One-to-one interviews can provide a more relaxed context to explore further the data gathered through the questionnaires, and they often provide unexpected but useful perspectives (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to facilitate the further probing of ideas and perceptions. There was a basic set of questions predetermined and followed in all interviews. However, in some cases, the question guide was slightly modified to serve the purpose of communication and extraction of valuable information.

Moreover, I wanted to run interviews alongside the questionnaires to allow students to express themselves orally instead of only in written form, which is inevitable with questionnaire completion. This was corroborated by the comment of one student who mentioned how he found difficult the written form of the questionnaire, as he gets tired of anything that has to be written. He admitted he had a more laid-back approach when completing the questionnaires. However, in the interview, he replied to all questions, took a stand, and critically commented on the intervention.

Although interviews offer the space for in-depth exploration of topics, they also tend to be significantly more time-consuming. Furthermore, some students may try to replicate what they think the teacher expects from them, or they may not be confident speakers (Anderson et al., 2007). I kept both latter points in my mind while conducting the interviews with my students, and I tried to be as vigilant as possible.

## Sample

Eight students participated overall, four from each class. Four girls and four boys. They were selected based on the potential of their answers. I tried each subgroup to be composed of at least one student who had high participation at the workshops, one who participated moderately and one who participated poorly. Luckily, this was achieved. This would provide a fairer representation of different student aspects. The selection of students was also influenced by the potential to acquire parental consent more easily. There was a time restriction as the end of the school year was approaching; therefore, a fairly quick response from parents was sought. Moreover, the very few students known to belong to families who were openly against refugees were not approached so that students would not get in an uncomfortable position. For the selection of students, I consulted both the class teachers, as well as the headmasters of the two schools.

All interviews were conducted within two days, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017, in a quiet area on the school premises, either during break time or with a short absence during their lesson time. They were audio-recorded in Greek and have an average length of 10 minutes each. Students were assured, at the beginning of each interview, that their identity would not be revealed at any stage. Moreover, they were reminded that there was no right or wrong answer and thus were urged to respond as honestly as possible. They were also reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the interview process whenever they felt like it.

## Interview Guide

The Interview Guide consisted of 10 open, semi-structured questions (see Appendix II). The purpose was to guide the participants to answer the information sought after but also leave the space open for them to express their personal opinion freely (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). The order of the questions sometimes changed depending on the course of the interview and/or the interviewees' answers. For instance, the answers in Question 4 frequently

referred to teamwork, so in those cases, I would switch the order of the questions and jump straight to Question 7, as it was more relevant and made sense.

All in all, the questions of the interviews echo the ones of the questionnaires to give students the space to elaborate their thoughts further than the limiting space of the questionnaires.

The questions aimed to cover the following broad themes:

- Evaluation of the intervention

Most of the questions in the Interview Guide refer to the structure of the intervention, as well as the content of the workshops. More specifically, the two first questions sought after an evaluation of the overall intervention. The fourth question and the sixth opened the space and invited students to voice any criticism they had of the intervention or the process of the workshops. The fifth question aimed to get feedback on the methods used during the workshops. The seventh question explored the group work from another angle. Instead of asking for the advantages and disadvantages of this method, I asked students to describe how they worked in their groups. This gave some insight into what and why went right or wrong. Moreover, the eighth and ninth questions explored the clarity of the tasks and the questionnaires. The answers to these questions were triangulated by a similar question in the Final Questionnaire. The answers yielded two pieces of information: whether the guidelines of the activities were clear and students could follow them; also, which activity made a bigger impression on them and the reason for that.

- New knowledge acquired

The third question prompted students to elaborate on two new things they learned from participating in the workshops. To avoid generic answers like 'We learnt a lot', I asked more specific questions like 'Did you learn something new about refugees or reconsider something you already knew?' and 'Did you learn something specific about hate speech?'

- Responding to hate speech

The interviews concluded with a final question aiming to capture the shift in addressing hate speech incidents.

### **Teachers' Interviews**

In my intervention, I invited two class teachers to join me in facilitating the workshops. There are two main reasons I decided to involve teachers. First, was to have a critical friend/observer who will be able to observe me in practice and give me feedback afterwards. Secondly, I wanted to see the possible challenges a 'regular' teacher, without prior knowledge of and experience with non-formal education, may face while implementing such kind of intervention.

As mentioned above, I needed someone else, an adult familiar with the educational setting, to provide me with a critical perspective on the process. I feared I might be overwhelmed by my participation in the process, so I might miss important aspects of it. At the same time, when designing the specific action research project, I knew more teachers encounter similar 'problems' to mine. So, on the one hand, I was keen to see if other colleagues would find interest in participating in an intervention like that. On the other hand, I wanted to see how they would cope in a typical formal education class when using non-formal education techniques.

From such a collaboration, extra information would be acquired: *how co-teaching works in practice*, especially in such an alternative scope where formal and nonformal education get mixed. I need to remind here that classes in Greek public schools operate with one teacher only. There are no teaching assistants. Only if there is a student with severe learning difficulties, an extra teacher might be allocated to accompany that specific student in class without getting involved with the overall teaching process. However, there is a provision in the curriculum for co-teaching under special circumstances. Even though teachers are theoretically encouraged to create co-teaching opportunities, in practice, they are reluctant to do so.

## Sample

Inviting another teacher in the class to participate in the workshops was a challenge I wanted to take. Since I was a specialty teacher for the classes that participated in the intervention, it would be valuable to join forces with the main class teacher. And that is how I started. I invited the main class teacher of each of the two classes. However, one of them accepted the challenge. She was very motivated to participate as her class was considered a 'difficult' class then. She felt that trying something alternative might actually impact the children. Unfortunately, the other class teacher rejected my proposal on the grounds that she was lagging behind with the teaching material she had to cover, so she didn't have teaching hours to spare. On top of that, she found the topic too controversial to handle in class, given the social circumstances back then. After the refusal of one of the main class teachers to get involved, I approached another teacher who entered the same class to teach the subject of Citizenship. He was also serving as the Headmaster of the school. Thankfully, he agreed to participate with enthusiasm.

The interviews took place after the intervention to elicit teachers' experiences throughout our co-teaching journey. They were recorded in June 2017, after the school year was over, in an empty class at our school. They were audio-recorded in the Greek language, and they have an average length of 15-20 minutes each. Both teachers were asked explicitly for their consent to the recording at the beginning of the interview process. Moreover, they were assured that their identity would not be revealed at any stage. Finally, they were reminded that there was no right or wrong answer and thus were encouraged to respond as honestly as possible. The two class teachers who helped me deliver the workshops of the intervention were coded in the transcription under the title "Class Teacher 1" (referring to the female participant) and "Class Teacher 2" (referring to the male participant).



## Interview Guide

The Interview Guide consisted of 12 open-ended questions (see Appendix II). The purpose was to facilitate the two teachers to share their personal opinions, ideas, and thoughts regarding their participation in the intervention.

The questions were structured under the following broad themes:

- Evaluation of the intervention

The first four questions referred to the overall impression of the intervention, progressively going deeper into the structure and duration of the workshops, as well as the activities selected. Teachers were also asked for suggestions for improvement of the workshops and whether they think they would face any difficulties, should they run it themselves.

- Empowerment to participate

The fifth and sixth questions asked teachers to make a projection of themselves in the future and decide if they would choose to run an intervention like that again, by themselves this time, and think of possible difficulties they might encounter. Moreover, they were asked which activities they would prioritise.

- Familiarity with hate speech

The following two questions sought to identify a possible increase in familiarity with the topic of hate speech by including a direct question of self-evaluation (eighth question) and an indirect one (ninth question).

- Feedback on my performance

I also asked for feedback on my performance as the lead facilitator at the workshops and invited some comments on what I could have done differently.

- Evaluation of their role in the context of the workshops

Finally, teachers were asked to assess their role and contribution during the workshops, as well as describe their lived experience of co-teaching with me in the context of the intervention.

#### **4.4.3 Field Notes**

As I was running most of the workshops of the intervention either myself or as the lead facilitator, I was keeping a research diary, where notes were kept about what happened in each session, special incidents noted, thoughts and feelings about the planning and implementation process. This personal journal of incidents was recorded on the same day as the workshop, so that time lapse would not interfere with the recordings. Keeping a research diary helped to supplement the information obtained from the other sources and reflect on the process and the practice of the intervention (Kourti & Androussou, 2013). Furthermore, this reflective process contributed to my professional progress as a researcher (Koshy, 2010).

A reflective diary is a valuable companion in action research projects and provides the researcher with support and guidance (McAteer, 2013). To organise my thoughts and record the educational experience as efficiently as possible, I created a Field Notes Chart Sheet (see Appendix III). This was used for dated entries and contained space for notetaking regarding four different themes: the reason I chose this activity; how its process unfolded in the actual workshop, including students' reactions that struck out; comments about the participation of other teachers and finally, some space to jot down things that I learned, or I needed to reflect on.

#### **4.4.4 Focus Groups with refugees**

Before designing the action research workshops, I needed to understand and explore issues that refugees face in their everyday lives in Greece. That is why I conducted two Focus Group interviews with refugees in Athens in February 2017. My aim was to understand in depth the status, feelings and experiences of a refugee. Moreover, I used this opportunity to record their encounters with hate speech and ask for their advice and suggestions about the student workshops.

A focus group is 'a nondirective technique that results in the controlled production of a discussion of a group of people' (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 85) and provides an important way to discover what participants think about a specific topic. Though as a technique it has been underused by qualitative researchers, gradually it has started gaining ground and being used in educational research as well (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013).

A focus group focuses on a particular issue and invites an interactive discussion among participants (Carson et al., 2001). Whereas group interview in social sciences has not traditionally been concerned with the discussion between participants but instead tries to elicit answers from each group member, focus groups attempt to promote a guided discussion and interaction between group members (Smithson, 2020). During this process, disagreements may arise, rejection of ideas, confusion, and shifting of views or consensus, all adding to the richness of the discussion (Robinson, 2020). By contrasting their views, a lot can be revealed about the participants' views, feelings, and attitudes (Flores & Alonso, 1995).

Moreover, I considered focus groups more revealing than one-to-one interviewing or observation. Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics that relate to the topic being discussed, and they are encouraged to express their views without an expectation of reaching a consensus (Krueger & Casey, 2000). In my case, the participants negotiated with their peers their common element, the refugee identity, and their experiences stemming from that. I was also particularly interested to see the points of possible disagreement between them and explore the degree of consensus on hate speech. Furthermore, as a data collection method, it yielded a larger amount of information in a shorter period (Morgan, 1993).

## Sample and setting of the interviews

### Open Reception Facility of Eleonas

For this is a small-scale research, I resorted to 'convenient' sampling. My initial intention was to recruit at least two large focus groups with refugees, however, in practice, I faced many difficulties accessing refugees and talking to them.

Athens had changed from a city of transition to a place of destination for refugees after the closure of the Balkan route (Kreichauf, 2018). At the time of the research most refugees were mainly residing in refugee camps, so that was the first place I turned to. The first camp I naturally thought of requesting access to was the one near my school, the isolated settlement of Schisto. I met tremendous difficulties and delays to gain access there. I had to contact many officials and apply for permissions from two ministries (the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior Affairs). Even though I followed all procedures diligently, I was informed by their contact person that if I am only interested in Schisto camp, I should wait and visit it in some other (unforeseen) period of time, as there was a 'technical problem'. As an alternative she suggested me access to Eleonas camp, which was the only accommodation within Athens' city limits. Having lost precious time with the red tape, I accepted the offer. Later, I realised they wanted to discourage me from gaining access to Schisto, because at that point of time the camp was overcrowded with minimal living conditions. On the other hand, Eleonas was a 'luxury' camp compared to the rest of Greece. It was duly taken care of by two Ministries, the Hellenic Army and the Municipality of Athens. Various programmes from universities and organisations were in action rendering some kind of quality for the lives of residents. It also had an 'open door' policy, meaning that residents could come in and out of it freely. Considering the above, it seemed to me that the authorities would rather have me 'investigate' the realities of people in the camp that would save face for those in charge.

The actual focus group took place on 26 February 2017. Upon arrival at the camp, I had to show identification and approval of access. I was never left unsupervised, and constantly

two of the employees were there present with me, even during the interview. As I did not have an interpreter with me, I asked if we could use the service of the camp interpreters, but I was informed they were busy. Therefore, the staff looked through their directory for people who spoke fluent English. They wrote down the numbers of their containers, and then we started knocking on doors looking for participants. Eventually, we managed to get hold of three people, of which two agreed to participate. It was a young man from Mali, who had been living in the camp for one year and two months and a man from Palestine living in the camp for one year and three months. The interview took place outside the head office, in the yard, under a pergola. Before we started, I explained to them about the research, and they read and signed the participant consent forms in English. For the most part of the interview, a woman, an employee of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, stayed and listened to what we were saying. This may have had an impact on participants' responses.

Both men I talked to were single and without families. My initial effort was to reach out to people with families so that I record their children's perspectives to the extent possible. However, given the circumstances, I decided to compromise, and this compromise proved fruitful. The specific participants revealed to me how different refugees can be among themselves and how diverse starting points, needs and aspirations they may have.

#### NGO in the centre of Athens

In the same period that I was looking for access to a refugee camp, I tried accessing refugees residing outside the camps to record potential differences owed to their place of residence. For this reason, I approached a large NGO -in the centre of Athens- that used its buildings to host refugees who were officially granted asylum and were on waiting lists to be united with other family members in northern European countries. After following all the formal procedures to gain consent to access the NGO space, I was reassured they would try to gather some refugees to talk to me. However, it would be random upon availability on the specific day of the interview. They told me all residents were speakers of Arabic. As they could not provide me with a translation, I used my personal resources and found an

interpreter. He was a young man who had just finished his MA in Germany and was visiting Greece. He was a native speaker of Arabic, fluent in English and volunteered to help me. Considering the nature of my research, I asked the staff of the NGO to try and approach people with families so that they could share their experiences with their children and the potential problems the children face.

On the interview day, the NGO informed me that six people had agreed to participate. However, only three appeared after much effort searching for them. The focus group took place on 20 February 2017 in a quiet small room on the premises of the hosting organisation. The group consisted of one man and two women, all from Syria. The man had five children and was waiting to be reunited with his wife in Denmark. One of the women had seven children and was waiting to relocate to Germany, where her husband was, while the other woman had two children and was with her husband in Greece, intending to remain in the country. Considering the above, this sample is not representative. In spite of the small sample size, the interviews nonetheless offered valuable qualitative insights. Moreover, I did not intend to generalise the findings beyond the sample (Cohen & Manion, 2011).

### Interview Guide

I used organised discussion based on an explicit Interview Guide (see Appendix II). It consisted of six open, semi-structured questions. The purpose was to guide the participants to answer the information sought after but also leave the space open for them to express their opinion freely (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). This way, I explored the subjective responses of the participants in relation to the pre-determined questions. At the same time, I allowed space for a new insight that came up unexpectedly and was of interest. At that point, I had to be careful and show leadership skills (Morgan, 1993) to contain the discussion without restricting it.

The order of the questions sometimes changed depending on the flow of the discussion and the participants' input. Moreover, some of the questions I had to rephrase during the interviews to prompt more answers or, in some cases, make myself more understood. For

instance, in one of the groups, they were hesitant to reply to my last question, so I rephrased it in this way: *'Is there something that you would like Greeks to know about you?'* and this yielded more answers.

In our conversations about discrimination, I did not insist on the term 'hate speech', but rather I expanded the discussion to all sorts of discriminations. I did that for two reasons: first, I didn't want to lead the agenda in one direction only for fear of losing important information; secondly, I felt that the term 'hate speech' might be confusing for them, ending up either in misunderstandings or blocking their expression of experienced intolerance. For example, in one of the groups, after hearing all their answers, I felt there was more to be said, so I insisted on the question: *'Have you ever been verbally assaulted?'* which brought about more answers.

Finally, the question about what gives them hope was put deliberately because I wanted to hear their aspirations for the future. I felt that as a host society, we are trapped in the image of the impoverished, miserable refugee. Hearing them talk about future goals and dreams would add an empowered aspect of them looking forward to better days ahead. It would also record the needs they currently have to accomplish their goals.

The data coming from the interviews were analysed through thematic analysis and the following main codes were generated: living conditions, experiences with discrimination, multiple identities of refugees, hopes for better education, suggestions for the design of the school intervention.

### **Interview with an aid worker**

The discussions with the refugees were very interesting and enlightening to me. However, there were instances when I was perplexed by some contradictory allegations. Especially during the focus groups with the Syrian refugees, the linguistic barrier made me feel I needed more clarification. Also, in some cases, the presence of the staff at the refugee camp made

me feel that perhaps the two participants did not disclose as much information as they would have liked to.

That is why I decided to conduct an interview with an aid worker who was working for an international humanitarian NGO offering mental health support to refugees in central Athens. I chose her for the deeper perspective she had on refugees' everyday lives in Greece, possible hidden traumas, and difficulties that I could not know by meeting with them for a few hours. At the same time, the fact that she was a Greek seemed helpful to me as she would understand the things I found perplexing, and she would talk to me as an 'insider', as well as a part of the dominant group.

The interview took place in her private office in Athens on the afternoon of 20.03.2017. The conversation lasted about half an hour. The questions around which our conversation unfolded can be found in Appendix II.

## **4.5 Data Analysis**

The three stages of this research project yielded much data. To make sense of them, I used thematic analysis for all the stages of my research, a widely used tool for analysing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Almost all my data were textual coming from interview transcripts, questionnaire answers and field notes. Therefore, I analysed them under a thematic content analysis model (Cohen et al., 2011), which provides a descriptive presentation of qualitative data (Anderson, 2007).

Thematic analysis within the qualitative paradigm often sees the researcher's subjectivity as part of the analysis process. As such, 'an inductive approach to coding and theme development is more common' (p. 21, Terry et al., 2017). Analysing the data, much information emerged, both expected and unexpected. The use of coding helped with data reduction (Roulston, 2010). To manage the large amount of data generated from all three stages of my research, I focused primarily on specific themes identified in the data closely



related to my research questions. After multiple readings of the data sets, I extracted relevant data and coded with specified codes of interest, creating various qualitative matrices. In some cases, I compared the content of some qualitative matrices exploring relationships among themes and looking for similarities or differences in emerging patterns (Guest et al., 2012). The design of the questionnaires and the interview guides, as discussed above, helped me keep a general focus on reporting my findings and providing some answers to my research questions.

Safeguarding the anonymity of all participants, I came up with codes for presenting my data that excluded any personal information or data that could reveal their identity. For presenting the data coming from the education stakeholders in the initial study, I used a term descriptive of their position, i.e., 'School Advisor' or 'Non-Formal Education Trainer'. The names used for presenting the findings of refugee focus groups are all pseudonyms. As far as the information coming from the students' questionnaires is concerned, it was coded in terms of the following points: 1. The class each respondent came from (5A and 5B), five signifying the fifth-year class of primary school; 2. Initial or Final Questionnaire (IQ – FQ); 3. The student who has answered it (1-20 for each class). Information from the students' interviews was coded considering: 1. The class each respondent came from (5A and 5B); 2. Interviews (I); 3. The student who has answered it (1-8: 1-4 students from Class 5A and 5-8 students from Class 5B). The class teachers were referred to as 'Class Teacher 1' referring to the female respondent responsible for Class 5A, and 'Class Teacher 2' referring to the male teacher who accompanied me at Class 5B.

#### **4.6 Validity and credibility of the research**

Naturalistic enquiry is qualitative in nature; thus, the data I collected are qualitative as well. Internal validity was safeguarded by including as many voices and perspectives as possible (Anderson, 2007). Students' perspectives were sought, as well as that of their teachers and administrators. Furthermore, I sought collaboration with my colleagues and asked for peer review. Regarding external validity in action research, Koshy (2010) argues 'that the action

researcher does not set out to seek generalisable data, but to generate knowledge based on action within one's own situation' (p. 30). As such, the findings are mostly generalisable to my context of work. However, disseminating my findings could apply to other practitioners in similar circumstances who wish to apply the findings or replicate the study. Focus groups with refugees also contributed to the external validity of my research. Informing my action research with their experiences enriched the intervention both for me and the students.

Credibility was enhanced by the wealth and range of data collected, the participants recruited, and the triangulation methods employed (Cohen & Manion, 2011). Triangulation is recommended as a way of ensuring the validity of the data collection and the research findings (Altrichter et al., 2008). The use of a variety of research tools for data collection (focus groups, questionnaires, interviews, field notes) before, while and after running the intervention with students contributed to the triangulation process (McAteer, 2013). For instance, data coming from questionnaires were compared and contrasted with that from the interviews. Thus, I achieved multiple valorisations of the data both using different data collection methods and by receiving data through different sources to ensure the intersubjective verification of results.

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

This section elaborates on ethical considerations regarding different stages of the research. I discuss here particularly ethical principles regarding the students who participated in the school intervention as well as the refugees who participated in the focus groups.

Following strict ethical guidelines is important in the context of action research, given the small-scale nature of the projects. Such projects are usually situated in the working environment of the action researcher, where it would be possible to recognise individuals and events in the local setting (Zeni, 1998; Koshy, 2010). Thus, some ethical principles to guide the work of the action researcher include minimising the risk of harm, obtaining

informed consent, protecting anonymity and confidentiality and offering the right of withdrawal.

Likewise, following strict ethical guidelines was important in the context of the specific focus groups, as the participants were people already considered vulnerable and in need of protection. Therefore, I took extra care to abide by the above ethical principles. Moreover, I tried for my participants to feel as relaxed and engaged as possible, and I was attentive to group dynamics and alert for possible dominant views or silencing of minority views (Robinson, 2020; Smithson, 2020).

### **Minimising the risk of harm**

Since my research involved children, it was my great aim to minimise the risk for them, be it physical, emotional, economic, legal, or social (Anderson et al., 2007). Both classes were homogeneous in linguistic, religious, and social characteristics, but a concerted effort was there for no one to feel excluded or disrespected. Moreover, there was no financial burden for students who participated. Materials needed for the workshops (e.g., papers, stickers, coloured markers) were provided by the school and me. However, the main concern was the experiential nature of the workshops. Sometimes, students had to use role-plays or consider situations where they had hurt someone. This is part of the empathy process, but for some students, this might be too emotional to handle. To minimise psychological risk, I used activities designed by experts and approved for these specific ages. Moreover, I consulted the class teachers before I used them in class to receive feedback on a potential threat or problem with any of the students. I was constantly aware that my role as a non-formal education trainer demanded me sometimes to come out of the traditional boundaries of a formal education teacher. That is why I tried to place some safeguards for students, one of which was to discuss and clarify possibly inconvenient or awkward moments with my students in real-time as they were happening. I discuss my role in more detail in Chapter 7 and mention how I handled some challenging situations like in Workshops One, Three and Ten.

Regarding the sensitive group of refugees, there was respect for the linguistic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds of all participants. There was no financial burden either for participants or for hosting institutions. Both focus groups took place in an environment already familiar to the participants so that they did not feel threatened. My main concern was in case any of my questions might trigger hidden traumas in any of the participants. To minimise psychological risk, I tried to phrase the questions as less dramatically as possible, and I was determined not to persist in any answers in case I sensed the participants would feel uncomfortable. To my surprise, all refugees were eager to share their stories and journeys. Especially the three Syrian participants shared even intimate details of their hurtful journeys without being explicitly asked to. It seems like it was validating for them to have their voices and stories heard. This might have happened because they either felt safe to share or they were used to having their stories told many times before, for instance, to authorities while applying for asylum.

Contemplating the potential risks of harm for my participants, I couldn't help thinking about what the benefits for them would be for donating their time and participating in these group discussions. Even though I could not see some direct benefit, apart from their voices being heard, I do believe and hope that this research will benefit future lines of refugees in being a bit more welcomed in the hosting countries they arrive.

### **Obtaining informed consent**

Obtaining informed consent involves explaining the purpose of the research to the people involved in the process. According to BERA (2011, p. 5):

'...all participants in the research [should] understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported'.

Informed consent is an ongoing, continual negotiation (Mathison et al., 1993). In this light, I sought official approval beforehand from the local educational authorities of Piraeus, as well as the Greek Ministry of Education. Moreover, I informed and received consent from the

headmasters of both schools and the class teachers of the two classes. Before the project began, students were informed of its aims, duration, methods, and dissemination of the results. It is worth mentioning here that the form of dissemination of the workshops' results within the school community was decided by the students. Given the young age of students and the fact that this project was embedded in the school curriculum, parents did not have the right to opt out. However, I asked for parents' written consent for their children to participate in the interviews.

In the same light, I sought official approval beforehand from the authorities responsible for the space I would visit to meet with refugees. Moreover, I informed the refugee participants about the details of the research in a language understood to them and received their written consent to participate before the beginning of the group conversations. In addition, I offered to inform them of the research results when it would be completed, and for that reason, I gathered the email addresses of those participants who expressed interest in being informed.

### **The right to withdraw**

The right to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason, is vital, and the participants must be informed of it (BERA, 2011). Since these workshops were a part of the weekly teaching process, the students could not opt out beforehand. However, it was made clear from the onset that if, during the process, someone felt uncomfortable participating due to emotional stress or any other reason, they would have the right to withdraw freely without judgment or repercussions. For that cause, at the beginning of each session, a red card was made available so that any participant could lift it up in case they felt like withdrawing. If a student was to use this card, they had the right to shift immediately outside the learning circle to a classroom corner where they felt disengaged and safe. At the end of the session, there would follow a discussion as to what led the student to the decision to leave the process, and judging the severity of the cause, the student(s) had the option to abstain completely from the rest of the sessions. If needed, a safe space outside the classroom was

allocated for him/her to spend the time under adult supervision while the sessions took place. This was a practice already followed in the school, and the 'safe place' was usually the head teacher's office or a small hall adjacent to the teaching staff room. At the same time, students were aware that it is always possible to re-engage at the workshops whenever they feel ready. However, in retrospect, even though some students used the card, no student chose to leave the classroom.

Christensen and Prout (2002) suggest that dialogue with children throughout the research project is essential and will render them active participants in the research. This is also in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should have the right to be heard and consulted about matters that concern them. Therefore, I consulted my students during the process of the action research incorporating their suggestions or comments in the activities to follow. This also helped mitigate the power control issues that might arise from the teacher-student relationship (Banegas & Villacañas de Castro , 2015).

Regarding the right of withdrawal for the refugee participants, I clearly informed them that they had the right to withdraw from the group conversation at any time they wanted, without any consequence whatsoever. Moreover, they had the right to avoid certain questions if they didn't feel like answering them.

### **Protecting anonymity and confidentiality**

In action research, the dual role of teacher and researcher may have an implication on confidentiality and need to be addressed (BERA, 2011). Given the reflective nature of action research, the teacher-researcher is expected to engage in increased data gathering and systematic documentation. I made all efforts possible in the data-collecting process to protect both students and teachers who participated in the research. When sharing participants' information during the data analysis or dissemination process, there is the potential to cause harm to the people involved by disclosing sensitive information. Therefore, I took the following steps to avoid potential harm: I made sure to keep the real names and

the identities of participants confidential and unrecognisable at all stages. The students' names were substituted with codes for the questionnaires and the interviews and pseudonyms for the field notes (Zeni, 1998). Once data were gathered, they were not kept at school, but they were kept safe in a locked drawer at my house.

In the case of refugee focus groups, apart from being a researcher, I was also a Greek. That means I belonged to the dominant group of the hosting country. I was constantly aware of that power relation and consciously tried to minimise any hesitation they might have had to talk to me openly. For instance, I reassured the focus group of the NGO that our conversation would not be notified to the members of the hosting organisation and that their status would not be influenced in any way by talking to me. I clarified that I came there as a teacher who wanted to know more about refugees and that I was not at all involved with the asylum process. In addition, we avoided using their real names during the discussions, and I committed to keeping the data I obtained completely anonymised during the data analysis or dissemination process. Moreover, I used pseudonyms for my field notes (Zeni, 1998). Once data were gathered, they were safely kept in a password-protected hard disc at my house.

After considering meticulously ethical issues at stake, I proceeded to the actual implementation of the research. The first stage of it aimed to address my first research question and is described thoroughly in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: REALITIES OF HATE SPEECH IN GREK SCHOOLS**

### **5.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter attempts to answer my first research question, which is whether hate speech is an issue in Greek schools. The features and kinds of hate speech in Greek schools were explored by conducting interviews with 13 education stakeholders in December 2015 in Athens. The outcomes of the interviews revealed the presence of hate speech within the Greek school reality and its different manifestations in different school contexts. Moreover, some obstacles emerged that hinder teachers from taking action against hate speech, such as the unfamiliarity with the term 'hate speech' and its problematic usage. Finally, insights were highlighted, like the need for teachers to be trained regarding hate speech and relevant topics as their involvement is crucial if the phenomenon is to be tackled efficiently within democratic school contexts.

### **5.2 Realities regarding hate speech in Greek schools**

As discussed in Introduction, Greece has passed the last decade with a financial crisis that brought its economy to its knees. Moreover, it was called to deal with an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants due to geopolitical upheaval and wars in nearby countries. Both situations were unprecedented and shocked the Greek public (Rozakou, 2012), which in its despair, became easy prey for demagogues and populists (Markantonatou et al., 2018). It is not coincidental that reports at that time from national and international organisations attest to the familiarisation of Greek society with incidents of violence and the targeting of people because of their diversity (RVRN, 2014; RVRN, 2015; ECRI, 2015). At the same time, racism and xenophobia started appearing in school contexts with an increasing recording of racist violence within and outside schools (Ombudsman's Report, 2013).



Within this sociopolitical context, I started wondering what the situation is exactly like within schools regarding hate speech. Thus, my first research question was articulated as follows: “*Is hate speech an issue for Greek schools? If so, what are the features of hate speech in Greek school context?*”. In my effort to address this question, I turned to data from the Greek Ministry of Education and other relevant organisations. I could find some data about bullying, but there was no mention of hate speech whatsoever. Since 2015 when this research was initiated, till today, in 2023, when this thesis is being written, there are no formal data recording the presence of hate speech within Greek schools.

Therefore, I decided, as a first step of my doctoral research, to conduct an initial study to record and understand the manifestation of hate speech in the school environment, as well as map the main topics troubling students and teachers at that given point in time. To do that, I conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with teachers, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders. One teacher came from a primary school, one from a lower secondary (Gymnasium) school and the other one from a higher secondary (Lyceum) school. The policymakers came from the Ministry of Education, the Institute of Educational Policy, a local Directorate of Primary Education, and a Directorate of Secondary Education. Two non-formal education trainers came from an organisation that runs various activities and workshops for children and teachers using the Council of Europe’s manual *Bookmarks*. Apart from the Deputy Ombudsman for Children’s Rights, the other representatives came from an NGO that records and monitors incidents of racist violence, an organisation that sponsors a campaign about Hate Speech in Greece and a youth organisation that runs the national campaign for the No Hate Speech Movement in Greece.

The interviews took place between December 2015 and January 2016 in Athens and the approximate duration of each interview was 30-40 minutes. My aim was to benefit from their experience and gather in-depth information regarding school reality, coming from different, but equally important perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were preferred as a research tool due to the flexibility of the open-ended responses (Kvale, 1996). Even though the transcription was time-consuming, as a tool it helped to get a detailed picture

of the views of respondents about hate speech. The Interview Guide for education stakeholders was differentiated from the one used with teachers (for both see Appendix II). The set of pre-determined questions aimed to guide the conversation but not dictate the course of the interviews. Therefore, there was flexibility in the series of questions, modifying the questions' content and the issues to be discussed according to each interviewee. Through thematic analysis key themes emerged such as -but not limited to- forms of hate speech in Greek society and Greek schools, school's role in the phenomenon and teachers' role and awareness about hate speech. Below are discussed in more detail the themes that emerged and are more closely related to answering my first research question.

### **5.2.1 Presence of hate speech in Greek schools**

The report of the Greek Ombudsman in 2013 was one of the first official reports expressing concerns about racism and xenophobia growing in schools, both inside and around them. The teachers I talked to had observed the same when we spoke in 2015:

[...] I am 10 years now in public school, I see that the children's mentality is changing significantly ... their language becomes more aggressive.

-Primary School Teacher

Hate speech certainly affects the student community in schools. Students as members of the community get affected by the family and their social circle (friends - groups). When racist views are cultivated in them, students, due to non-developed critical thinking, usually accept and reproduce them in the school space against their peers.

- Secondary School Teacher\_2

Both teachers acknowledged the presence of hate speech in their school context, especially when compared to earlier times. Even though teachers didn't elaborate explicitly on the reasons for this change, it was mutually understandable at the time of interviews that the whole social atmosphere contributed to that given the socioeconomic circumstances of the last decade in Greece, as also described in the thesis' introductory

chapter. The second teacher also explained how hate speech manifests itself in the school setting. She identified the family as the main source for propagating hate speech. She believed that once a student hears hate speech in their family, it is easier for them to reproduce it in the school setting. That is also facilitated by the underdevelopment of students' critical thinking.

Education experts also pointed out that the financial crisis has influenced the use of hate speech:

The financial crisis has intensified anger. Everyone thinks that the other person is to blame, and they attack verbally more than before. We have children who come to school more loaded. They transfer the tensions they experience at home.

-School Advisor

Our teachers in recent years have been faced with the phenomenon of rivalry between students and between groups. They saw its manifestation at children – on the student level and then tried to understand what it is. Thus, arose the problem of racism or xenophobia and hatred and teachers should be prepared to manage and deal with the school.

-Institute of Educational Policy Officer

## **5.2.2 Forms of hate speech in Greek society and schools**

The participants identified several social groups that may happen to be the target of hate speech in the Greek context:

In Greece, there is both racial intolerance (xenophobia, hostility towards immigrants) and religious intolerance, and I believe that racism has reached alarming proportions after the large influx of immigrants in recent years. As far as schools are concerned, from my educational experience so far, I have noticed discrimination against Roma children and hostility-isolation towards children who seem to be different in terms of sexual orientation.

-Secondary School Teacher\_1

The target students [for hate speech] are often those who are not of Greek origin or who belong to a minority group, Roma for instance.

-Primary School Teacher

The most frequent victims of hate speech are refugees, Muslims, homosexuals, and women. 80% of people believe that there is equality between the sexes. Therefore, there is a problem in recognising the hate speech against women, so it is not recorded so much in Greece because we do not understand that this is hate speech. Instead, the [racist] comment towards a Muslim or a homosexual, for some reason – which I find difficult to comprehend- is more obvious.

-NGO Representative\_3

The groups usually targeted by hate speech in Greece seem to be mostly Roma and foreigners, that is, people visibly different to what they would expect a typical Greek to be like. An interesting comment also included women, who are usually the receivers of hateful comments, but this is so common in many societies that it eventually goes unnoticed. I found it interesting, and I made sure in the intervention I designed later to make some space and discuss this somewhere with my students. Especially as the battle 'girls vs boys' and who is better is common in their discussions at this age.

The social groups identified in the quotes above were more or less repeated by many of the interviewees. However, the common element in all answers was that any group or person could potentially be the victim of hate speech if they happen to be the weakest link in a given context at that given point in time:

It seems that the economic crisis has affected the manifestation of hate speech in Greek society by creating scapegoats amongst the most vulnerable, Roma, immigrants, etc.

-NGO Representative\_2

In the context of the general political-ideological confusion due to the crisis, an attempt is being made to transfer the responsibilities for the current situation to any kind of minority group that exists in the country, as they are the easiest target.

-Primary School Teacher

From the comments above, it is evident that any minority can potentially become the target of racist language, and this happens when the majority is looking for a scapegoat, for someone to blame for their ills:

Hate speech does not derive from children but from adults. For [the hate speech targeting] the Roma, [it happens] permanently. But the school simply repeats the opposition that exists in society. In many cases where the local community does not want the gypsies at [the general] school, it is capable of building a school in the camp as well.

-School Advisor

Here the respondent illustrated the social group of Roma again as one that receives hate speech frequently in the Greek context. More importantly, he pointed out the two-way connection between school and society, decrying how school can become a mouthpiece for society's ills.

### **5.2.3 Teachers' obstacles in taking up initiatives regarding hate speech**

Even though my first research question was related to the presence and features of hate speech in Greek schools, the interviews gave me a lot of feedback also about the role and needs of teachers who decide to deal with hate speech within schools.

As far as the role was concerned that teachers can play in the response towards hate speech, three categories of teachers seemed to emerge. The Greek Ombudsman for the Rights of the Child was one of the respondents who consented to have his identity revealed, and he suggested that teachers may be:

#### Neutral

[...] the big mass does not dare to do too much but is permeated by the principles of education, which dictate that we should help everyone to coexist.

#### Motivated

Another category [of teachers] takes a further step, they get trained, they try, they change, they divert from the curriculum, they discuss within the classrooms.

#### Negative

[another category of teachers] not only do nothing extra but they may also be guided by respective perceptions of 'evil foreigner' or 'different'.

I do not share the usage of the term 'neutral teacher', as I believe that the educational process is a 'political act' (Freire, 1979) and willingly or unwillingly, it has a social and political impact (Giroux & Filippakou, 2020). It is the choice of the educator whether education will be used as a conditioning process for 'domestication' or as a tool for deconditioning and 'freedom' (da Veiga Coutinho, 1972, p. 9). However, my understanding is that the respondent here wanted to describe a group of teachers who have good intentions to engage in a more meaningful education but fail to act in this direction.

Jerome (2018) explored the way teachers engage with human rights education, and he identified some factors that can potentially limit them from rising successfully to the challenge of this type of education. Ignorance, fear of loss of authority and conservatism are some of them. However, he also recognised that teachers may be on a journey and occupy different positions at particular times through 'exploring the possibilities, testing the boundaries, and building their confidence' (p. 57). Furthermore, Struthers (2016) suggests that teachers often have reservations about teaching HRE because they view human rights as a topic that can be controversial, abstract, or biased for young students.

Contemplating the different types of teachers, as delineated by the Ombudsman, my interest focused on the larger group of 'neutral' teachers. I wondered what it is that makes them more detached. So, I started tracing possible obstacles that may hinder their goodwill from engaging.

### **Devaluation of the teaching profession**

The profession of teaching has been devalued in recent years by both the state and society (Tomasevski, 2003; Daliri-Ngametua & Hardy, 2022), and perhaps this deterred them from undertaking new initiatives:

Many more of those [teachers] are more abandoned than before. Especially now that they have suffered all the consequences of the crisis, the devaluation and the austerity that broke them and deprived them of the tools they had.

-NGO Representative\_1

The financial crisis has also had its toll on the teachers as a professional category. During the years of crisis in Greece, there started a rhetoric of teachers 'being lazy' and 'not doing their jobs properly,' which led to the 'legitimisation' of cutting their salaries savagely. For many years, due to austerity measures, the schools would not be equipped even with the minimum standards they needed to function. That caused burnout for many teachers as they were trying to make up for the shortages in the system.

Katarina Tomasevski (2003) has identified a similar thing happening to other teachers in countries across the world. She highlighted that often teachers' rights are not recognised, and their salaries can be so low that impedes their performance. Apparently, this seems to be a neoliberal pattern also present in richer countries. Apple (2005) identifies neo-conservative policies in education as contributing to the intensification of teachers' work, as well as the loss of autonomy and respect (ibid., p. 282).

In addition, during the peak of socioeconomic unrest, teachers in Greece were the recipients of social discontent among students and parents at school. Specifically, parents started involving in teachers' work more than before:

Parents have also started to get involved in the game. Incidents of parents putting forward official complaints against teachers have increased – justly or unjustly.

-School Advisor

Therefore, the element of fear came up in some interviews as a factor prohibiting some teachers from running activities related to contested topics such as diversity and human rights:

In recent years there have been significant threats against teachers who run anti-racist initiatives and education programmes. They put them through disciplinary councils, and you know, disciplinary persecutions mean even removal from school or suspension — all that has brought about tremendous upheaval and fear in teachers.

-Ombudsman for Children's Rights

The fact that some parents started attacking or even pressing charges against teachers, especially parents supporting extremist ideologies, generated disappointment, fear and eventually disengagement in a large number of teachers.

So, in a way, even teachers have been the recipients of hate speech. This may be one of the reasons that fear and hesitation are observed among teachers to take up initiatives outside the formal curriculum.

Moreover, the teachers' association within the school has lost its coherence and unity:

In recent years teachers have been considered as teaching hours. When the law foresees that a teacher may teach in five different schools... when teaching hours mean teaching in class and nothing else... when there is no time foreseen for the collaboration of the assembly of the teachers' association, then what pieces are there to pick up? You are just teaching hours, you are on your own.

-School Advisor

This lack of communication among the school staff may contribute to the further alienation of the teachers. When they feel alone, it is more probable that they feel weaker in fighting battles that they know beforehand are contested topics in Greek society.

### **Lack of relevant training**

Another obstacle that probably deterred teachers from taking up initiatives is the lack of relevant training and available tools to do so:

I believe that teachers are not properly equipped to deal with conflicts of school violence, let alone issues concerning -what we call- hate speech.

-Institute of Educational Policy Officer



When the discussion came to whether teachers are prepared to take action against hate speech, all interviewees also acknowledged the need for teachers to receive up-to-date and relevant training on how to deal with incidents of hate speech:

I believe that (teachers) are not properly equipped to deal with conflicts of school violence, let alone in matters concerning hate speech. If they cannot deal with episodes of violence and hatred between two students or groups within the school, it means they are in more need of pedagogical tools to address hate speech when it is collectively expressed by one group to another [...]. Consequently, the Greek state should prepare teachers through appropriate programmes to address the phenomenon of hate speech because it has too many levels and too many aspects. Generally, it is the preliminary stage for the explosion of hatred.

-Institute of Educational Policy Officer

I understand that teachers need special training, and I wish they had it. If only they could have a small periodic update on all the issues raised by the news. Things have changed, it is much more difficult, and you cannot rely on the knowledge you gained at the University 20 years ago. I would like teachers to receive from the Ministry information and small workshops, with some instructions on how to face the dangers of the current affairs resulting from the socioeconomic crisis or other circumstances.

-NGO Representative\_1

In the quotes above, we see that the training offered to teachers is a bit outdated. Sometimes, they need to rely on the knowledge they gained several years ago. Given that participation in training taking place outside school hours is voluntary, perhaps it would be a good idea for incentives to be offered to teachers to increase their motivation to participate in them. Moreover, effort needs to be made for teachers' sensitisation on issues of human rights, diversity, and equity, as they remain extremely current for the times we live in (Osler & Starkey, 2005).

Finally, considering that two of the three interviewed teachers worked in schools on the periphery of Greece and not in Athens, they also complained about the lack of training opportunities in contrast with the capital city. This is something that needs to be considered as well.

## Need for relevant tools

- Teacher training is essential.[...]
- Do they have the tools?
- Not too many.

-Ombudsman for Children's Rights

Many stakeholders recognised the need for more tools to be given to teachers to facilitate them with their duties. The main problem with the existing tools is that they are scattered and sometimes hard to access. Despite the grave circumstances discussed earlier for teachers, they were still expected to keep up with the latest European trends in education, which usually appeared in schools through emails and directives from above.

Many things have been done by the Ministry. Unfortunately, they are often fragmentary, so they do not always have a solid impact. While many things are being done, unfortunately, many times, they do not work effectively because there is no cohesion. [...] Of course, not everything is generously given, you do not enter a website, and everything is collected - unfortunately - this does not really exist.

-Ministry of Education Officer

Teachers seemed to have difficulty accessing training materials relevant to hate speech. Most of this material is produced abroad and is usually found in English. In addition, teachers need to look for these materials themselves, which can be chaotic as computer literacy skills are also required, apart from foreign language skills.

Tools exist. Some [teachers] have some of them. There is no easy access in terms of language, [neither] there is access to the information about the very existence of the tools [...] Moreover, they have not been taught about non-formal education, albeit typically!

-Non-Formal Education Trainer\_1

We see that despite the existence of some tools, they are not easily accessible to Greek teachers. Moreover, as the last respondent said, one additional problem was the teachers' lack of familiarity with non-formal education.

## **Lack of understanding of non-formal education**

Therefore, another obstacle seemed to be the lack of understanding of non-formal education and its methodology:

[...] what we have come across so far is a fear on the part of teachers to bring the educational activities of the Council of Europe into the class. They are afraid of whether they will do it well or not.

-Non-Formal Education Trainer\_1

Because you don't know how to work with it ... and you don't know what it will bring about... and you do not have the training to do that ...

-Secondary School Teacher\_2

Here the teacher expressed a feeling of inadequacy in tackling the issue of hate speech in class. Mostly because it is unknown territory, and they knew hardly a few things about its meaning and its implications (Kourti & Androussou, 2013). Moreover, it was a sensitive issue that they did not know how it would be received by students. Formal education teachers can indeed find it difficult to deviate from formal channels of disseminating knowledge. It is this part of teachers whom I feel in solidarity with, and I tried to inspire through my school intervention. I proposed the incorporation of non-formal education techniques within the formal education classroom as a suggestion to make the lesson more interesting for both students and teachers alike. In addition, I intended to bring a European educational trend -like the one advocated by the Council of Europe regarding hate speech- and make it more tangible for teachers by contextualising it in the setting of the Greek classroom. That is why I used many Council of Europe's activities in the student workshops to test them myself in a Greek school setting.

Non-formal education is a key vehicle for the educational approach as suggested by the Council of Europe's activities to explore hate speech. Experiential learning, which is at the heart of non-formal education, is also key to human rights education and aims to foster empathy through experience (Brander & Keen, 2012). It offers space to address sensitive issues that have to do with respect for diversity and the fight against intolerance and

discrimination (Adams & Bell, 2016). However, Greek teachers coming from formal education discipline were unfamiliar with such non-formal education practices:

It is very typical of what learners usually tell us when we start the training, and we ask them, 'Have you had experiential learning before?' -'Yes, we have', they respond. And once we begin, they say, 'No, we've never done such a thing. [...] A characteristic expression of teachers we've trained in recent years is that 'we did not believe that we had such stereotypes'. It is something they take out during experiential learning. And they get puzzled by themselves because suddenly a window opens, and they see some views they never thought existed.

-Non-Formal Education Trainer\_2

The NFE trainer, who trained students, teachers, as well as university students of pedagogical faculties, noted here the importance of familiarising teachers with experiential learning techniques. She suggested it can be beneficial for them to unpack personal prejudices they might have. Zembylas (2015) noted that this alternative education includes examining one's emotional experiences and perspectives on themes like justice, human rights and diversity. Sometimes, these perceptions and emotions can be negative and shake the individual to its core. However, if it is dealt with constructively, through initiatives, like action research projects, for instance, that adopt a holistic approach and do not fear to confront negative emotions critically, it seems to be a way forward to supporting such educational initiatives.

At the same time, if teachers experience this kind of learning themselves, they will find it easier to apply it in their classrooms with their students. She also claimed that persons who have experience in non-formal education are much more willing to see it as part of formal education as well:

People trained in non-formal education are very positive about it becoming a part of school practice.

-Non-Formal Education Trainer\_2

Considering all the above, I saw there was a gap and an opportunity for me as an experienced non-formal education trainer, but also a formal education teacher, to try and combine both these fields and see whether it works in practice and under which conditions.

## **Problematic understanding of the term ‘hate speech’**

A final point I would like to raise is the problem with the term ‘hate speech’. I noticed through the interviews with teachers that they did not feel familiar with the term. All three teachers felt uncomfortable with the usage of the term ‘hate speech’, even though I had provided a definition of it at the onset of our interviews. Despite that, they didn’t seem to grasp its meaning fully, and they hesitated to use the term itself. They all hummed in their answers, and I could see they sometimes improvised in their replies instead of admitting they didn’t understand the term completely. Only one teacher, after the interview finished, admitted that she had to read many times the definition I provided her with in advance to grasp what I was asking her about. Sometimes, even though I asked about hate speech incidents, they would respond about ‘bullying’, perhaps because they were more familiar with the term.

This was also confirmed by the words of the trainers, who commented that

Even as an expression, it was not there in our vocabulary. It was not there, so it is not something that is widely known.

-Non-Formal Education Trainer\_1

There is no familiarity with the terms.

-Non-Formal Education Trainer\_2

An explanation for this confusion or unfamiliarity could be that sometimes hate speech is interrelated with bullying. Bullying is described as the systematic –repeated and deliberate- abuse of power (Smith & Sharp, 1994a). School bullying can take various forms; some are direct and physical, like hitting, some are direct and verbal, like name-calling and some are indirect like rumour spreading. Drawing from the bullying forms and definitions, hate speech can be used as a means or a strategy for abusing power or inflicting pain on the other person. It seems to fall under ‘direct and verbal’ and ‘indirect’ school bullying. However, hate speech is distinct from bullying, as further clarified in Chapter 2.

Another explanation for this misunderstanding could be of a linguistic nature. The actual translation in Greek for 'hate speech' is 'rhetoric of hatred' (ρητορική του μίσους). The word 'rhetoric' used in the Greek context alludes to Ancient Greece and thus is usually considered as something positive. Here it is followed by the word 'hatred', which connotes negativity, and that might cause some confusion in a Greek speaker's mind. On the other hand, one could argue that the Greek translation aims to allude to the philosopher who raises arguments to convince the crowds. And deliberately tied together two contradictory words to show how insidious and misleading this phenomenon can be.

The problem with the understanding of the term 'hate speech' needs to be taken into consideration as one possible reason for alienating teachers from the topic of hate speech. It may contribute to discouraging them from taking action to tackle it.

### **5.3 Insights gained**

The previous section offered an answer to my first research question. Hate speech does appear to be an issue for Greek schools, and it may take different forms. Specific social groups were identified as vulnerable to hate speech. However, the common assumption was that any minority group has the potential to be targeted by the majority group, given the circumstances. Furthermore, in the previous section, certain obstacles were identified that may deter teachers from taking action against hate speech. Lack of relevant training, scarcity and inaccessibility of educational tools, unfamiliarity with non-formal education, and the term hate speech are the main factors pointed out to put off teachers.

This section discusses some insights revealed through the interviews and makes suggestions for facilitating teachers' engagement with the topic of hate speech.

### 5.3.1 The importance of teachers' involvement in dealing with hate speech

The Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe (2011) identify educators as the main actors for change. They acknowledge them as one of the groups of society which can have an impact on how people in Europe think about each other and therefore enable them to live together better (ibid., p.37).

When teachers were asked if they could play a role in combating hate speech in the school context, they all were affirmative:

Generally, teachers, through their teaching and with different actions, can cultivate in their students the importance of equality, acceptance of diversity and harmonious coexistence.

-Secondary school teacher\_1

I speak through my personal experience. This little that I have tried sometimes to balance situations that came up, showed me that there is a result if you talk to the children.

-Primary school teacher

That only leaves us with the hope that teachers can be the agents of change and act as multipliers for good practices regarding the confrontation of hate speech. Teachers have a significant capacity to make a difference on the issue of hate speech in schools. This doesn't mean they can or should compensate for all society's ills. However, they can use the compensatory power of the school to tip the scale in favour of tolerance and respect for diversity. This way, they can contribute to having more hate-free school environments.

Teachers have enormous power and mission -without saying that only themselves, the teachers and the school will change this whole state of society.

-Ombudsman for Children's Rights

[...] Our teachers need to know the phenomenon theoretically and practically. The time of crisis requires them to deal with it knowledgeably and correctly.

-Institute of Educational Policy Officer

Teachers give a fight to educate children in living together.

-School Advisor

And exactly here is where experiential learning is relevant. Activities of such nature can be incorporated into the teaching process and enhance the learning outcomes. Taking, however, into account the non-familiarity of teachers with experiential learning, it would be beneficial if the introduction of experiential learning activities would systematically enter schools. And while several educational actions take place, they are, unfortunately, fragmentary and are not guided by a coherent link to have solid and long-term results.

Hopeful results can be achieved when teachers try to involve students (Jerome, 2018). So, if we want the school to fulfil its compensatory role, we should bear in mind that teachers are the most valuable agents to take that up. Therefore, we ought to support them in their work, curtail the contempt they faced in past years and put more emphasis on meeting their needs. One good suggestion towards this direction is the following:

[...] at some point, we should create training programmes targeting teachers for teachers and not teachers for students.

-School Advisor

Here the school advisor acknowledged that often the trainings addressed to teachers were irrelevant to their needs, or they added to their workload and stress instead of providing practical guidance and inspiration. Moreover, special attention, in my view, should be given to the group of teachers who were previously labelled as 'neutral'.

At the same time, it seemed that teachers usually did not show the same motivation to prevent hate speech in the first place. Rather, they got interested in the topic once an incident arose in their school community, and they needed to figure out ways to deal with it. However, they did show vivid interest and participation when trainings were offered. For instance, the organisation which was running trainings about the use of the Council of Europe's educational materials regarding hate speech back in 2015 mentioned that they were quite popular and were considered useful both by the teachers as well as the institutional agents:



In the context of our programme, there has been recorded interest on behalf of the teachers regarding the manual Bookmarks both on the individual level as well as the institutional.

-NGO Representative\_2

### **5.3.2 Need for teacher training on hate speech and relevant topics**

For teachers to be able to become agents of social change, professional development opportunities are important (Bourn, 2021). Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 encourages all member states of the Council of Europe to provide teachers and other educational staff with the necessary initial and ongoing training and development in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. This recommendation aims to ensure that they have a good knowledge and understanding of EDC/HRE's objectives and principles and appropriate teaching and learning methods. Brander and Keen (2012, p. 59) mention that it would be ideal and a necessity for teachers of all subjects to be trained systematically both in their initial and in-service training and thus equipped with competencies relevant to EDC/HRE. Moreover, Struthers (2016) argues for an improved teacher training on HRE accompanied by a cultural shift to the educational setting that favours the mainstreaming of HRE within educational policy.

However, the Greek state has not undertaken such initiatives, and most teachers remain in the dark about EDC/HRE. Those who learn about it and want to train more in this field have to do it by their own means and efforts. As such, all three teachers claimed they feel alone in confronting hate speech incidents in school. They feel they lack information and skills training on how to deal with hate speech phenomena. They did mention that they had received some training regarding bullying; however, it was considered insufficient taking into account the gravity of the situation. They would appreciate any training around hate speech as they realised it is a topic emerging more often in Greek schools today. Teachers recognised this training need they have and wished for more concerted efforts by their officials and mentors on how to deal with the topic of hate speech in their classes:

As educators, I don't think we are particularly aware of the subject or how to prevent and deal with it. Only recently, in the context of bullying and such cases observed, has there been an effort to mobilise around this issue. However, I think the training provided is inadequate for such a serious issue. [...] It requires adequate and continuous training, which is provided so far by educational institutions quite infrequently.

-Secondary School Teacher\_1

Well, as teachers, we are committed to operating within a framework. Thus, it would be good to have some general guidelines from the Ministry to provide some more focused trainings on how to deal with these crises and also inform us how we could record these incidents [of hate speech]

- Primary school teacher

Androusou and Iakovou (2020) attest to the difficulty and frustration Greek teachers experience due to the lack of relevant training regarding the education of vulnerable groups, combined with a lack of the necessary support and guidance. They allude to the Greek educational system for complicating the situation further for teachers, as it 'only addresses the ideal average student' (p.164) and favours mostly homogeneity in the student population.

Teachers have the potential to protect students from exclusion, radicalisation and violence if they themselves are well equipped to deal with controversial issues at school (Taylor et al., 2021), in a constructive way, making clear that discrimination is not tolerated at school. Working in this direction, education directed to include diversity is needed. Almost all respondents noticed the need for this type of education:

[...] the Greek school at the moment needs to work more on how to elaborate further to diversity, whichever form it takes.

-Ministry of Education Officer

When we teach the child [...] not to fear the unknown, the different, s/he will change attitude, and when they grow up, they will be cultivated and able to criticise and confront fabricated arguments. This type of active citizen with critical thought, democracies ought to shape within the education system.

- Directorate of Primary Education Officer

Ideally, the school could have been more open to diversity. Within classrooms as well. [...] I think we need to show that being different is not a negative thing.

-NGO Representative\_3

Since the majority of teachers do have the willingness to take steps against hate speech, the Ministry and other stakeholders ought to help them turn their goodwill into effective action. It is important that the high-ranking officials in the hierarchy of the Ministry of Education recognise the significance of teacher training on how to deal with hate speech. Consequently, they should invest in fostering skills like critical thinking and respect for human rights and diversity.

This was a gap in the school practice that my school intervention covered. I designed a series of workshops based on experiential learning and human rights education principles aimed at students. However, while doing so, the needs of teachers were also in my mind. My aim was to test in action and suggest good practices for teachers who care to deal with the topic of hate speech in their classrooms. All perspectives above were taken into consideration and included in the workshops. Namely, the creation of empathy and tolerance towards diversity, respect for human rights, also the sharpening of democratic skills like identifying the boundaries between the freedom of expression and discriminatory speech.

### **5.3.3 Need for more democratic schools**

An intervention -like the one I suggest- cannot work in isolation from the rest of the school. Ideally, it will be a part of a democratic school context with a respective school culture (Banks et al., 2005). For teachers to act as agents of change and multipliers of good practices regarding hate speech, they need democratic processes and the wider support of a democratic school climate:

The answer is cultivating a democratic climate in the school, not just financial management or practice[...] [The Ministry] needs to enable schools to self-organise, to give them tools for decentralisation. You cannot achieve this kind of management through law enforcement. You should do it through the cultivation of the respective climate.

-School Advisor

The European Commission's White Paper (COM(2001)681) discussing the quality and effectiveness of education systems in Europe raised concern since 2001 that schools and educational structures were insufficiently democratic and did not encourage participation. Moreover, it suggested that to create the right conditions to enable young people to participate fully in the life of democratic, open, and caring societies, renewal of the learning and teaching approaches is deemed necessary. The same Paper called for a need to change the nature of the student-teacher relationship and to encourage a learner-centred approach and more flexibility on behalf of the teachers in supporting the learning process.

The democratic governance of an educational institution plays a major role in human rights learning and its credibility (Backman & Trafford, 2007). Regarding democratic schools, reality seemed to be disappointing in Greece:

Children do not often have the opportunity to speak, to express their opinion, to express themselves, and this need is accumulated and, if not channelled properly, it could cause a problem.

-Non-Formal Education Trainer\_1

The school is a group of individuals; it does not act as a team to make decisions or to set goals or priorities. Just see the fight every year for the teachers' timetable ... I want my 21-24 hours gathered together to be able to leave immediately. So, there is no communication, and no collectivity in addressing school problems.

- School Advisor

On the one hand, the NFE Trainer observed the lack of self-expression in students. She believed students' voice is not a priority in class, nor is it encouraged. And she warned that this could lead to dangerous situations. On the other hand, the School Advisor identified a democratic deficit in the overall hierarchy of the school. In this particular quote, he pinpointed the problematic function of the Teachers' Association. Moreover, he underlined the catalytic role of the school headmaster in creating a democratic climate in schools since they are appointed -theoretically at least- based on their competence to use the skills and interests of teachers and mobilise them daily. Democratic relations ought to permeate the student-teacher relationship, as well as the relationships among teachers and headmasters, as well as senior services, such as the Ministry itself.

The Ministry of Education Officer, when we were discussing the existence of educational tools and their availability to teachers, she unwittingly confirmed this top-down structure of the educational system in Greece:

The Ministry is there [pointing upwards]. But [for the educational tools] to get to class, there are too many steps. We have the Ministry, the Institute of Educational Policy, we have Directorates, there are the school advisors, and there is the school. So how is it that from up there [the Ministry] where they offer you five things [how do they reach schools?], how does the school advisor eventually introduce them in the classroom?

-Ministry of Education Officer

By describing the hierarchy structure, the Officer intended to disclaim the Ministry's responsibility of how the tools eventually reach the school unit. More or less, she transferred the responsibility for this to the school advisors. This overall description of structure and hierarchy depicts the top-down approach prevalent in the educational structures of the country that also permeates the relations within the base of the educational structure, which is the school. That is usually managed top-down as well, with the school headmaster being at the top and students being at the bottom, and teachers in between.

Even though not all schools have achieved a clear democratic way of functioning, most respondents mentioned the need to render the school culture more democratic. There were bodies and organisations that sounded the alarm and advised the Ministry to put this a priority:

This year we emphasise in our texts and suggest to the Ministry and schools that a strong emphasis should be put on Democratic School. Through experiential learning, non-formal and informal education [...]

-NGO Representative\_1

Human rights education can help towards creating a more democratic atmosphere in schools:

I reckon, and I declare, that human rights education should permeate not only our curriculum –which it does- but everyday school reality [...]

-Ministry of Education Officer

Here the Ministry Officer acknowledged that education for human rights may be part of declarations. However, there is a long way till it becomes commonplace. There is a long way till learning and teaching about rights get systematically embedded in curriculum frameworks (DICE, 2010). Androusou and Iakovou (2020) suggest that training teachers is one of the biggest challenges of this century and highlight the need for new proposals and ideas. The intervention I devised and implemented was a part of this wider effort: to bring human rights education in Greek schools and create more democratic relations among students and between students and teachers.

## **CHAPTER 6: REALITIES OF REFUGEES IN GREECE**

### **6.1 Introduction to the chapter**

The findings of the initial study illustrated in the previous chapter informed my interest to focus on the social group of refugees as they were a hate speech target at that point in time in my school context, i.e., two primary schools in Athens where I worked as a teacher. After identifying the specific social group, I wished to better understand the realities refugees face in their everyday lives in Greece and record their perspectives. Therefore, I interviewed two small groups of refugees in February 2017 in Athens and gained insights regarding their living conditions, experiences with discrimination, and hopes they hold for the future. Moreover, I received some suggestions for the design of the school intervention that was to follow.

### **6.2 Perspectives of refugees in Greece**

In the previous chapter, I described the initial study I conducted to 'test the water' in a Greek school context regarding hate speech. One of the main findings was that hate speech is indeed an issue for many schools in Greece. However, each school has its own reality and possibly different groups vulnerable to hate speech. For instance, some school contexts may have Roma pupils that need support; other school contexts may have students with disabilities, and others may have issues with LGBTQ+ members.

This finding prompted me to identify a social group that was a potential target of hate speech in the context of my school. At that point in time, I was working as an English teacher at two primary schools in an area where a refugee camp had opened. There were mixed reactions towards refugees from the local community. I also noticed some adverse reactions among my pupils to the imminent possibility of refugee children joining their schools. So, I decided to focus on the social group of refugees and work with my students

on this topic. However, this led me to wish *to understand and explore issues that refugees face in their everyday lives* in Greece. I wanted to know what they go through and what their lives are like, especially at the point in time when Greece had just exited a severe financial crisis and was called to handle an unexpected influx of refugees. So far, I did not have immediate access to refugees.

I felt I should know more about refugees' realities before embarking on my teaching journey as this knowledge would help me clarify what Greek students need to know about refugees' varied experiences and perspectives to better understand them and therefore promote empathy towards this social group. Instead, I watched their stories and news broadcasted by mass media. Meeting some of them and talking with them would enable me to hear their experiences first-hand. Consequently, I would be able to set up an intervention designed on a more realistic understanding of this group's perspectives. Thus, I decided that the best way to find out what it is like to be a refugee in Greece was to meet them where they reside and try to hear their stories and experiences.

After a lot of effort, - discussed in Methodology Chapter, section 4.4.4 - eventually, I managed to talk with five refugees, three people from Syria, one man and two women, who had families with children. I met them in a hosting place in the centre of Athens. Moreover, I talked with two other male refugees, one from Mali and one from Palestine, who were residing in a refugee camp in the suburbs of Athens and were in Greece without any family.

Below follow the stories and inputs of the five participants under corresponding pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

### **6.2.1 Omar**

Omar was the first respondent in the group of Syrians to take the initiative and share his story with me.



He started his journey from Syria with his five children, three daughters aged 15, 16 and 17 and two sons aged 8 and 12. They travelled to Greece through Turkey using unsafe sea passage and eventually reached the island of Chios. They spent two months in a camp there.

Our kids were terrified spending two months there [on Chios Island camp]. Having fights all the time with the Afghanis. And when the kids were sleeping, out of a sudden, we would be fully terrified because you would hear out of a sudden: there is a fight between the Syrians and the Afghans, and now there is a kind of slaughtering like killing each other. We lived in a terrorised situation in the camps.

Once they got their IDs as asylum seekers on the island, they moved to Athens, where for the first two months, they had nowhere to stay, and he had to find the money and rent something privately so that his kids would have somewhere to sleep. This was a hard time for them, but afterwards, they managed to secure a place in a camp on the outskirts of Attica, where they would live for free. In the meantime, his wife had managed to find her way to Denmark and had applied for a family reunion. While they stayed there at the camp, their aim was to register their names with the UN for a family reunion. Once they got on that list, they were accepted to move and stay in central Athens with the hosting organisation, where I met them while waiting for their departure to Denmark for a family reunion.

Apart from the difficult living conditions in the camp, Omar also mentions how the unique construction of refugees' identities results in different needs and also different classifications on behalf of authorities, resulting in overlooking his family's needs sometimes:

There they were just paying attention and taking care of special cases differently. So, a pregnant woman, a disabled person, women with kids without a husband and so on, those were like some special cases

On the imminent departure of Omar's family to Denmark, he holds education very high as a priority and emphasises the importance of language acquisition in the new country which will host them:

We would learn the language first to be able to mix and integrate into society.

Moreover, he feels grateful for the chances his children will have for better education:

To me, it's wonderful that my kids will grow up and raise in another country where they will get to know a second and a third language, where they will get to know more technology, something I didn't learn, and I would not be able to afford them [...]

### **6.2.2 Maryam**

Maryam left her house in the war-torn town of Daraa and went to Damascus with her seven children, aged 16, 14, 11, 9, 5, 3 and 2. Then from there to Hama, where smugglers got her. They were dividing the areas between themselves, so they were moving Maryam and her children from one place to another and from one smuggling group to another, extracting a huge amount of money from her. In order to reach Turkey, they walked two days through the mountains. Her goal was to reach Greece and then reunite with her husband, who was in Germany.

The smugglers took everything I had on me, and my story of misery started with hunger, thirst not having something to drink, not having something to eat, and kids crying.

The Turkish smugglers aimed to take them to Izmir so they could take the sea road towards Greece. However, Turkish police caught them on the way, and because they had no papers, they didn't allow them to continue. They made them step inside a bus to go back. However, the bus driver asked for money from her for the tickets while she didn't have a penny in her pocket. She felt desperate, and she and her children all started to cry. Eventually, one of the Syrian people who were inside the bus showed her some compassion and offered to pay for the tickets for her and her children. That is how she managed to return where she was handed again to the same smugglers. The following day she ventured again with the same smugglers to cross the area avoiding the army and police checking areas, and so they continued. Things worked out, and she reached Izmir. They spent ten days there and eventually got through the sea to Chios Island.

A week after reaching Chios Island, they departed for Athens. They travelled by boat and reached the harbour of Piraeus. There they had to stay in tents on the harbour. Her suffering started once again:

There [in the harbour area of Piraeus], we stayed in a tent, in tents, and then the suffering started. Those are like small tents, I have seven kids. No food! No money! It's so hard to live there; the conditions are miserable and full of torture. Conflicts rising. They used to drink next to me in the tents, the whole-time alcohol, and drugs. So, every day I suffered, and every day passed by as it was a whole, long year. Every day for me felt like a year.

After spending four months in that harbour area in a tent, she was transferred to another place four hours away from Athens. She was hosted in a two-room apartment by the beach but had to share the place with her seven children and one more family. Moreover, it was a remote place with no facilities:

The place had no medications, no doctors, no healthcare. [...] It was a disconnected area that was totally in the mid of nowhere, disconnected from any kind of human beings and living things. Water everywhere around us...

She wanted to return to Athens to seek a better situation for her family. So, she returned to Athens again, and she was put again in those harbour tents where she was at the beginning. And she suffered all over again. It was then that she decided to actively seek a better future for herself and her children.

So, I started going around again with my sons. Searching for organisations, asking camps, knocking on doors, nobody welcomed us, nobody opened the door for us

Then she found out about a camp where the conditions were better. However, admission was not allowed without having a stamp from the camp. She got mentally very tired, and her kids were getting sick. She knew that if she entered that camp, she would have the chance to officially register her family and start receiving some kind of help.

I thought 'need is the mother of invention'. I prepared fake papers and tried to get in. They allowed me. They didn't realise it was fake.

Once in the camp, she was given yet another tent for her family to stay in. She spent twenty more days in that tent. Then she tried to get her name registered officially on their computer systems, so they would give her a caravan instead of a tent to stay. This eventually worked out and was able to move her family from a tent to a caravan (container). Even though she was in the country for so long and passed through several places, she only managed to get documented in that last camp. After getting officially documented, she got called for an interview in October of that year, but she happened to be very ill on the day of the interview. This was a lucky coincidence, in a way. At the

interview, she was informed that since her aim was to relocate and have a family reunion, the camp could not host her, so she had to evacuate. However, the lady officer, seeing her difficult situation, being ill and with seven children, classified her as a special case and tried to find her an alternative accommodation to live. That is how they moved to that hosting organisation in central Athens where I met her, and she said she 'finally kind of felt ok again'.

Maryam, like Omar, held education in high esteem and longed for her children to have good educational prospects ahead of them:

If there was no war in Syria, education would be a holy thing, a great thing [...] So, I hope that I could be able to raise my kids that way that they would love school and they would go and take education.

### **6.2.3 Amina**

Amina is a Kurd from Syria. She lived in Ghouta before the war. But when the war started, she lost her father, and she, her husband and her small child had to run to escape. They went to Kobani, where they originally came from. They stayed there for one and a half years until Daesh also attacked them there in Kobani:

On a night with no moonlight, they just attacked the area...we felt we heard... suddenly we just heard the sound of the bombs, the rockets and bombs.

Eventually, she had to flee Kobani too with her small family. The whole area of Kobani was attacked, and people from around three hundred villages suddenly were running away and trying to escape towards the Turkish borders. She recalls how on the one hand, it was them and the bombs and on the other hand, the Turkish governments that wouldn't open the borders for them to pass through. She witnessed atrocities before her eyes:

In front of our eyes, in front of our kids' eyes and lots of things happened people were killed. People died, people were cut in half, and lots of things happened that we saw in front of our eyes on those two days.

The Turkish government would line up tanks and guns on the borders, as if 'challenging them to face their destiny'. She claimed that the Turks do not like the Kurds, and that is why they would not let them leave Syria. She spent two days trapped on the borders with no food to eat and no place to sleep. At the time, she was seven- months pregnant. All the people gathered, along with the children, would sleep on the ground. After two days, the Turkish authorities decided to open their borders. However, there was one condition, only humans could pass, and they had to leave all their belongings, vehicles, animals and personal belongings behind. Thus, they had to leave everything behind. They lost everything at that border crossing.

In Turkey, she gave birth to her second child. She spent a year there and hoped the situation would work out for her, and she would manage to stay there, but the lack of support and rising costs made her want to leave the country. She had thoughts of returning to Kobani, where she still had a house and a car there. However, she found out that the house was destroyed, the car was stolen, and there was nothing left for them there. And that is why they decided to keep on their journey towards Europe. First, they went to Izmir and stayed there for a month until the smugglers could arrange for them to cross to Greece using light floating boats. After their perilous trip, they reached Chios Island and were admitted to a military-controlled camp. It was herself, her husband and two kids. When they arrived there, they were shocked by the living conditions they were confronted with. They were put with sixteen other people in one room, where they spent eight months.

Once they landed on Chios Island, the authorities took their fingerprints and followed the asylum-seeking process, However, after six months, they gave them a negative decision saying they didn't have the right to move to any other country because they had reached Greece after the 20th of March 2016. Instead, they had to be returned to Turkey (see more on the EU-Turkey Agreement in the Introduction).

After this news, she went to a lawyer to fight in court against that decision. Luckily, in that period, she was pregnant with her third child, and when she showed proof of this to her

lawyer, she informed them they could be included under a special protection scheme and was eventually allowed to stay in Greece. After this was settled, they got their refugee IDs. However, due to the Greek-Turkish agreement, they were not entitled to accommodation. Again, due to her pregnancy, she was dealt with as a special case and was sent with her family to be hosted at the organisation's place in central Athens, where I met her.

As Amina knows she is not permitted to other European countries, she was willing to invest in her integration into the new society:

I need a Greek teacher because I want to stay here.

She knows that investing in learning the local language is a good start which will enable her in other sectors as well, like employability, socialising and others, she also puts education as a high priority for her children too:

It makes me seriously happy because my kids are still very young [...] and they will start learning another language, getting the education [...] there is nothing better at all and more important than education.

#### **6.2.4 Abbas**

Abbas is from Palestine. He passed through Lebanon and Turkey before reaching the Greek border island of Lesbos. He was not married and didn't have kids. He had been in Greece for a year and three months when I met him. He seemed to enjoy life in Greece, and he shared his intention to stay in the country.

Though he is a passport holder, he still has a long bureaucratic process to go through in order to be acknowledged as a refugee:

But they don't reach a decision. I'm going to a second interview, the next interview will be in one week, to get papers here

He didn't seem to have faced problems with the local community. He mentioned having faced discrimination only outside Greece, most notably during his stay in a camp in Lebanon. He seemed to have built a social life here. He was able to move in and out of camp, upon free will. That gave him the opportunity to maintain friendships, meet them for meals and exchange visits.

He found that Greeks are very friendly towards Palestinians. He compares this with the attitude he received in Denmark when he tried living there for two months. He mentioned that the fact that he was from Palestine and speaking English, not Danish, seemed to be a problem there, which eventually led him to return to Greece.

As a young man struggling for a better future for himself, he tried once to cross the borders with Northern Macedonia, but authorities wouldn't allow him to pass because he was not from Syria. This distinction made him feel frustrated. He complained that Palestine has been war-torn for decades, but Greece and Europe pay attention to Syrians who have been at war for the past five years. He has faced this distinction again when searching for accommodation:

But now it's Syria, it's all about Syria [...] They [authorities] help them, give them everything, give them a home. [...] I told them I want a home; I don't like to stay here [in the camp] like an animal. Please give me. You give everybody a home, but we need for Palestinians too. They Say: No, just for Syrians. It's ok but for Syrians.

### **6.2.5 Mabruk**

Mabruk came from Mali. He had been in Greece for one year and two months. He was single with no kids. He travelled through different countries before reaching Greece, including Algeria. He reached Greece through Turkey by air. In Turkey, he mentioned having experienced intense racism due to his skin colour:

Anywhere we have racism if you go. And in my country also. But in Turkey, I think it's more for us the Black.

He believed Greeks were warm people behaving well to refugees. He didn't have any problems so far, even though he has some friends who have been victims of racist

attacks. He acknowledges there are bad and good people everywhere. However, he felt lucky he had met only good-hearted people.

He left his country for fear of prosecution. He fled a war. He misses his country, but for the safety of his life, he doesn't see himself returning.

We don't come to Europe because it is better than our country. If for all of us, it's better to leave in your country, it's because you are free in your country. [...] If I were safe in my country, I would never come to Europe or any other country.

However, he notes that due to his nationality, he finds it difficult to get acknowledged as a refugee:

I can never go back to my country because I left a war. And I come here, it is not war, but it is more than war because everything is difficult for me because I come from Mali.

When asked about misconceptions the world or Europe might have for refugees, he replied that Europe puts a great emphasis on nationality. And that can prove a problem, especially when they are differentiated from Syrians. He complements with complaint:

If you come from Syria, you have everything. Everything will be okay for you!

He wishes to remain in Greece and makes a good effort to integrate through education. He attended school for the Greek language. He even tried speaking to the minister of Education about his case. He finished secondary school in his country and started University before leaving. His dream is to become a lawyer. However, he seems disappointed and broken by Greek bureaucracy:

I started my University in my country, but here I am doing my best to make my dream be reality. But I couldn't find a solution. [...] they make a promise to me: Ok we will see, we will see now.[...] I asked him [an official] why it's very difficult for us, I meant Black African people, to get Asylum here in Greece. Because first you have to be legal [...] and that is the big problem for us.

Being in this vague situation with his papers, he finds it difficult to commit fully to the new country, learn the new language and move forward.

I really want to study again. Because I want to make my dream come true one day, but sometimes I think Greece is impossible...really impossible.



## 6.3 Insights gained

### 6.3.1 Living conditions

The hard living conditions refugee children grow up in are directly related to the obstacles they need to overcome in order to have successful school attendance and social integration overall (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Skleparis, 2017). Therefore, the living conditions of the adult refugees I interviewed was one of the codes I generated during the data analysis, as inevitably they affect children as well.

At the beginning of 2016, Greece was called to handle the first big influx of refugees. Refugee reception facilities accumulated a much bigger population than they could serve. As a result, they offered appalling living conditions resembling large open-air prisons (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019; Greek Council for Refugees, 2019).

Though in later years, relocation schemes were put in place to give some people a chance to live in the urban fabric around Greece, the majority of refugees has passed through or still live at refugee camps. The conditions in the camps were questionable, with international organisations and media reprimanding Greece for trapping thousands of men, women and children in overcrowded, unsafe and degrading conditions (Kotsoni, 2016; Markantonatou et al., 2017).

The three Syrians I talked to all spent some time living in refugee camps before arriving at the hosting place in Athens, where I met them. Moreover, the participants from Mali and Palestine were already residing in a refugee camp at the time of the interviews. They all discussed how the living conditions in the camps were far from ideal and how this had a negative impact on their everyday lives (Skleparis, 2017; Canning, 2019).

During the great influx of refugees and migrants in Greece, many people were packed together, and access to the minimum living standards was not obvious. Maryam discusses how she couldn't find food or money to provide for her seven children at first. She had to spend long days and nights stranded and eventually forge papers to be

allowed access to a better place for her family. This took a toll and her mental health and probably had an impact on her children as well (Fazel et al., 2012).

After securing access to basic facilities for survival, like food and running water, more problems appear. People in camps usually have to share spaces and coexist with others without having a say in them. This is disempowering, especially when it continues for months and years, as the applications for asylum are notoriously slow. Fazel et al. (2012) emphasise the need to develop a rapid response to asylum claims to protect the mental health of refugees.

Moreover, people from different ethnicities are gathered together in camps, and sometimes conflicts tend to arise. This can partially be explained based on the accounts of the two men residing in the camp that there is a portion of refugees, including them, that experience feelings of frustration due to priority being directed to Syrians. These conflicts, for whatever reason they arise, are exacerbated by the Greek authorities' inability or indifference to tackle them unless the situation is aggravated. Such conflicts create a hard and stressful environment both for adults and children.

As mentioned before, the Greek state has made efforts through the years to relocate some of the people in the camps to the cities. However, these people often do not receive the support they need for their new beginning. As in Maryam's case, after the initial relief of finding a refuge and a safer place to reside, it usually follows the disappointment of not having a choice over their life. Many lives are halted till their case is examined, and in the meantime, some people get mentally challenged in the process.

Maryam narrated how the effort on the side of the Greek authorities to relocate her outside a camp brought about negative results. She was put with her children in a seemingly safer place. However, she had to squeeze in two rooms with her seven children and one more family. Moreover, it was far from nearby city centres, with no doctors. At the same time, this was a seaside place which triggered her fear of water and the traumatic experience of their perilous voyage through the sea. Something that for a Greek or a European citizen

most probably will denote relaxation and privilege, i.e., to live in a seaside place, for a refugee might be a difficult experience challenging their integration into the new society. It is no wonder this woman still complained and wanted a better life for herself and her children, even though, typically she was offered better living conditions than those in a camp. Fazel et al. (2012) suggest that among the risk factors damaging mental health are several changes of residence in the host country.

From the above, we conclude that hospitality works when it is offered in a way that respects the beneficiary's needs. However, the Greek state, through the years of refugee influx, has stripped the privilege of agency of the beneficiary and attributes it solely to the host (Rozakou, 2012). This attitude escalated to the inauguration in the winter of 2021 of the first closed centres (prison-like) for refugees on Greek border islands under the auspices of the EU Commissioner for Promoting our European Way of Life.

The lower living standards and territorial segregation of refugees add to their obstacles to integrating into Greek and European society (Vergou, 2019). Most importantly, the difficult living conditions aggravate their physical and mental health (Kotsoni, 2016). That is why the living conditions of refugees were one parameter we explored with my students during the school workshops. I believed it would help shed some light on why those people may not be able to keep up with the standards of school participation, job market or self-presentation as they are expected by the hosting society. My students' understanding of refugees' experiences would increase their empathy towards them and invite a critical reflection on misconceptions about them.

### **6.3.2 Experiences with discrimination**

Another code I generated during the analysis of the data was the issue of discrimination, as it is a trait directly related to hate speech.

Even though all participants mentioned having experienced discrimination before arriving in Greece, during their journey and passage from other countries, they all kept a neutral

or even friendly stance towards the Greeks. For instance, Abbas and Mabruk reported having faced bad behaviour before arriving in Greece, Algeria (Mabruk) and Lebanon and Turkey (Abbas) which were transit countries on their journey to Europe. At the same time, they did not appear to have faced discrimination in Greece or chose not to talk about it. This may be partly explained by the fact that both have long settled here and have made Greek friends. Malhi and Boon (2007) have recorded similar denial or minimisation of their participants' own experiences with racism. They used the notion of covert 'democratic' racism to explain that racial minority groups in their research utilised the same discourses used by the dominant group to dismiss or erase racism. They also warn that this denial contributes to systemic inequalities remaining unchallenged.

The reason they might not want to talk negatively about Greeks - even though ill behaviour on their part has been mentioned elsewhere in our discussions - can be explained. On the one hand, they were participating in a discussion orchestrated by a Greek, and possibly they did not want to offend me. On the other hand, they find themselves in this new place, the country of Greece and consequently the land of Europe, where they try to make a new beginning in their lives, and they need to feel welcomed; they possibly try their best to 'fit in' and integrate.

Regarding their experiences with discrimination, participants talked about covert forms of discrimination, rather than overt ones (Trepagnier, 2011). A 'distance' was recorded by the Greek population towards the refugees. They were careful not to label Greeks as 'racists'. Rather they talked about Greeks 'keeping distance':

It's just a minority, a smaller part of people, when they realise we are Syrians, they keep their distance, even in the buses they keep distance.

Maryam

The aforementioned 'distance' was mainly attributed to the unfriendly way the bureaucratic system works and partly to the ignorance of the general public towards refugees. They were aware that some people around them held the misbelief of refugees being 'dirty' and carriers of diseases.

This is the common idea we spoke about, generalising that they [Greeks] are afraid of diseases. What if refugees didn't have doctors, maybe they don't know how to use hygiene and secure themselves. [...] Now that we are here, we get the vaccination. But those are in the centres [refugee camps] and the people [Greeks] do not all know that we have a vaccination.

Omar

I have a friend, she was born here, she is an Egyptian, and she told me it's not because of the scarf [that Greeks keep distance], but they are afraid of sickness, and diseases so this is why they keep distance

Maryam

However, the very last quote came out of a dispute the participants had about whether Greeks keep their distance from them due to their religion or whether they are distant due to fear of diseases. The man claimed that Greeks are not familiar with Islam and when they see Muslim women wearing a headscarf, they don't want to approach them. However, the woman wearing a headscarf supported that people would keep their distance mainly because she is a refugee and a foreigner – with the myths that brings- and not a Muslim. Her view here shows how the different dimensions of discrimination are interwoven and that Muslim refugee women who wear the hijab can sense discrimination in a very different way to non- hijab wearing counterparts (Paz & Kook, 2021).

The contrasting views expressed here between the participants are the wealth of having a group interview (Carson et al., 2001). Overall, it was noted that refugees feel discriminated against by a part of the Greek society due to their religion and due to some stereotypes such as that they carry diseases and they are dirty.

The aid worker also shed some light on the distance Greeks keep from refugees and foreigners and also talked about an underlying fear:

The most frequent thing the people [that I have sessions with within my work] is fear. What they usually mention is that it is as if Greeks are afraid of them in some way. [...] For example, they may not touch the other person. For instance, if they happen to be seated side by side on the bus, they will not touch them, which is what people [refugees] can sense. It is not that they do not understand it.

Aid Worker in Athens

The aid worker also brought up the covert form of racism refugees face:

Most of the times it is not a direct assault. But it can manifest this way: I fear you; therefore, I keep my distance. Or I underestimate you in how I talk to you by being rude. However, I will not directly say: 'Get out of here, go back to your country.'

Aid Worker in Athens

In this quote, she also alludes to the discrimination and difficulties refugees face when dealing with the Greek state, especially public services and even state hospitals. This is a typical example of aversive racism where due to whites' – usually well-educated - denial of personal prejudice, the unconscious bias and negative feelings towards other ethnic and racial groups manifest in a more indirect and subtle way, like a persistent avoidance of interaction (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

Moreover, Mabruk and Abbas attest to the struggles, and possibly discrimination from their point of view. They both expressed that the Greek state seems to overlook other nationalities and prioritise Syrians in issuing papers, accommodation and providing access to other countries.

I think for me Europe has the difference between the Nationality. If you come from Syria ... everything will be okay for you! [...] I don't have any problem with any nationality. I like all nationalities because, for me, we are all brothers, we are the same. I don't care about nationalities, I don't care about the colour of skin. [...] But Europe does think about that. They differentiate between the nationalities. That is the big problem.

Mabruk

Both Abbas and Mabruk find themselves in a refugee camp for a prolonged period, and their asylum applications are delayed infinitely. On top of that, they face legal issues due to Greece being notoriously slow at issuing or renewing legal documents. Rozakou (2012) suggests that the Greek state follows "a politics of invisibility" towards refugees and asylum seekers, which is reflected in various obstacles, delays and violations during the asylum process (Rozakou, 2012).

Moreover, Mabruk points out the extra level of discrimination against immigrants / refugees from Africa, due to the colour of their skin, among other factors (Saksena & McMorrow, 2021). This is a systemic failure that many organisations for human rights

have observed and condemned. The influx of refugees from Syria following the war that tore the country apart led the Greek authorities to prioritise them in the asylum process. Moreover, the media coverage led this picture of war-torn Syrians fleeing their country to be more prominent. Even though that is the case, other places on the planet are war-torn for years and decades without receiving equal media coverage, especially when these countries are located on the African continent.

Based on these lived experiences that refugees shared with me, which I was also able to identify within the existing literature, I designed an intervention that had exactly this aim: to sensitise the general public (in my case, the students of my class) about the refugee experience and restore their human aspect looking beyond the surface. Moreover, I included a particular session in the intervention that was devoted to myth-busting about refugees, where students had the chance to explore possible concerns about refugees' health status and challenge myths that associate refugees with criminality and economic dependency on the state (Arnot and Pinson, 2005). This perspective was explored with my students through the second part of the Fifth and Tenth Workshop of the intervention (see more in Chapter 7). Hope was that eventually, the aforementioned 'distance' would gradually reduce between the native population and the newly arriving foreigners seeking refuge in the country.

### **6.3.3 Multiple identities of refugees**

In the West, people often construct a bipolar narrative related to refugees (Arnot et al., 2009). Discourses in the field of education, as well as the media, often contribute to the formation of an us-and-them mentality by idealising one's own group and demonising the other, thus creating resentment and hatred towards others (Zembylas, 2015). Particularly, asylum seekers are found to be one of the most reviled groups in society, alongside Roma people (Valentine and McDonald 2004). Moreover, we treat them either as potentially threatening fanatics whose main purpose is to harm us and our values or as vulnerable, weak refugees 'in need of being helped' (Cabot, 2014, p. 145). This construct serves

populist purposes and weakens the people seeking asylum. However, Fazel et al. (2012) suggest that maintaining one's own sense of identity is protective of mental health and could contribute to more successful social integration. Indeed, a strong message from the refugees I conversed with was that they don't want the generic term 'refugee' to overshadow their individual and multiple identities.

The people I met are mothers and fathers, spouses and/or siblings. One was a doctor, another was a businesswoman. One was pregnant. Another was an atheist. Some are Caucasians, others are Africans. As Omar points out:

They say in Arabic: 'our fingers in our hand are not all the same'.

Omar

There is a minority of refugees who is creating problems and having bad behaviour (...) but all refugees are not the same. Some of them are also well educated, some of them are very open-minded, some of them are here to have a safe life (...)

Amina

Here Amina also hints at refugees being misunderstood as people prone to violence and criminality, which she rushes to clarify is not the case. Abbas also discusses the myth of criminality and wonders why he would risk his life and make this perilous journey if his aim was to harm others:

They just want to see the life, a better life [...] If I want to do something bad, I stay in my country, why pay money and come here? Maybe I will die in Turkey, in the street, maybe not... I don't know. [...] Not all fingers are the same, in Palestine, you can find bad people, good people...

Abbas

This aligns with stereotypical xenophobic narratives that blame refugees for causing a rise in crime in host societies, posing a threat to public health and contributing to job loss for the native population (Arnot and Pinson, 2005, Markantonatou et al., 2017). Migrants and asylum seekers suffer from poor representation in the media that spread sweeping generalisations like "Immigrants cause an increase in crime" or "Immigrant workers take our jobs" (Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe, 2011, p. 13-15). Such narratives serve to deepen the dichotomy between them and us, alienating further 'the other'.



The unique construction of refugees' identities results in different needs and different classifications on behalf of authorities:

There they were just paying attention and taking care of special cases differently. So, a pregnant woman, a disabled person, women with kids without a husband and so on, those were like some special cases.

Omar

Here the man from Syria voices his concern that although special cases were taken care of, he felt left behind as his needs were prioritised as 'secondary', even though he also had to cater for his five children.

The aid worker also added an extra viewing of the existence of multiple identities: they might result in multiple discriminations. In the case of Mabruk, he faced difficulties due to his nationality and skin colour. She also added another parameter suggesting that from different identities, different needs and problems arise. Moreover, these identities could be the reason someone may suffer from hate speech:

Many times we have intense cases with refugees who are also homosexuals, for instance. They face racist speech from everywhere, both from the locals and their compatriots, from everywhere.

Aid Worker in Athens

As the findings here show, the term 'refugee' can be misleading for covering up many other -equally important- identities people possess. Arnot et al. (2009) remind us that "[r]efugees commonly have just one remaining identity – that of being stateless and statusless" (p.249). However, it is important to keep in mind these other identities as well because otherwise, it's easy to overlook further existing needs these people might have. Frequently, failing to acknowledge multiple identities leads to treating groups of people homogenously. That does not bring about equity, rather it deepens already existing inequalities (Young, 1994, pp 162-168; Allingham, 2021). Even worse, using a single term to characterise a large crowd as one thing can easily serve the purpose of instrumentation used by populists to promote their agenda of 'victim' refugees or 'vile' refugees. Moreover, putting diverse people in one bag can lead to misconceptions. For instance, if one characteristic is attributed to some of them, i.e., being prone to criminality, this can easier be transferred to the whole group.

On a self-reflective note, this exposure and immediate contact with refugees also helped me remember that they are not all from Syria. And certainly, meeting the refugee from an African country encouraged me to widen my perspective as to the origin and characteristics these people might have. I realised that if I had been susceptible to the stereotypical narration projected by the mass media about the main image refugees are attributed to (impoverished Syrians coming out of half-sunk boats crying out for help), then I should certainly work with my students to reveal the multiple identities these people bear and not stick to the levelling image of the 'abject' refugee (Canning, 2019); the demonisation of the destitute 'scrounger' (Fekete, 2018). This eventually led to my intervention, not limiting only to the plights these people face but adding more perspectives.

All this valuable information gathered from these conversations was added to the school intervention. Namely, the fact that being a 'refugee' is not the only reason one is vulnerable and in need of protection. This is why I decided to include stories of schoolchildren, as well as mothers and men so that they get exposed to different narratives and circumstances of people's lives. Seeing refugee children for who they are, not only as victims but also as schoolmates who enrich the school community will make them more visible and accepted (Androusou and Iakovou, 2020), detaching from them the identity of 'the other' (UNESCO, 2007).

### **6.3.4 Hopes for better education**

The people I talked with were generous with me while sharing their stories. They let me know of hardships they went through; they shared problems they faced during their journey to reach Greece but also challenges they still faced while in Greece. Sometimes, the stories I heard were so personal and traumatic that they seemed unbelievable to the ears of a Greek who has never been really exposed to perilous situations. For instance, I still remember with awe Amina narrating her escaping from Kobani, passing through dead

bodies torn in half. And indeed, the 'trauma' is one element of what characterises refugees, others to a greater extent and others to a lesser extent. However, this trauma and human pain coexist with hopes for the future and the desire to experience better days ahead.

They express their wishes both for themselves and their children. On an individual level, they aspire to live a better life than the one they left behind:

I would like to be anywhere better for me. I just want to be in my life, to save my life. And I want to stay here in Greece because in my dream I want to be a lawyer one day, I want to study again [...]

Mabruk

But we don't care about the money, we want a new life, we want to forget our [old] life.

Abbas

They have fresh memories from their struggle for survival. So, first and foremost, they prioritise their right to live, and their agony to survive. Once this is achieved, they start dreaming of brighter futures. Dreams for a better future usually go hand in hand with better education. A good education will equip them to get a decent job and become more active as citizens. In an assessment in Greece by international organisations, one in three refugee parents interviewed reported that education was the key reason for leaving for Europe and 77% of children mentioned going to school as one of their main priorities (UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, 2019; UNHCR, 2020).

All refugees I interviewed refer a lot to education as they know it can help them climb up the social ladder and claim a more powerful presence in the host society. They acknowledge that the first step for that is learning the Greek language, even though it is a difficult language to learn:

And sometimes I want to learn the Greek language. I want to do my best. If I think about it, I feel it is important.

Mabruk

Moreover, education can help them with employability. Unfortunately, the Greek market is fraught with unemployment and has recorded significant regression in labour matters over the last decade. Therefore, it is doubly difficult for refugees to find a work post.

Connor (2010) discusses a 'gap' between refugees and other immigrants regarding employment and wages. Refugees tend to be even more disadvantaged in finding jobs, and even when compared with migrants of similar characteristics, they are less likely to be preferred for employment (Fasani et al., 2022).

However, finding a job is important to them. They know it will help them sustain themselves and integrate smoother into society. This contradicts the myth propagated by refugee haters that foreigners tend to rely on benefits and get lazy not trying to find work. Therefore, I made sure to include in the school intervention an opportunity where my students would hear the other side of the story of this widespread myth and explore possible obstacles refugees face when they try to access the job market of the host society.

As far as children are concerned, a common ambition for the three Syrian parents was to see their children grow and prosper. That is why they all put education as a high priority. Access to education is a strong motive for parents to venture the perilous trip with their children, as they know it can be a vehicle for social accession and thus have realistic hopes for a better future.

They talk about how living in another country favours the learning of more languages – especially the host country's language(s). Most refugees seem to prioritise learning the English language and information technology (IT) as they are deemed key skills for navigating European countries and markets. Even though they all reside in Greece now, some of them plan to relocate to northern European countries. That is why they also express their wish to be helped with language lessons for the countries they will travel to and live in next.

Above all, access to education for refugee children is a right they have. Providing access to education for these children is an obligation for all European countries (ECHR, Protocol, Article 2), including Greece, which they have signed for and vouched to safeguard.

When refugee children are included in the educational process of the host country, one more advantage arises:

Children somehow become a means of integration, in a way. Because children will speak the [local] language first, they will come in contact with other moms. Through that, they will be invited in some homes. It's not the most common, but it does happen.

Aid Worker in Athens

Refugee children have the potential to become the link between their families and the new community. Learning the language of the new country, and interacting with the children from the local community, make them communicant with the new culture into which they are called to integrate. Moreover, involving parents in the educational process of their children can empower them and help them feel a little closer to the new setting they are expected to adapt to (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Androusou & Iakovou, 2020).

In the school intervention, I purposefully included a story of a refugee mother discussing her efforts and agonies to provide a good education for her children. This way, my students would get to hear some new information about the families of their peer refugee students and perhaps realise that refugee parents share common values with their own parents, like appreciating the good of education.

Moreover, I employed an activity in Workshop 10 (see Chapter 7) where I used an example familiar to students and tried to reverse the terms for them. I used a misconception regarding Greeks being referred to as 'PIGS' by other European peers during the years of fiscal crisis. This struck a chord with my students, sparked some heated debates, and eventually facilitated the process of promoting empathy with outgroups.

### 6.3.5 Suggestions for the design of the school intervention

I considered it crucial for the design of my intervention to have some input on behalf of the group that it aims to sensitise about. Therefore, the refugees' advice on elements they believe I should include in the school intervention was crucial. At first, both groups appeared hesitant to give me any advice. They seemed like having no concrete suggestions to make. This initial hesitation was possibly owed to their own previous limited educational experiences. However, after spending some time contemplating the question and hearing the comments of each other, they would all add a few suggestions to the discussion (Kvale, 2007).

The most common reference was the need to involve all the teachers and the administration of the school to help existing students accept and welcome newcomers. They pointed out how important it is for the whole school -from administration to teachers to students - to be open and supportive towards their children to feel accepted and welcomed. This is in line with the 'whole school approach' that literature also suggests as good practice (UNESCO, 2007; Brett et al., 2009; Androusou and Iakovou, 2020), especially when it comes to tackling issues like discrimination or bullying. It is significant to note how this comes intuitively out of people who have limited knowledge in educational matters but have first-hand experience of the need to be accepted and integrated.

At the same time, some participants call for equal opportunities among Greek and refugee students:

If the administration will give a chance to this child, to this student, to this refugee, if they are treated the same [...] to the Greek student or child at school, if they will get all the same chances, all the same rights, for sure they would become more or less one, and then they will get mixed together in the class.

Maryam

Here they express their need for access to equal rights and opportunities as the local population. They belong, after all, to a vulnerable group that is very likely to be deprived of basic human rights and enjoy far fewer opportunities compared to the citizens of the country they are hosted. At the same time, care should be given to equity, as well.

Refugee students cannot be 'treated the same' as Greek students. Special measures need to be taken to help them adjust to Greek reality, considering their previous experiences, possible shortages and additional needs so that they are supported accordingly. This was pointed out during our workshops with students. We tried to understand where refugee students come from, what conditions they face to reach school, how their everyday lives are different to ours -even though we all lived technically in the same city back then- and how that could impact their behaviour or progress at school.

In addition, there were some suggestions about the actual content of the teaching that should not be neglected in the school intervention. They suggested I prioritise our common humanity in my teachings (Zembylas, 2015), focus on common human values that unite us and disregard other parameters that may create false divisions.

Teach them to respect all the people, respect all the nationalities, not care about Muslims, this ... just forget something... [...] you just tell them: ok! It's all brothers... [...] There is no colour-black, colour-white... to forget that... [...] black, white this makes war and people kill... [...] Love each other.

Mabruk

Mabruk suggests here that respect and equity should be at the core of my teaching. He suggested that traits like race and nationality that create division should be put aside. Instead, highlight things we have in common and unite us as the ultimate way to bring about peaceful co-existence. Indeed, the intervention had a central aim to trace things the local and the host populations have in common. Probe students to identify common things on an abstract level, such as rights, but also on a more concrete level, such as favourite games and sports. At the same time, it was not sought to hide the differences, rather than learn to acknowledge and respect them.

Another topic that came up was the importance of mixing and co-existence between local and refugee students:

If the school, the administration, and the teachers support that kind of integration and getting students together in the classes, the other students would accept that and this way, we would avoid some of them facing differentiation or racism in class.

Amina

It is argued here that ethnic mixing provides better chances of familiarising one group with the other. Apart from that, one can see their fear of segregation. They voice their concern about keeping their children in different spaces from other students or even out of school altogether. Some of the participants already had such experiences with their own children. As Vergou (2019) warns, practices such as placing refugee children in non-mixed classes without locals or offering school provisions inside the refugee camp lead to de facto school segregation. Therefore, it is a legitimate concern they have for their children being segregated. This request of theirs resonates with literature which argues that ethnically mixed classrooms, with a medium proportion of the outgroup population, foster more inclusive outgroup attitudes among the native students (Janmaat, 2014).

Their suggestion for creating opportunities for children to co-exist and interact is also supported by the literature and advocated by the Contact Theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp's, 2006). Contact Theory has shown that under certain circumstances, this can lead to a more harmonious co-existence between the dominant and the minority group. The refugee parents' fear of their children being segregated made me reaffirm my intention to include in the intervention an opportunity for the two student populations to meet. Knowing that the current status was in the form of segregation, i.e., refugee students attending a different school at different hours than my students, making it even more vital to include the meeting opportunity. Therefore, after the workshops, I arranged a communication between the refugee students from the afternoon -refugee only- school in our neighbourhood. I believed this would offer some kind of bridging between the populations of the morning and the afternoon schools; two student populations which normally do not meet or interact with each other. This way, the refugee students would get some kind of connection with the morning school, and my students would learn more about the existence of afternoon schools and perhaps ponder on their utility to end this school segregation which follows the territorial isolation of refugees (Vergou, 2019).

The aid worker added one more perspective to the way I should handle the management of the school intervention:



I think the challenge is not to say: “It is forbidden to say to the other child that you are- I don’t know what- a Muslim...”. The challenge is finding a way for that child to know the other better. For me, the key is exposure and knowledge.

Aid Worker in Athens

In this advice, she summarises the importance of exposure to other groups to gain direct knowledge of the ‘other’ (in line again with Contact Theory). Moreover, she points out that it is vain to point fingers at students and talk about what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. The most effective way, she proposes, is to get to know the other side. This is a great challenge in itself. And my school intervention aimed at this exactly, to facilitate the meeting and knowing of the other side. I tried to avoid coercion to ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ produced knowledge. Instead, I created opportunities for knowledge discovery, exposed my students to new input and allowed them to reach their own conclusions.

In conclusion, the group interviews with refugees provided me with a wealth of information and deeper insight into the lives and realities of refugees. This gave me greater confidence to design the part of the school intervention relevant to the refugee topic and incorporate some of that new knowledge in the design of the school intervention. Moreover, it helped me handle more confidently and fruitfully the discussions that followed in class with the students about certain aspects of this topic that otherwise, I might have been unable to tackle. At all stages, my aim was the awakening of empathy by providing chances for my students to know a bit better the realities of the other side, as well as get exposure to the ‘other’.

## **CHAPTER 7: THE SCHOOL INTERVENTION**

### **7.1 Introduction to the chapter**

The previous two chapters paved the way for the school intervention, which is the main topic of the current chapter and attempts to address the remaining two of my research questions. That is, identify successful EDC/HRE teaching practices for raising awareness about hate speech and the extent that is possible to help primary school students develop empathy towards refugees. This chapter describes step by step the structure of the school intervention, the coursework of individual workshops, the cycles of feedback and the participation of students. Moreover, it describes the meeting opportunity between local and refugee students, as well as the dissemination of results of the intervention in the school community.

### **7.2 School Intervention**

In Chapter 5, I located a gap in the Greek school context regarding the practical dealing of hate speech within the educational context. Even though both teachers and education experts acknowledged that there are cases of hate speech in schools, Greek teachers seemed unable to have a clear grasp of the term, let alone take action to address it. That is why I decided, as a teacher myself, to undertake action research and design an intervention to tackle hate speech and put it into practice in a realistic context and see how it works with my students. My ambition was to learn from this experience so as to be able to suggest to other teachers a way of addressing the topic of hate speech, should they ever need or want to address it in their own classrooms.

Once I identified a social group which was a likely target of hate speech in my school context (it was refugees in our case), I actively sought to talk to members of that group

and get to know them better. Chapter 6 includes parts of the stories they shared with me and useful information I learned regarding their living conditions, experiences with discrimination and more. They also offered me advice for the design of the school intervention, which I readily included in the workshops.

Considering what I wanted to achieve, I decided that action research was the most suitable way to address my teaching practice. After identifying a problematic situation in my classroom, i.e., students showing apprehension in the possibility of refugee students joining their school, I designed a series of workshops to address the topics of hate speech and refugees. These workshops were based on human rights education methodology, as again, I deemed it the most appropriate approach to tackle hate speech issues and evoke empathy for a vilified group of people. The overall educational programme lasted about three months. It started in March 2017 and was completed by the end of May 2017. It involved two primary school classes of forty 11-year-old students overall. The duration of each workshop was approximately 2 hours and took place once a week. I was their English teacher back then. However, the workshops took place outside our normal teaching hours.

Below follows a thorough description of each Action Research Cycle containing elements of the workshops' procedure and the students' and teachers' participation, as these were recorded in my Field Notes.

### **7.2.1 Cycle I**

The first action research cycle consisted of four workshops dedicated to the theme of hate speech. We studied the meaning of 'hate speech' and its relation to freedom of expression. Moreover, we discussed the forms in which it usually appears, groups that get affected by it and the consequences it can have on targeted individuals or groups. The activities for this cycle were adapted from the educational manuals of the Council of Europe *Bookmarks* and *Compasito*. Details on the design and structure of the workshops can be found in Chapter

4: Methodology. Moreover, a full description of step-by-step guidelines for the workshops is available in Appendix V.

### **First workshop**

(Based on the activity 'Words That Wound' in Appendix V)

We introduced the topic of hate speech by exploring words that wound. The students were introduced to a simplified version of Article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which is about the freedom of expression. Then they were prompted through group discussion to explore the freedoms that arise from this Article and its limitations. Then, everyone was given coloured post-its and was asked to write down hurtful comments or words they hear people say about other children or names that children call each other. I made a scale on the board ranging from 'Playful / Teasing Words' to 'Words that Hurt A Lot' and asked the students to put their words where they thought they belonged on the scale. Then we tried to come up with categories under which these words fall and the students came up with three: boy/girl, external appearance, and internal characteristics. While trying to sort out words within these categories, some words were hard to put under one category, such as "I hate you" or "We don't want you to be part of our team". So, we put those above categories hovering between the two categories of external and internal features.

At this point, I was struck by the fact that the words they noted were mainly around external appearance, like fat/ugly and internal features, like stupid etc. They did not mention words that discriminate based on features like the colour of skin, country of descent etc. This is probably owed to the fact that at this age, they are mostly absorbed with the problems they face within their classroom. Or it could mean that they were not concerned with these forms of otherness so far as they may not have encountered it so far through first-hand experience. However, there was vivid discussion about which words hurt more or less, and there were opposing views on whether a word hurts little, a lot or

not at all. A connection with the term ‘hate speech’ was made, but we did not go deeper at this point to discuss the causes or effects of it.

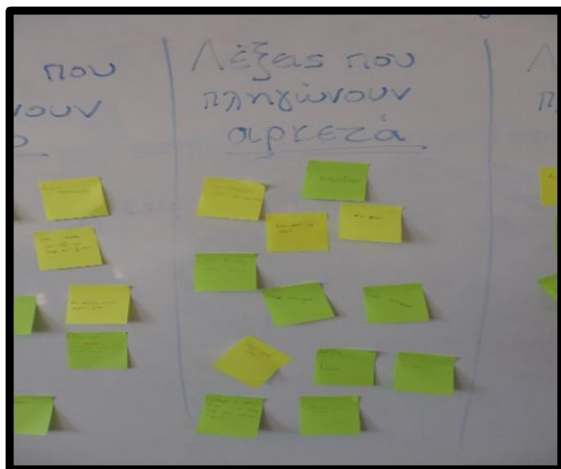


Figure 7.1: Students' replies about "Words that Hurt a Lot"

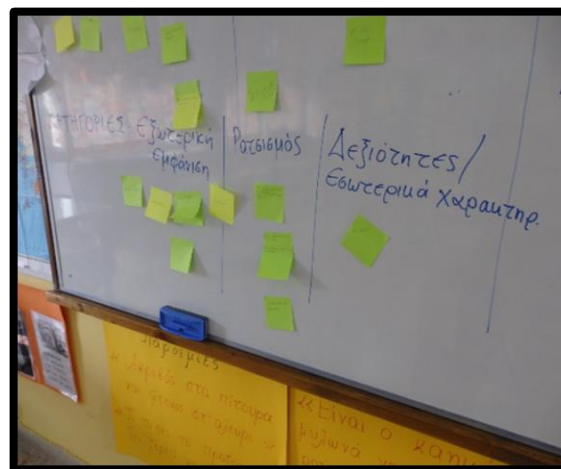


Figure 7.2: Categories under which we sorted the hurtful words

\*All photos included in this Chapter were taken by the author

As it was the first workshop, I introduced the ‘red card’ they could use in case they opted for any reason to abstain from the procedure. A question came up about the colour of the card. I replied that the colour red means ‘stop’ in our context, but it could have been any other colour. In one class no one showed interest in making use of it. In the other class, as soon as I introduced the red cards, three students, and a bit later, a fourth one, expressed their willingness to withdraw from the session. I was puzzled by this response but remained calm and explained that they have the right to do so, but I also wished to know the reason for it. They didn’t give a concrete reason, they only mentioned ‘they did not like the project’. I wondered how they did not like the project since it had just begun. They replied that they did not like the title of the project’s theme. I acknowledged their right to withdraw, and they did. I also pointed out that they will have no implications and may come back if and whenever they wish. Three of them returned during the process by returning the red cards to me and switching from their allocated places outside their learning area to their normal places inside the learning area. At the end of the session, I approached the one student who did not return throughout the process –who, however, had attended with interest from outside the learning circle and even replied to a question

or two-. He gave an explanation that he did not know what the experiential activities would be about, and that caused him some discomfort. After he saw what it was about, he expressed his intention to participate.

Regarding the role of class teachers, their presence was crucial. Even though they were informed about the activity's rubrics and details, they were hesitant to initiate the activity or take the lead and preferred to observe me. So, I found myself performing most of the time, and they both willingly took a secondary role in helping with the distribution of material, the sitting arrangement for the group activities, as well as making some comments here and there during the debriefing part. In one of the classes, the headteacher intervened at the beginning of the session to second that I am a highly experienced teacher and willing to run innovative interventions with the students which provided a great opportunity for them to get exposed to different kinds of teaching and new learning experiences. Generally, I noticed the students accepted my different role in the class (not as that of the English teacher) easier as it was, in a way, legitimised by the presence and cooperation of their main class teachers.

## **Second workshop**

(Based on the activity 'Freedom Unlimited?' in Appendix V)

In the second workshop, we went a little deeper into the idea of freedom of expression. We explored the importance of this concept both for individuals and for society, as well as investigated possible reasons why limiting freedom of expression may be needed to protect human rights, particularly where hate speech is involved. In brief, students were reminded of the content of the CRC Article 13 through a brainstorming activity. Then they were divided into four groups. Each group was given a special case study where a person or a group of people (women, disabled people, migrants and refugees, school child) were targeted with harmful comments. The group had to decide whether this is a case where any of the harmful comments should be taken off, in which case the freedom of speech should be restricted, decide why or why not, and think of other things that could be done

and by whom. In the end, each group presented their case to the plenary and provided arguments for their decisions. While observing the students' work in teams, I noticed that children in that age prefer to express themselves through other means as well, other than writing only, drawing for instance. That is why I was asked many times if they could also draw things on their presentation posters and not only write. I also noticed difficulty in writing the gist of their arguments.

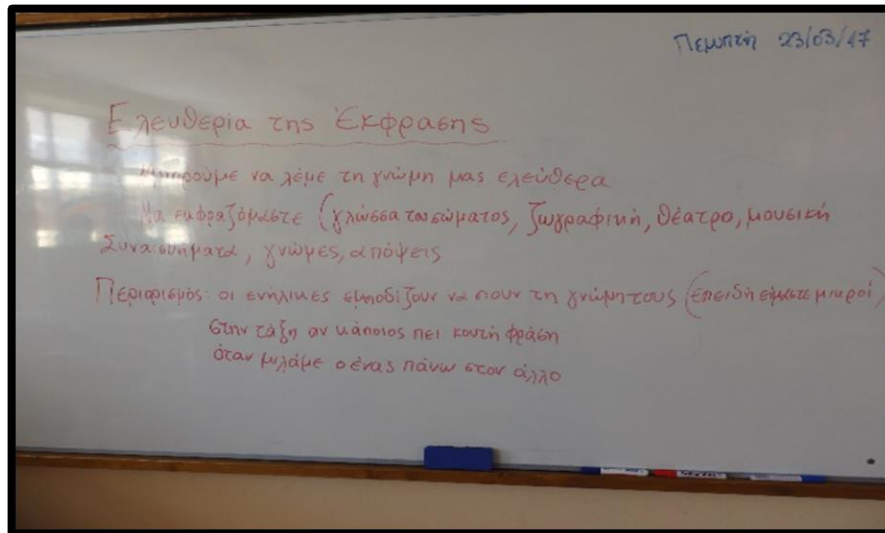


Figure 7.3: Brainstorming about the freedom of expression

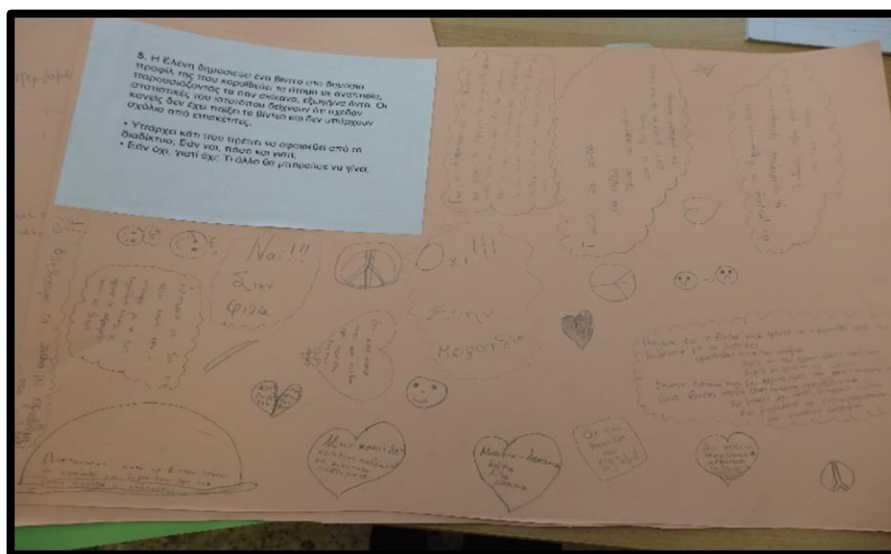


Figure 7.4: The product of teamwork in the case study of disabled people

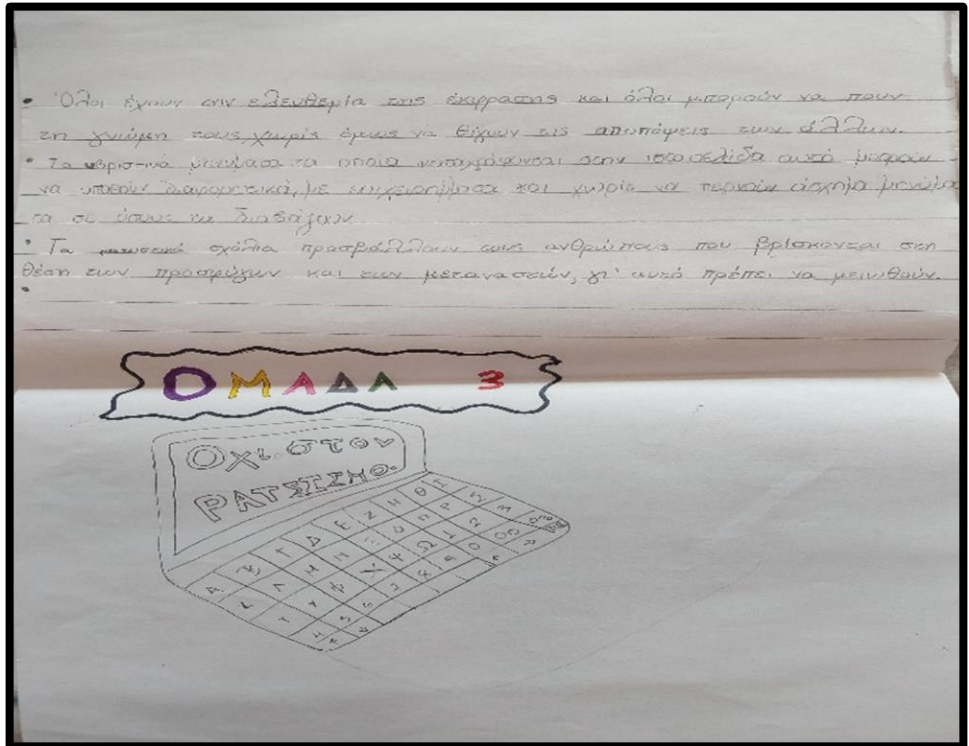


Figure 7.5: Presentation sheet of the team working on migrants-refugees

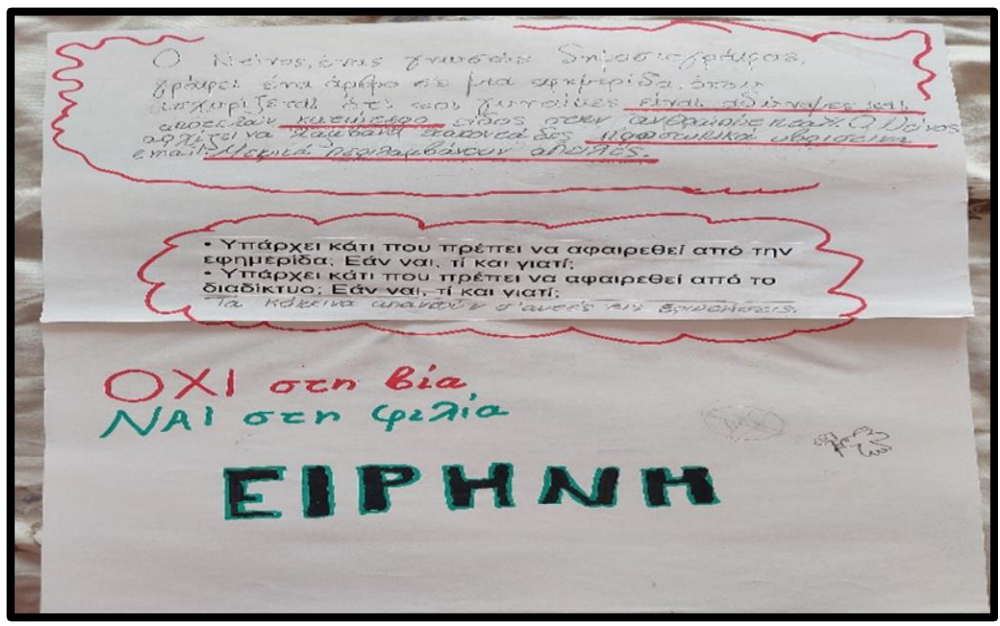


Figure 7.6: Another team's work stating "NO to violence – YES to friendship – PEACE"



It was the first time we worked in groups, and this proved a challenge. I separated random teams by counting numbers and distributed the papers with the cases. Some teams argued a lot among themselves. During the whole process, most students addressing me for help would not be for clarifications regarding the activity but rather about problems with their teammates. As some teams faced great difficulty in their effort to cooperate, I sat with them in some cases and had discussions of how the teammates can and should claim their role in the teamwork and discuss how the outcome should be a collective product.

Finally, the time frame did not prove enough this time. This had an impact on the debriefing. I noticed some teams were trying to put the finishing touches of their own presentation, instead of listening to the other teams presenting. In addition, during the results' presentation, it was striking how some teams could come up with counterarguments to defend the points they made and even refute hateful comments, while other teams did not manage to go deeper into their thinking and come up with ideas or solid arguments. These teams were usually the ones spending more time arguing among themselves than dealing with the activity.

In one of the two classes' workshops, I had to lead the session alone. It proved rather difficult to handle a class of 20 students during an experiential activity, where arguments sparked, rules had to be reminded of and disputes resolved. The number of participants and the nature of the activity takes at least two facilitators to be present to better cater for the teams' needs and render the overall process smoother.

### **Third workshop**

(Based on the activity 'Play It Again' in Appendix V)

In the third workshop, we used a role play of a child drawn into an act of bullying because of peer pressure. The scenario involved a student a bit 'different' than the others and a student from another country. The aim was to understand how bullying works, develop

empathy for victims of bullying and encourage participants to take action against bullying and hate speech. I selected four volunteers in advance and explained them the scenario, then they acted it out in front of their classmates. After a few prompting questions about the plot and the characters' feelings, I asked them to replay the scenario and invited the spectators to step in, whenever they felt like, in order to achieve a better outcome for Ahmed (and Yorgos).

A common element both classes had was that students found it difficult to enter their new roles. They were not used to being engaged with theatrical acts, especially in a class context, so that made it hard for them to improvise. In one of the classes, we had to try the roles with many different students in order to finish the first version of the play. Apart from that, both classes had a different engagement with the role-play, which probably mirrored the different levels of engagement on behalf of their teachers as well.

In Class 5A the headteacher was present but he took the part of the observer and was mainly watching the process. At some point, he even left the classroom to talk on the phone and handle a school situation. This class, as opposed to the other class, used a lot of aggression to deal with the difficult situations of the role-play plot. They would make the role of Ahmed go aggressive towards his bullies, talking back, and calling them names. I had to make a lot of suggestions to ask if the other roles could change anything, or if John could say something to the other characters to intervene. Overall, I had to discuss with them clearly how aggressive behaviour is not the answer to our problems and how it can generate more violence and aggression. I decided to devote extra time to the debriefing and allow for heated arguments to be expressed and handled gently. While discussing the first solution they suggested, that of Ahmed talking back, I asked for possible alternative solutions. They eventually came up with responses such as discussing the problem with his parents, with his teacher, talk to the parents of the other children, students themselves to approach him and tell him not to believe the nasty comments he hears, and find friends who accept him for who he is. While coming up with these solutions we discussed peer pressure and many of them admitted that they had

succumbed to peer pressure and did things they didn't like to get accepted. I found it a worthwhile and much-needed debriefing process.

In Class 5B the class teacher had a more active engagement. Prior to this session, she decided to prepare her students by reading them a chapter from a book by a Greek author that tackles the issue of racism. During the session, she helped by distributing the roles of the role-play. The students who acted out the play the first time were a bit hesitant and did not know how to render the different parts, but with encouragement and support from both of us, they did it. Some children hesitated to tease Ahmed, especially while having two teachers watching them. We kept reminding them that this is a role-play and not a real situation, that they are performing roles and they don't represent themselves. Once they acted out the plot the first time, we asked students to ponder about their own feelings and what drove John to make fun of someone else. They could easily recognise peer pressure. The kid who happened to play John felt safe enough to share with us that he had in the past been in a similar situation, doing things he didn't like to please other students and get their approval. When we replayed the plot, the student spectators made key remarks and brilliant changes to the plot and the characters. In the end, they asked John and the other two students to apologise to Ahmed and invited him to hang out with them.

This session was so intense that I didn't manage to take out any photos. The class teacher enjoyed participating in this session. Moreover, during a discussion we had later in the teachers' room, she told me that some parents of her students had approached her recognising the deterioration of their kids' attitudes and thus acknowledged the need for such interventions like the one we did.

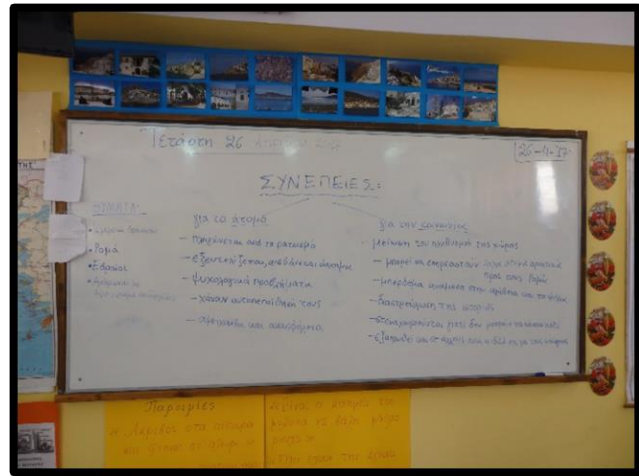
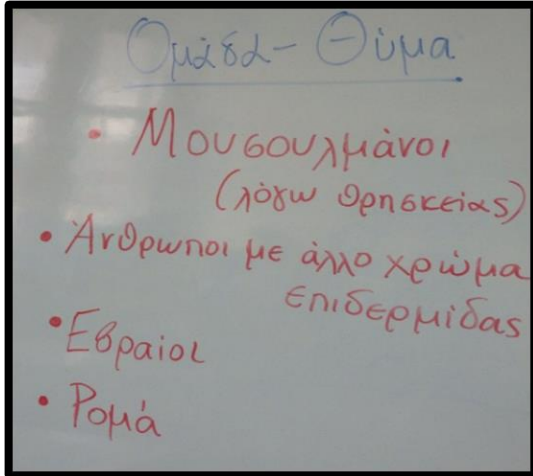
#### **Fourth workshop**

(Based on the activity 'Understanding Hate Speech' in Appendix V)

After exploring how bullying works, we tried to look deeper into different cases of hate speech. Participants looked at examples of hate speech in the press and online,

discussed its possible consequences for victims and society and explored possible responses to hate speech. At first, I returned to the term 'hate speech' and asked questions in plenary to explore its meaning. I linked this with the question I had included in the Initial Questionnaire they had filled in before the start of the intervention. Resorting to experiences from the first two sessions, we ended up gathering that it can include 'merely' offensive comments to abusive and even threatening behaviour. We also expanded its presence in forms of communication such as videos, images, music, and so on. Then, the participants were divided randomly into four groups, and each group was given one case study of hate speech (affecting Blacks, Jews, Muslims and Roma). Details of these case studies can be found in Appendix V). They were asked to discuss the case amongst themselves, then identify the victim(s) in their example (Figure 7) and the impact hate speech has on them and on people who identify with this social group. At the end of group work, all teams presented their results and I collected their responses on the board under two categories: 'Consequences for victims' and 'Consequences for society' (Figure 8). In the end, some time was devoted to collective reflection upon the overall process of the activity as well as themes like their individual feelings about the examples they analysed and other tools or methods they can think of for addressing incidents of hate speech.

In the initial stage of brainstorming, when the term 'hate speech' was explored, an initial suggestion that came up from some students was that the term might relate to a 'rhetorical question', which is a question that does not expect to be answered. This echoes a point discussed earlier in this thesis that the Greek translation of the term (*ritoriki tou misous* – ρητορική του μίσους) can be confusing for native speakers leading them to false assumptions. In my turn, at the end of the discussion, I commented that hate speech is speech or comments that target a person negatively because of their belonging to a certain social group (like a religious group, another country, the colour of skin, disability, and other traits).



**Figure 7.7** Exploring social groups affected by hate speech **Figure 7.8** Brainstorm on consequences of hate speech

During teamwork, I was roaming among the groups, observing the process, and facilitating when needed. While roaming around, I overheard rude or incongruent comments coming from two different students. One referred derogatorily to black people as ‘Pakistanis’, and someone else wondered if the Roma are worth defending. I felt uneasy, but I chose not to intervene there and then in order not to make students feel censored by my presence. Luckily, in one of the teams, other team members responded internally to the racist comment by refuting the speaker and challenging his derogatory comment. In both cases, I kept mental notes and addressed such points later in the plenary discussion, challenging these notions openly, as it is important for expressions of racism not to be disavowed but rather be interrogated and constructively explored (Pettigrew, 2012). However, I didn’t personally address the person who phrased those comments because my aim was not to make the person feel uncomfortable, but rather critically unpack the idea expressed.

Another issue I identified while observing the group work was that the activity guidelines were unclear to many of them. Mainly, students had difficulty understanding the word ‘impact’, so I offered synonyms and a few examples. Even after I provided the necessary clarifications, some teams would still struggle to identify the consequences hate speech might have on society. Though it was much easier to infer consequences for the person,

they had difficulty inferring consequences for society. That is perhaps because they cannot generalise yet the sufferings of one person to the total of society. Therefore, I had to give prompts like 'How does what happened to the footballer affect other black people, or how does it affect me that I do not have dark-coloured skin?'. I refrained from giving them ready-made answers and drifted away to let them think of it further.

Again, I received complaints from both classes for breaking out teams in a random way and not letting them work with their friends only. I explained that the goal of allocating them to random groups is to give them a chance to work with students they hadn't worked with before and be surprised by the new things they will learn from each other and for each other (e.g., special skills they might possess and is not known). I also added that if one experience of group work is not a happy one, it is ok since they will not have to repeat it as the goal is to work with new people each time. I also reminded them that for the groups to work out, it is crucial that each member should have a clear role or task to implement. In class 5B, one team started fighting with each other, and two of the four members decided to abstain from group work. I tried to intervene and encouraged them to find roles that all would feel fine doing (a person drawing, a person writing etc). In another team, only one person was doing the work and the rest were discussing other things. This difficulty made me include in the plenary discussion on the board an extra column called 'Problems in teamwork', which, however, we did not have the luxury of time to go into much detail.

Time is a precious element to have in such activities where human interaction is involved. Without having sufficient time for debriefing, it was not very clear which messages got across. With class 5A we happened to be granted some extra time on the day we ran this activity. Since we had ample time, after all the teams had presented their results in plenary, I asked students to go back to their teams and think of a message of solidarity towards the person who, in their study case, was the victim of hate speech (be it a poem, a letter, a slogan, a painting, anything they choose). Their creations were related to the objectives of the session, which were to explore the consequences of hate speech for victims and society, as well as explore possible responses to hate speech.

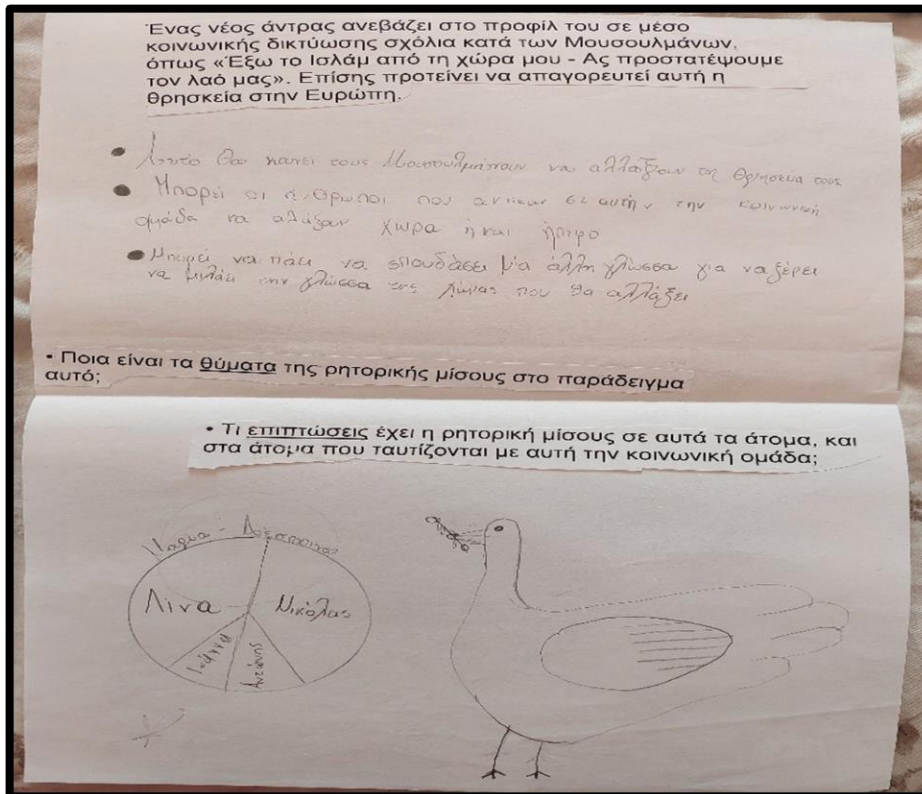


Figure 7.9 Students expressing themselves through drawings: the sign of peace with their names in it and a pigeon holding an olive branch as a symbol of peace

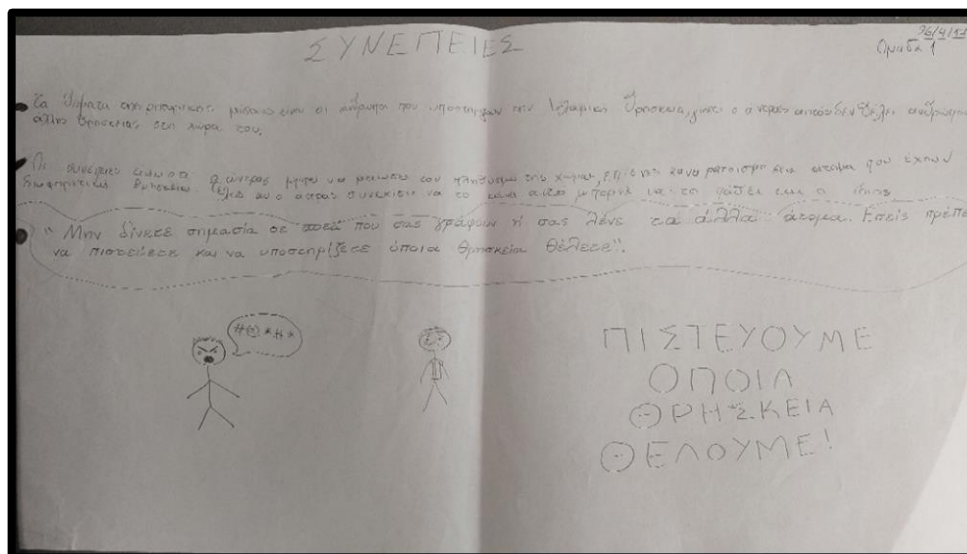


Figure 7.10 Solidarity message ('We can observe any religion we want')

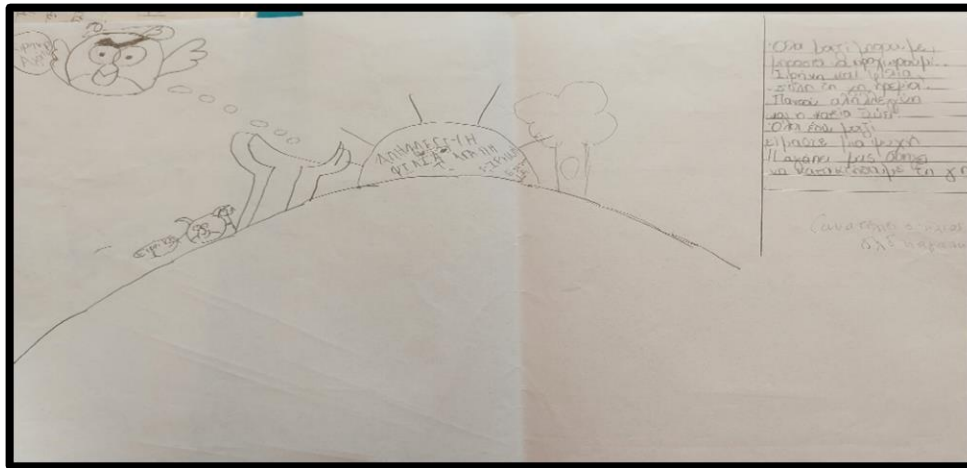


Figure 7.11 Solidarity message (students' poem calling for solidarity, friendship, love and peace)

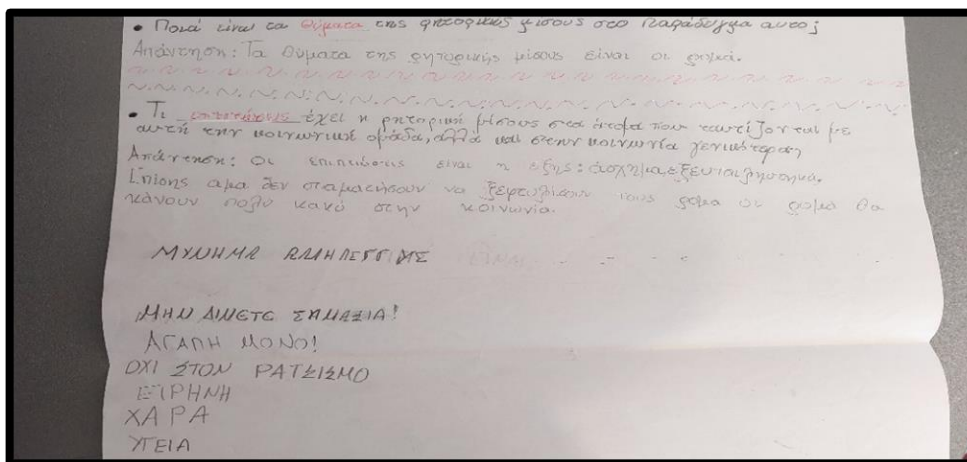


Figure 7.12 Solidarity message ('Only love! Say no to racism')

The role of teachers was not very active, and they both chose to sit back and observe. I believe to a certain extent, this choice for a more passive role is owed to two reasons: first, it mirrors how overloaded and burnout Greek teachers are, and secondly, this intervention was something new to them both methodology and topic wise.

In class 5A, the colleague asked me if he could sit back and watch, and I used this opportunity to ask him for his feedback. I asked him if he could act as a critical friend to observe me regarding class management and whether I give enough space to students



to express themselves. At the end of the lesson, I approached him and asked for his feedback, and he said I did everything well. When I asked for details in certain moments of the workshop process, he added that even when I had to raise the tone of my voice in an instant, he found it necessary, as it was because I tried to balance the situation and 'save' or protect the rest of the learning process. At some other point, he had remarked, 'I like to watch you, I learn'. Even though this mini-observation was not conducted under strict protocols, it feels that both of us benefitted from this opportunity.

### **First brief workshops' evaluation**

After completing the first four workshops related exclusively to hate speech, I asked students to complete a short, written evaluation of their experience so far. Such questions can help make the research focus more concrete and also serve as a testing device (McAteer, 2013). I aimed to get some feedback on what they liked till that point, if they had any suggestions for improvement and what they thought of the activities. All students completed the evaluations within approximately 20 minutes. Students asked many questions, some as to how to answer the questions and some as to why they were asked to evaluate the process. They were not used to being asked to evaluate their learning in the class, so I kept explaining that I needed their opinion on how to progress further and see if there was something not working for them so as to alter it. Or if there is something that works well, so as to boost it. I also made it clear that the completion was anonymous and voluntary.

The questions were the following:

Things I **liked** from the programme so far:

Things I would like to **improve** on the programme:

Activity(-ies) I liked most so far and why:

Activity(-ies) I liked less so far and why:

The results of this short evaluation are incorporated in the discussion of the students' findings in Chapter 8, as they coincided greatly with the answers I received from the Final

Questionnaires. Overall, the activity with the theatrical play made an impression on them, as it involved action and allowed them to intervene and change the plot. There were complaints about teamwork, but at the same time, the experience and products of teamwork were noted as something positive. The main suggestions for improvement were asking for more available time dedicated to the intervention and expression of a wish for better cooperation within teams. Other than that, it was mostly positive feedback. This could be either because they were not used to giving feedback to teachers, let alone negative comments, or because it was something new and really excited them.

Based on this overall positive feedback, I felt encouraged to continue with the intervention. I decided to continue using experiential activities that would be different from what students had encountered so far during their traditional teaching in the formal education setting. Moreover, I noted the trouble with teamwork and decided to continue working on this aspect as well and not drop it as a method of work. I realised that for them, this exposure could also be a trial of democratic principles and an effort for inclusiveness.

From the plenary discussions we had during the activities, I noted there was a need for such kind of intervention, and students had queries on the topic and points they found of interest to discover further. Though I could go on with hate speech as a broad topic, I decided to narrow it down over the second cycle of workshops to explore a topic that was relevant to our school community, the refugees. Narrowing the topic down would allow us to dig beyond the surface and dismantle the ways hate speech works and affects people.

### **7.2.2 Cycle II**

The second action research cycle consisted of workshops dedicated to a specific social group: refugees. From my analysis of the Initial Questionnaires, I recognised that we needed to work more on empathy and the sense of diversity as a positive element. We tried to increase our class' empathy by getting familiar with some refugee stories. We discussed

misconceptions that follow this group and hate speech that usually affects them. Details on the design and structure of the workshops can be found in Chapter 4: Methodology. Moreover, a full description of step-by-step guidelines for the workshops is available in Appendix V.

### **Fifth workshop**

(Based on the activity 'Message In a Box' in Appendix V)

This workshop attempted to connect the topic of hate speech with refugees.

The main aim was to serve as an introduction to the theme of refugees. Therefore, I found it important to start by clarifying the meaning of the words and concepts: refugee, migrant, human rights, racism, equality, and asylum. Moreover, an objective was to develop empathy for comments that may hurt or please a person who newly joins a group.

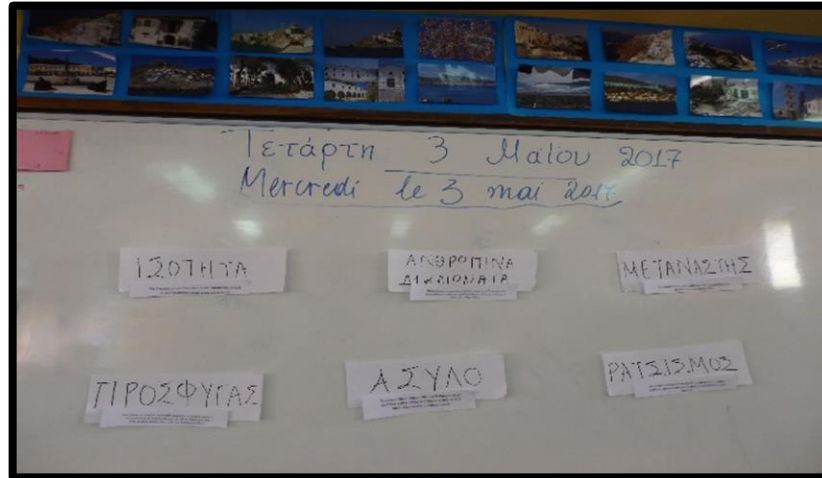
In the first part of the workshop, I tried to introduce the terms in a more playful manner so that it didn't turn out to be a dull matching of words and definitions. I introduced the story of a 'magic box' that has come to our class from afar and contains stories and surprises for us. After reading the message contained in the box, the hunting game was introduced. Students were invited to search around the classroom to find the missing dictionary pages. Once the collection of all items was concluded, in plenary, the students tried to connect the terms with their definitions, and I kept note of their answers on the board.

In the second part, students were introduced to phrases (like 'Why should she sit next to me?', 'Do you want to play?' etc.) that children may hear when they try to enter a new environment for the first time. They were asked to put the statements in order from 1 to 10, starting with the one that creates the most positive emotions and ending with the one that creates the most negative ones. After sorting out all statements, in plenary, we discussed both parts of the activity. That is, whether they had any difficulty matching the

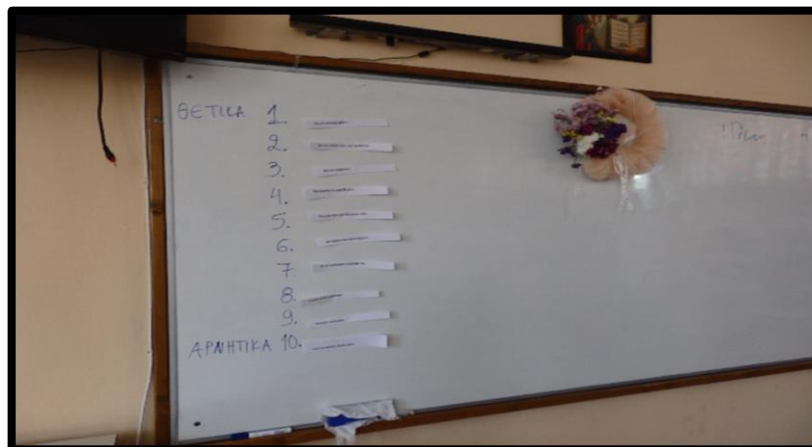
terms to the definitions or which statements they thought might cause the most distress and how they would like to be welcomed in a new place.

While students were trying to match the definitions with the terms, it was surprising to see that there was some disagreement or confusion on what a refugee is and what a migrant is. That contrasted with their answers to the Initial Questionnaire, where most of them declared they knew exactly what the difference between a migrant and a refugee is. Moreover, an awkward moment was when they saw the term 'asylum'. Some students connected its meaning to a famous TV show broadcasted back then called 'Survivor' where the players would receive immunity called 'asylo' in Greek. I decided not to disregard this comment and used it to make the term asylum clearer to them. I saw that using concepts familiar to students – even though it wouldn't be a teacher's favourite choice- may help familiarise them with new knowledge.

While discussing the intensity of the different statements in the second part of the workshop, an interesting discussion unfolded. Students explored how the speaker's intention is crucial to render a comment as negative or not. Discussing the neutral ones, other students perceived them as negative and others as not negative. We discussed that this difference of opinions is owed to the intention of the speaker (i.e. to hurt the other person or not) and the tone of voice (especially with sentences like 'he doesn't speak our language'). Moreover, the way the person who receives the comment perceives it, is important. Negative sentences are considered negative because we feel the risk of isolation when we hear them.



**Figure 7.13** Familiarising with terms relevant to the refugee issue



**Figure 7.14** Assessing as positive or negative the comments that a child in a new country or class is likely to receive

With class 5B, the plenary discussion became a bit more specific about refugees. We discussed what it might feel like to be unwelcome and a stranger in some foreign land. A boy mentioned how he would have liked to host a refugee in their house, but his father wouldn't want to because he believes that all refugees are dirty and carry illnesses. A girl agreed and said, 'Yes, my dad would say the same'. Two other students voiced some negative comments about not wanting to host someone at their home or that they don't find it as their problem the hardships that foreigners face. At that point, I found myself struggling for some seconds with the ambiguity of how to respond, fearing not to impose

my beliefs on them and not to blatantly dismiss ideas expressed by students. I answered with mild comments, knowing that we will have the opportunity in the following workshops to revisit some of these ideas. I saw one of the students rethinking his argument when I flipped reality and put him in the negative position of needing help. Empathy seemed to work and lead him to some different kind of thinking. It was interesting that after a point, they all mentioned they would give them money (instead of hosting, for instance), and they kept repeating what goods they could buy with money. This mentality was perhaps influenced by the financial crisis around us. Maybe they felt that money could buy things we need because this is what they hear in their families.

In class 5B, the class teacher showed initiative by offering to do the preparation for the session, that is, to print and cut out the necessary material and help me hide them around the class. Also, she tried to participate in the discussion we had at the plenary at the end of the session.

### **Sixth workshop**

(Based on the activity “Balloon Friends” in Appendix V)

Before the intervention, students made no reference to human rights as a way of responding to hate speech or somehow relating them to countering offensive, racist language. That is why I dedicated a workshop to reminding my students -or increasing their knowledge and awareness- about human rights. It was deemed crucial to include a session about human rights, as all discussion about hate speech and freedom of expression is inherently interconnected with human rights. Moreover, the discussion about human rights would pave the way for exploring later their violation of certain groups.

With the help of the ‘magic box’, I introduced the story with the balloons and distributed one balloon to each student. Then the students were asked to paint a face on their ‘new friend’ and think of 2-3 things (words) they need to be safe and happy. Upon finishing that, we asked them to roam around the class, consult a simplified list with the human rights

posted on each classroom wall and choose two human rights as the most important to keep them safe and happy. Then, we discussed as a group the answers the participants came up with and tried to connect them with some of the human rights. In the end, students were asked to throw their balloons in the air and try to catch them back without falling, as a symbolic gesture of protecting their friends and their rights. The debriefing elaborated on whether it was easy to identify what makes us happy and safe if it was easy to connect it with human rights and how we can help to protect our rights and the rights of others.

At the plenary discussion, I wrote down the words they mentioned their new friend needs to feel happiness and safety, and we saw there were some words repeated and predominant, like love, friendship, and home. I noticed they drew on things on a personal basis judging from their own experiences. For instance, one girl puts sports as a priority, as she devotes much time to rhythmic gymnastics herself. Possibly this is normal at this age to be self-absorbed and mainly see the outside world by relating it to personal experiences. They make sense of the world through their personal lenses. I also asked later whether it was easy to choose only two human rights as the most important and how they dealt with the disagreements that arose.

While throwing their balloons in the air, I expected them to be less able to catch them and need help from each other, but this was not the case, each child almost caught their own balloon. However, one child mentioned someone tried to pop her balloon and throw it on the floor, so I took this chance to mention at the discussion afterwards that protecting everyone's rights is collective work. Moreover, we are all responsible for safeguarding our own rights, as sometimes there might be people or situations that threaten to harm them. During the overall process, some balloons even burst. We used this opportunity to talk about how we can be proactive in safeguarding what is important to us, like our new friends and our rights.

A delightful moment was at the end of the session when two girls approached me from class 5B to ask which other classes I ran the same intervention with. I replied it was only

class 5A from the other school. They responded with, 'Thank you, Miss, for choosing us to participate'.



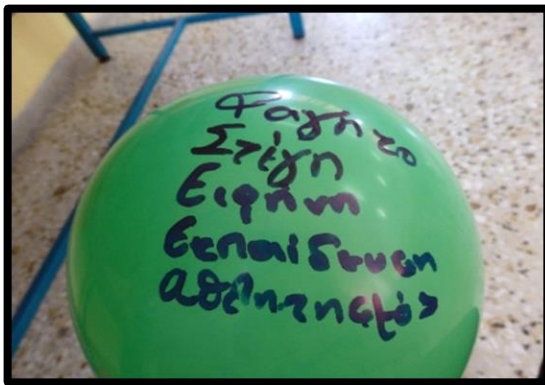
Figures 7.15



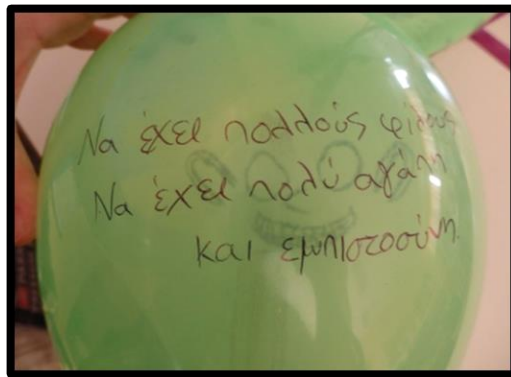
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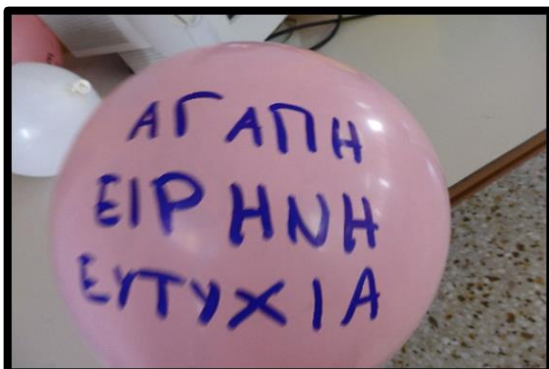
Figures 7.17



Figures 7.18



Figures 7.19



Figures 7.20



Figures 7.21

Figures 7.15 – 7.21 Balloons as students' 'new friends' writing on the back human rights they need to enjoy





Figure 7.21



Figure 7.22

Figure 7.21 & Figure 7.22 Throwing our 'new friends' up in the air making sure they land safely

The colleague of class 5A did not participate in this workshop. Therefore, when I needed some help managing things, I asked for students' help and allocated them some small roles, like posting the lists on the classroom walls. Delegating tasks and receiving help

from students can get a teacher a long way as it can facilitate the process and also make students feel more involved in the process.

My other colleague in class 5B had offered to bring the balloons. However, she turned up a bit late. I worried for a moment, but I tried to keep calm and maintain a positive atmosphere with the students. Instead, I used this time to give them an idea of what today's session would be about. It was not easy, but in practice, I saw that maintaining a positive mood and mentality makes collaboration work better and that struggling with ambiguity is a vital skill to master for teaching and training.

### **Seventh workshop**

(Based on the activity 'The Sun and the Birds' in Appendix V)

Following the session about human rights, we continued with a game where students would have the chance to experience inequality and injustice firsthand. Experiencing something, rather than just talking about it, promotes empathy and understanding.

Using the 'magic box' again, I introduced the game 'The Sun and the Birds'. One of the students got to be the Sun, and the rest of the children were the birds. In the centre of the allocated space, there was the sun and its rays (portrayed by coloured markers). The rays of the sun were scattered on the floor. Around the sun were the students in a big circle formed by chairs representing the birds' nests. The aim was for the birds to gather as many rays as possible without the sun touching them. Rules were the same for all birds trying to approach the sun except for two birds with green tails. If the sun would touch the specific birds, they would have to freeze for 10 seconds instead of 5 in their effort to hide from the sun, plus they should only sit on certain allocated chairs/nests to protect themselves and not anywhere they wanted, as was the case for the rest of the birds.



**Figure 7.23** Exploring social inequalities through a role-playing gam

The 5B class teacher was especially helpful during that session. We both cooperated with the students to make the circle with the chairs and prepare the nests for the 'green birds'. Instead of putting two green birds, we decided to put three to get more feedback for the inconvenience and inequality experienced. While setting out the rules of the game, the students asked for many clarifications –even some that were not foreseen by the guidelines- so we improvised and gave the answers.

When we put the game into action, we witnessed a small chaos; the sun not being able to touch anyone, the green birds always sitting in the same nests, all the birds picking up more than one ray at the same time and thus the game finishing too fast. That is why we played a second time again after clarifying any rules that were not clear. However, we saw the students misconducting, e.g., someone tried hitting the sun, or other students would not stop and count as they were supposed to when touched by the sun. Finally, we

played it one last time by setting the rules clearer and stricter this time. After this last round was acted out, we sat all together around the circle and discussed the process. Due to the peculiarities in the process, we were not left with ample time for the closure discussion. However, we tried our best to give students the time and space they needed to talk about their feelings, vent their frustration, and comment on whether they found the rules fair and whether all children were treated as equals. Students tend to experience strong emotions when their beliefs are contradicted (Adams & Bell, 2016). The type of education that focuses on both one's own emotions as well as on others' often needs to deal with discomfoting learning experiences (Zembylas, 2015).

The teacher also helped in the facilitation of the discussion. She would intervene and comment more this time. Some students complained about the misconduct of other students, breaking the rules, and being nasty to other students. What took me pleasantly by surprise is that they managed to connect the rules of the games to what is happening in society. They realised this game had extensions in society and certain social groups. On the other hand, I once again noticed that it is very difficult for them to think of helping people in need in another way other than giving money (charity). Even when I prompted a student to think of what else we can do except give money, he counter-suggested giving donations! This was also noticed by their teacher, and she commented after the session, 'How these kids cannot think of sparing a good word to someone else or make a sweet gesture!'. Perhaps the attitude of these children is influenced by the money-centred culture we are surrounded by. Most of them are from working-class families, most probably struggling to make ends meet and may rarely hear words of praise themselves. We didn't try to connect the specific game with the social group of refugees only but rather relate it to more general values and the way society works. We pondered who makes the rules and what can be done if we consider the rules unfair. We concluded with the story coming from the little black box revealing the 'treasure'.

Unfortunately, I had to skip this game with the other class. The peculiarities of the specific game made me feel I couldn't make this workshop work without a co-facilitator. Instead, I devoted some extra time to the sessions that were to follow.

## **Eighth workshop**

(Based on the activity 'Refugee Stories' in Appendix V)

In this workshop, we focused on real stories of refugees. The stories were selected from educational material designed by ActionAid Hellas for the Global Week for Education 2017. The aim was through these stories to see refugees as individuals and get to know some of the hardships they go through. The stories were chosen to help unpack the harsh living conditions in camps and record their great wish for access to education, which is something that also came out of the group interviews with refugees.

I informed the class that they would hear three real stories of refugees, and then I read them out one by one. After each story, we would pause to see the picture of that person and discuss some of the things mentioned in their narration, using probing questions to explore various aspects of their lives. Students' attention was more captivated in the process as soon as they understood that these were real people and their stories and photos were also real.

The first story (Figure 7.24) was about a 13-year-old girl from Syria, remembering how she fled from her war-torn country and trying to adjust to her new life in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Students were prompted to suggest actions and activities that could be organised inside the camp to improve the lives of the people living in it. They came up with some interesting points, like providing them with hot water, bathing and laundry facilities, and a playground for children. This time they moved beyond the notion of charity and suggested practical solutions. Moreover, I saw them realise for the first time perhaps that refugees do not come to Greece only but go to other countries as well and utilised the opportunity to make it clear that mostly they go to neighbouring towns and countries and then attempt longer routes.

The second story (Figure 7.25) was about Asra, a Syrian mother of two young children who was at that time located in the refugee camp of Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos. She narrated why she had to flee her country and was begging in tears for her children

to go to school. Students could relate to a mother's wish for her kids to go to school and seemed favourable to the idea of her children - refugee children - joining Greek schools.

The last story (Figure 7.26) was of Ali, a young Afghani man. This story sparked an extra interest as Ali had found his way to Greece and was staying at that point in time at the refugee camp of Schisto, located in the wider nearby area of our school. Ali talked about his life in Afghanistan and explained how he was not given a chance to attend school in his country, for several reasons, including his parents' fear of being attacked by the Taliban if he did so. Moreover, he expressed his fervent wish to educate himself and learn as many languages as possible, as well as build more skills now that he finds himself in a European country. Students were encouraged to think of how his life could have been different if he had been born in a European country instead of Afghanistan. Overall, students had good thoughts and arguments. When some negative stereotypes came up (such as doubting that he even had a house in Afghanistan, as it is such a poor country), I replied with brevity and confidence, restoring the misinformation.



Figure 7.24



Figure 7.25



Figure 7.26

Overall, through the stories and the subsequent discussion, students were encouraged to develop an understanding of the complexities present in the lives of refugees, think of the conditions they live in the camps and imagine how their lives might have been different if offered the facilities of a European country.

As a wrap-up activity, I employed the technique of narration. I asked them to improvise an imaginary story of a refugee and create a narrative by contributing one or two

sentences per person, continued by another participant. I gave the first sentence, *'I am Mariam, I am 15 years old, and I come from Iran'*. I insisted they use the first person. I thought that if they created stories for others in the first person as if they were themselves, then they might be able to see a person again, not just a refugee. When they got stuck in the process, I would give a prompt like 'And what do you need?', 'What do you hope for now?', 'What is your current situation?', in an effort to give them the inspiration to continue without overfeeding them with answers. It was nice to see that they used many elements from all three stories they heard, finishing the story in a 'happy way' by putting the girl return to her country after she achieved what she needed.

The class teacher was present throughout the session. I invited her to read the second story, and while she was reading it aloud, I was wandering around the class, showing students the picture of Asra and her kids. Towards the end, she asked to leave while I was about to read Ali's story. When I mentioned he is a refugee hosted in the camp of Schisto near us, she said, 'Ok, I will wait and listen to the story first'. This shows again how important it was for local people to get to know a bit of the 'other' in their neighbourhood for whom they had heard a lot but only from other sources and not from the people themselves.

### **Ninth workshop**

(Based on the activity "They are not just numbers" in Appendix V)

We continued with one more activity related to refugee stories. Again, the objective was for my students to see refugees as individuals, and understand some of the reasons that caused them to flee their countries by getting to know some of their personal stories. As MSF (Kotsoni, 2016, p. 9) aptly put it:

We talk about 'refugees' without even identifying the gender of these people, without knowing their name, their profession, whether they have a family or not, how old they are, what their personal story is, after all. We treat them as one, we call them 'refugees', and they become an undifferentiated mass. Faces are lost, personal stories and requests cease to exist. Thus, we easily keep them at a 'safe' distance from our daily life and reality [translation from the Greek language is mine].

So, I insisted on storytelling to minimise the distance and stop facing them as an undifferentiated mass.

I stuck the photos (relevant to refugee experiences) on one side of the board, and on the other side, I wrote the following key-words: army, asylum, border, detention centre, education, deportation, fear, family reunion, opportunity, parents, passport, persecution, poverty, protection, return, work. The students were divided into four groups. I asked one team to invent an imaginary story about a refugee using only the photos, the other one using only the key-words and the other two using both photos and key-words.



**Figure 7.27** Photos as prompts for storytelling



**Figure 7.28** A group working with both photos and key-words

This time I allowed them to form their own teams on the grounds that they would try to involve every member and allocate tasks accordingly. So, teams were formed, but still, few kids were not invited to join any team, so I tried to help them find their way into some of the existing teams. During teamwork, I noticed that even though they chose their own teams this time, they would still have problems working together, some would do all the work, others would be lazy, and one of the groups worked very harmoniously. All the teams wanted to work on both photos and key-words, or photos only, and they complained when I asked them to consider only key-words, so I allowed them. The truth is that the photos were so vivid, so once they were there on the board, it was hard not to take them



into account. One team asked me the meaning of 'deportation', and many kids wondered what was there in the picture with the van transferring people hidden inside the cargo.

Ένας πρόσφυγας

Η Ζαφείρα είναι ένα κορίτσι από τη Συρία που αυτή τη στιγμή γίνεται αδελφός. Η οικογένειά της συστάθηκε στον πόλεμο. Αναγκάστηκε μια νέα πατρίδα άρχισε να ψάχνει μαζί με άλλα παιδιά του έχασε τους γονείς τους με ένα φοιτητικό στην Ελλάδα. Υπάρχουν πολλοί αιτούντες.

Μετά από αρκετό καιρό στεναχώρια και κούρασης έφτασαν σε μια δομή φιλοξενίας στην Ελλάδα. Πήγε σε κατώφλιο σχολείο, έβαλε την ελληνική γλώσσα και γνώρισε κατούριους φίλους.

Μεγαλύτερης απέκτησε οικογένεια και παιδιά και για πρώτη φορά είχε χαράς και της αγάπη που είχε χάσει.

Μαρία  
Μαρία  
Ελένη  
Ελένη

Figure 7.29

Είμαι ο Λαίος και έχω μια αδελφή στην Συρία  
κι ήμουν πρόσφυγας 3 χρόνια και μου  
πείθανε η μάνα μου και τα 8 αδέρφια μου.  
Το καταφύγιο μου είναι πάνω από μια γέφυρα. Θέλω να  
μετακοτώσω στην Ελλάδα κι έχω βρει έναν τρόπο. Πήγαινε  
με άλλα παιδιά πρόσφυγες θα φύγουμε με  
ένα καρτοβέτο. Διότι τα πράγματα μου είναι στην  
μα και θα ξεκινήσω αλλά θα είναι πρώτο γιατί  
στον δρόμο προς το καταφύγιο μου έρχεται μια  
σφαίρα που φέρει τα παιδιά να ανασταθούν.  
Τέτοιους λαχτάει άνθρωποι μας βοηθήσανε και  
πήγαμε στην Ελλάδα. <sup>Εσύ</sup> ~~στα~~ βρήκα σπίτι,  
και έζησα κατ'οίκον ωραίες σιδηρές χωρίς να  
σκεφτώ μια σου πόδεμο.

based on the pic  
with the girl  
dancing

Figure 7.30

Figure 7.29 & Figure 7.30 Two of the stories the teams came up with

Once the allocated time was over, every group presented their work to the others. Their stories contained a mixture of elements they learned at the workshop and also the information they had from other sources outside the class. Almost all teams chose a positive ending for their stories. During the debriefing process, participants were asked to consider and share their difficulties in creating an imaginary story on this topic.

Today I was asked for the first time if they would be marked for participating in the project. I replied emphatically no. I was not sure if they would have liked to be marked or not about it. However, this question, along with the expressed wish to include their names on teamwork products and claims of ownership, seems like the remainder of the formal education mentality tangled into the process of the non-formal.

Neither of the teachers participated in the last two workshops. The 5B class teacher also withdrew from the process at this point, as there was a serious time constraint with the end of the school year approaching. We had lost many hours due to random incidents (excursion, strike, elections, sickness). Moreover, I was not given full two-hour sessions any more, so I had to squeeze everything into single teaching hours of 45 minutes. However, I decided not to squeeze in the last two workshops but instead save some time by utilising my personal teaching hours, when needed, to dedicate the necessary time to run these workshops effectively.

### **Tenth workshop**

(Based on the activity 'Talking It Out' in Appendix V)

The concluding workshop of the intervention aimed to re-connect participants with hate speech and fake news by reflecting on common prejudices about particular groups in society, including refugees. Moreover, the target was to encourage participants to think critically about commonly held beliefs and explore responses to expressions of hate speech.

I put on the board three made-up statements (Girls perform better than boys at school. / Greeks are lazy. / Scientific studies have shown that Europeans have smaller brains than Asians.), with the heading 'True Facts'. I asked for the students' reactions, and after a few responses, I revealed that these statements were completely made up. I apologised for having to 'lie' to them, but my role for that particular moment was to serve the purpose of the activity, which was to expose them to 'fake news' presenting them as legitimate and truthful. After hearing their reactions, we explored together why they believed these statements (those who did). Next, we explored the difference between an 'opinion' and a 'fact' and discussed how people are drawn to believe things about groups of other people whom they've never met based on someone else's opinion. At the same time, we pondered how we could check our 'facts' and arrive at reliable conclusions for ourselves. Furthering the discussion, we had the chance to revisit the boundaries -or rather the delicate balance- between freedom of speech and hate speech.

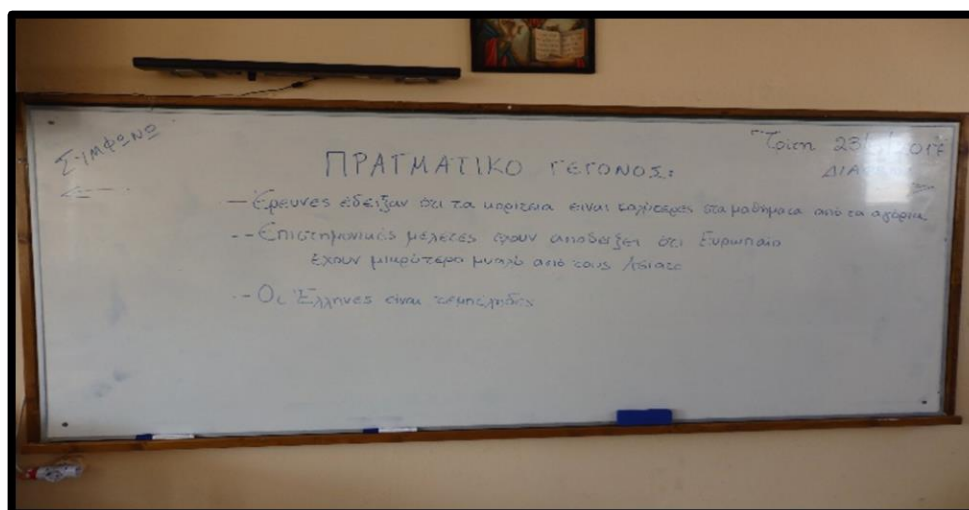


Figure 7.31 Made-up 'real facts'

Students were very interested in expressing their opinions, especially about the statement about girls being better at school performance than boys. They all seemed so eager to say their opinion and be heard, so I left more time on that sentence, even though participants would often repeat themselves. For the statements they didn't know (for instance, the sentence suggesting that Europeans have smaller brains than Asians),

some of them would say they didn't know or could not tell. At the same time, it was impressive that they had an opinion about everything, sometimes stereotypical (especially with reference to Greeks being lazy) and sometimes quite a mature approach to the statements.

Then we moved on to another activity. I explained they would hear some of the negative 'facts' or opinions about refugees, which have become widely accepted today and asked them to stand on the right side of the class if they 'Agree' or on the left side of the class if they 'Disagree'. They may also move position during the discussion if what they heard altered their opinion.

The sentences I was planning to use were the following:

Refugees are dirty and carry illnesses

Immigrants and refugees take our jobs

Greece is full of refugees

Our children suffer from having refugee children in their classes

I brought all the students to the front, as in the rest of the space, there were their chairs and desks and showed them which corner was for 'Agree' and which was for 'Disagree'. I read aloud the first sentence and asked them to take a corner. My way of handling the conversation was to hear first the side with the fewer votes and then open the floor for counterarguments by the majority opinion. I saw some students standing in the middle as they said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements. All students were encouraged to express their thoughts freely, even if they were controversial or ideas they heard around them but did not quite adopt. This way, participants tried to 'debunk' common myths using the knowledge and expertise of the group. I would let them first exchange views among themselves and then close the discussion with my view by introducing some facts. I would listen to the discussion and keep misconceptions and then offer alternative viewings on these misconceptions.

When discussing the statement 'Greece is full of refugees', I saw many of them adopting this opinion. As I continued discussing this issue with them, I tried hard not to support the counterargument (i.e., Greece or Europe are not really full of refugees) but to present to them some different arguments to the ones they hear more frequently and perhaps question their views. It was amazing how some children, that were almost invisible during the teaching of English, would talk, interact and show motivation and interest to participate.

In the end, I asked if someone had heard something they hadn't thought of before and if anyone had changed their opinion on something and why. I challenged the negative opinions openly when no one else would. For instance, a student expressed his opinion that he had heard his dad saying that refugees from Syria brought to Greece the illness of tuberculosis. My aim was to reply with arguments and challenge their perception by asking questions. For instance, 'Have you met all of the refugees coming from Syria and saw they are sick?', 'Have you heard doctors confirming the spread of tuberculosis?' etc. All in all, my aim was to encourage them to use critical thinking and check their sources. My aim was not to convince them of a specific statement. However, I could not leave some comments unaddressed, as I felt there was a danger of reinforcing negative stereotypes. Another student mentioned that refugees are shabby and dirty. I invited him to give me further argumentation about his opinion, I said I held a diametrically different opinion; however, I cared to listen to his arguments in case I changed my mind. He said that refugees are not clean, and I counter-argued that perhaps they live in conditions where they do not have access to cleanliness, like clean/hot water, showers, laundry etc. He soon adopted my view of it and reinforced it by saying: 'Oh yes, we do not provide the means to be clean'. That made me understand how weak his opinion is or how not very rooted these negative images were to him.

With one of the classes, the second part of the activity proved very difficult. When I gathered them in the middle of the class, they were very noisy, they would talk amongst themselves, not hear the person speaking and tease each other. Perhaps I shouldn't have accumulated them all together in such a small space. Thus, at some point, I felt the

process was getting out of hand, and I had to raise my voice more than I would have liked. Under these conditions, we had time to work only on the first sentence. I surrendered at that point in time and let them go on the bell ring.

In light of this event, I decided to run one more workshop with them to give us all the chance to review what had happened and conclude the activity in the most fruitful possible way. After all, this class had skipped the activity with the Sun and the Birds. So, in the next and final session, I reminded them briefly of what we did the previous time and asked for their feedback on the process. This time to avoid the mess, I asked them to remain seated and raise their pencil if they 'agree' with the statement and their rubber if they 'disagree'. Apart from restructuring the way of participation, I reordered the hierarchy of importance for the statements to be discussed. I felt that for my given context, discussing the statement 'Immigrants and refugees take our jobs' was not a good idea, as time was again not sufficient, and I believed it would have raised a lot of discussions. So, I did not want to leave such a hot topic discussed poorly, as it might have left wrong impressions. Instead, I decided to focus on the two statements related to refugees (Greece is full of refugees / Our children suffer from having refugee children in their classes). It was good to see that for the second statement, most of the participants were in favour of receiving refugee children in their class, and, thus, there were many counterarguments to the few 'agree' by the students themselves.

## **Second brief workshops' evaluation**

After completing the tenth workshop, I asked students to complete a second short, written evaluation of the workshops related to refugees. I focused on their opinion of the activities only, as I knew more topics around the overall assessment of the intervention would be covered by the Final Questionnaire that was to follow.

For the time being, they were asked to answer the following two questions:

Which activity(-ies) did you like most so far and why:

Which activity(-ies) did you like less so far and why:

I reminded them once again of all the activities we did between the fifth and tenth workshops and gave them 15 minutes to complete their answers. The completion was anonymous and voluntary. Only one child refused to complete it because he was moody due to a fallout with his classmates. Four more students did not complete it as they were absent that day. Overall, I got 35 answers from both classes. This time the class was familiar with the process, so they didn't ask many questions and filled it in quite easily and quickly. While completing the evaluation, I was roaming around the class, encouraging only some of the students to answer the 'why' part of the activity. None seemed reluctant to fill it in, and I think it helped that I had made a review of all the activities on the board beforehand, I took it smoothly and gave them ample time without hurrying them.

One of the classes completed this evaluation on the last teaching hour of a very hot day. The kids asked me to create a cooler atmosphere by using the air-conditioner. I saw that this helped create a more relaxing ambience and helped them complete their task more calmly, even though some were tired and restless. It is highly important to create a comfortable atmosphere at the trainings, be it temperature, light, or other factors, as it helps participants focus and participate more fully.

The activity with the balloons seemed to be the most popular as it involved movement, drawing, creativity, critical thought and engagement. The second most popular type of activity that attracted students' attention was the one involving narration and storytelling techniques. More details coming from these answers are included in Chapter 8, where students' findings are reported regarding the content of the workshops.

In the time we got left, we had an open discussion about what they had learned from our intervention and how they could communicate their experience to the rest of the school. Some ideas were to arrange an exhibition, write an article, a poem, a play etc. Eventually, we decided to write about it in the school newspaper.

### **7.2.3 Meeting opportunity between my students and peer refugee students**

The components which describe the intercultural competence, and are discussed in Chapter 3, they alone are not enough to make an individual interculturally competent. It is necessary 'to be *deployed and put into practice through action* during intercultural encounters' (Huber & Reynolds, 2014, p. 21). Considering this, I tried to provide my students with a meaningful intercultural encounter. After consultation with my students, at the end of the workshops, we decided to have a follow-up activity that would enable communication with peer refugee students. Based on Contact Theory or 'contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), I aimed initially to create an opportunity for my students to get in direct contact with refugee students from the nearby refugee camp so that they have the direct experience of the 'other' and form their own opinion of their peers. However, as it was not feasible to meet, we decided to orchestrate an activity that would offer at least indirect contact.

In more detail, at the end of the workshops, I mentioned to my students that there is a nearby school which receives refugee students in the afternoons to have lessons on its premises. I wondered if they would care to come in contact with those students. Most of them showed enthusiasm and were very eager to arrange something. The few students who did not show enthusiasm still were intrigued. No one was against the idea. So, I promised to get in touch with their teacher and see if we could arrange a meeting. As the intervention finished towards the end of May, there was a time constraint. Greek primary schools close for summer in mid of June. However, I was determined to make my best effort to establish some kind of contact between the two populations. My first step was to inform my school's headmaster about my intention. He was favourable of the idea, but given the circumstances at the moment with the polarisation of the climate in the neighbourhood, he thought it would not be safe for either our students or the refugee peers to meet in person. A technical problem was also that the two schools had different working hours, so one of the student populations would have to travel outside school hours which meant much paperwork, approval from at least two ministries, including




students' parents, bus arrangements and more. I understood all that, and I agreed it would be a rather difficult venture; however, I couldn't drop the idea completely. Therefore, I counter suggested to get in touch with their teachers and see if they would be interested in facilitating their students' correspondence with our students. The headteacher offered to contact the headteacher of the neighbouring school for her approval. So, it happened. I got the contact details of the refugee teacher and the permission of both headmasters to act. Then, I approached the refugee teacher and made an appointment at their school one afternoon. She told me how their curriculum works and how refugee children try to adapt to the school environment. I also saw the students there and had the chance to talk with some of them during the break. Most of them were from Afghanistan. We agreed with their teacher to exchange some information between the two populations, and since many of them could not write, we thought of a topic about which both populations could draw pictures about: their favourite neighbourhood games. My students initiated the contact, they wrote a letter to their refugee peers in Greek and English saying a few things about themselves, their school and their favourite neighbourhood games, asking them questions about their lives and their favourite games. The letter was accompanied by their drawings. I delivered the letter to their teacher, and she mediated its content to the refugee children. With her help, a response was drafted and sent back to our students.

Below is a sample of the material exchanged between students:

## Pictures by Greek students

ΤΑ ΜΗΛΑ


Οδηγίες: Βρίσκουμε δύο άσπια που θα είναι ένα Ανάθετα τους, θα είναι δύο οι υπεργουίτοι. Τα άσπια που είναι έξω, κερτάνε την μπάλα και προσπαθούν να πειώχουν αυτούς που είναι μέσα. Όποιον πειώχεται η μπάλα, άγαντε έξω. Όποιος πειώχεται εν κινήσει, παίρνει ένα μήλο. Αν άσπια κλάσσει, άκαρπία. Έτσι, το μήλο μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί για να βάλει κάποιον μέσα. Όποιος μείνει τελευταίος (χωρίς μήλο) θα πρέπει να αταίσει δέκα βόλες για να νικήσει εκείνος για την ομάδα του. Ένώ αν τον κερτάνουν πριν τελειώσουν οι δέκα βόλες, νικάν η άλλη ομάδα.



" THE APPLES "

Guidelines: We find two kids who will be on the sidelines. Between them will be all the others. The kids who are on the sidelines, throw the ball to the other kids trying to touch them with the ball. Whoever the ball touches, goes out of the game. Whoever catches the ball, gets an "apple". That means that if he loses, he has one more chance. Also, the "apple" can be used to put someone in the game. Whoever stays last, without "apples", must avoid ten throws of the ball, for his team to win. But if the ball touches him before the ten throws of ball finish, the other team wins.

Winner



Tia, Panos, Lina, Chris, Stephen, Tasos

Figure 7.32 Guidelines in Greek and English of a ball game



Figure 7.33 Drawing of hide-and-seek



Figure 7.34 Drawing of another game with a ball and the guidelines in Greek

## Pictures by refugee students

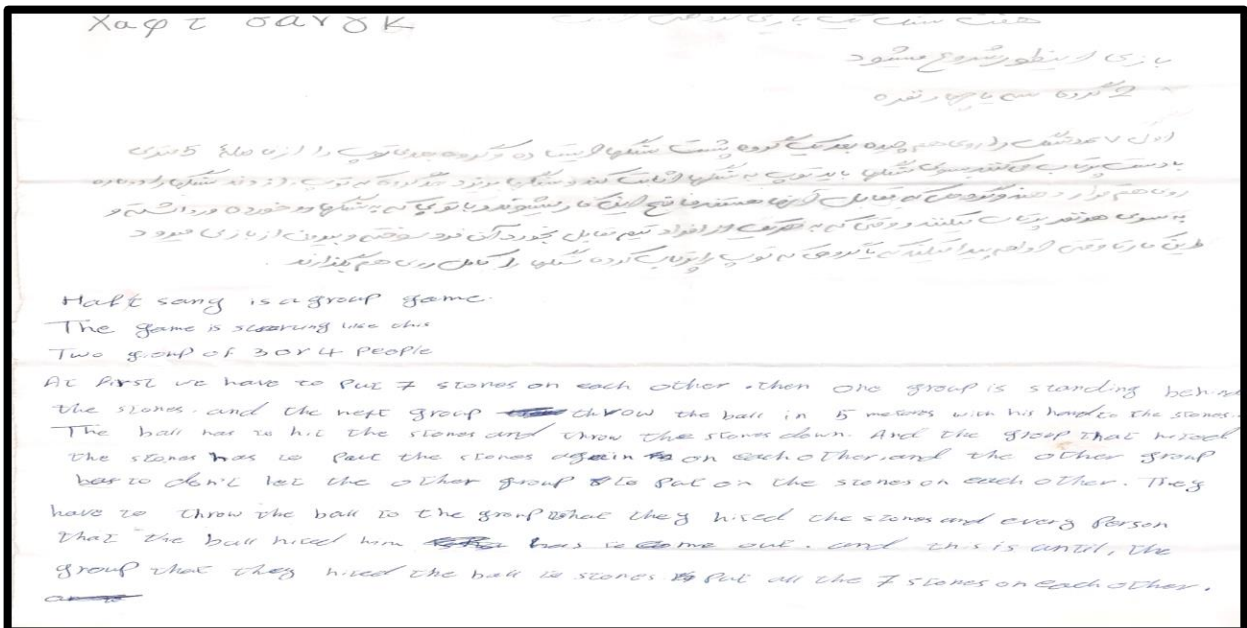


Figure 7.35 Guidelines in Farsi and English of a game played with stones and a ball

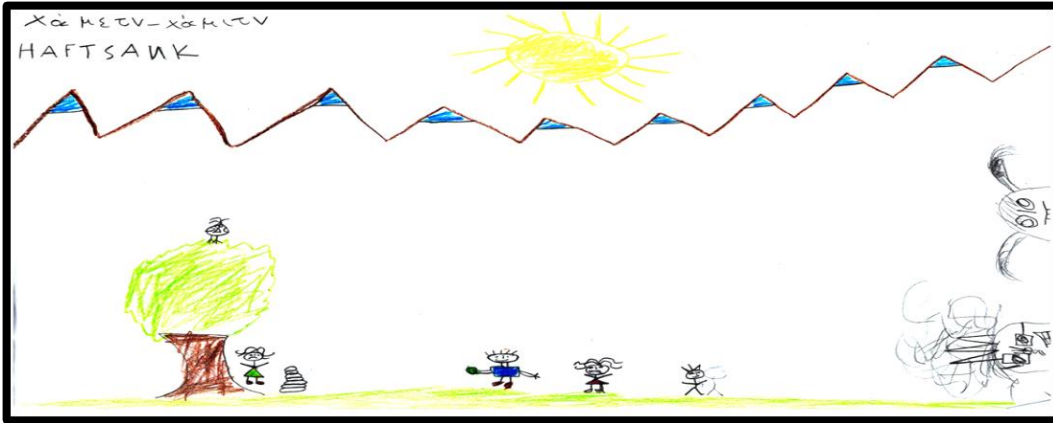


Figure 7.36



Figure 7.37

Figure 7.36 & Figure 7.37 Drawings of the game described in the guidelines above



Figure 7.38 Drawing of another ball game

My students waited for the response to their letter eagerly. They would ask me if something had arrived every day they saw me, even at break time. When the reply finally arrived, they were all very quiet and attentive to the things I took out of the envelope. I read the letter refugee children had written in broken English, including some words written in Greek. They also included a text in Farsi and many drawings from neighbourhood games. My students were very interested to hear what the peer refugees had written and asked for the letter and drawings to circulate in class so that they could see from close. They especially marvelled at the Farsi language, and that was a chance to notice that the script is written in the opposite direction to Greek. The refugee teacher told me her students were very pleased to receive something from their Greek peers, and they expressed their wish to join the morning school someday. Both populations were startled at the similarities between the games. Particularly, the game described by refugee children, which aims to knock down a pile of stones using a ball, is also played in Greek neighbourhoods.

Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (Allport 1954, Pettigrew 1998) supports that intergroup contact can have positive effects if four conditions are met: equal group status within the situation, attainment of common goals, intergroup cooperation and support of authorities. In the case of this intervention, all four conditions were met: the two populations had an equal status within the situation since they both belonged to the student populations of neighbouring schools. They were encouraged to work towards the common goal of communication and exchange of information between the two groups. This happened with the absence of any competition, but rather the work on a topic of common interest. Moreover, the authorities -in this case, the teachers- offered full support and facilitated the communication between the two groups, offering developmentally appropriate teaching practices as well (McKay, 2018).

Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) argue that contact reduces prejudice by enhancing knowledge about the outgroup, reducing anxiety about intergroup contact, and increasing empathy and perspective-taking. However, anxiety reduction and empathy appear as stronger mediators than increased knowledge of the outgroup (ibid.). That is why the

overall intervention I designed had as a primary aim to create empathy for refugees. It also offered a reduction of anxiety about intergroup contact through indirect contact with refugee peers, which was gently introduced and well-organised to avoid any stress for both sides. Of course, enhancement of knowledge about the outgroup was also present in the intervention, but it did not stand alone and only served to pave the way for empathy enhancement and anxiety reduction. This research advocates that even this indirect contact that my students had with the outgroup was much preferable – and had some impact, as the findings below also support - than not having the contact at all.

Even though the meeting opportunity was performed outside the ten workshops, five students responded in the second evaluation cycle that this was their favourite activity of the intervention:

**5B.B.2a** I liked the activity with the refugees the most because we wrote about some games and then we sent it to them to establish communication with them

**5B.B.5a** I liked the most the activity where we communicated with the refugee students

**5B.B.8a** I particularly liked the communication with students from the other country because we had the opportunity to see the letters and writing of that country

**5B.B.13a** I liked the communication with refugee students and neighbourhood games because they made us hear different stories about different people

**5B.B.17a** I liked the paintings they sent us because they were very beautiful and I was amazed by them

## **7.2.4 Dissemination of results**

The dissemination of the outcomes was decided by the students. We discussed ideas that included a theatrical play, an awareness campaign, a post on the school website and a publication in the school newspaper. Eventually, the publication in the school newspaper was opted for, considering the time limit ahead of us. I drafted a small summary of our intervention, and we chose the pictures with the students. Under each picture, we added a headline describing what it was about.

On my behalf, I additionally gave an oral presentation of the results to the schools' teachers' association.

Below is the extract from the school magazine dedicated to our workshops:



**Τμήμα Αγγλικών**

### «Ελευθερία της έκφρασης: από το μίσος στην ενσυναίσθηση»

Οι τάξεις Ε3 και Ε4 του σχολείου μας πραγματοποίησαν ένα πρόγραμμα Αγωγής Υγείας που διήρκεσε από τον Μάρτιο έως το Μάιο 2017.

Κύριο θέμα του προγράμματος αποτέλεσε η ρητορική του μίσους, δηλαδή οι μορφές έκφρασης που διαδίδουν, υποκινούν, ή προωθούν το φυλετικό μίσος, την ξενοφοβία και τη μισαλλοδοξία. Μέσα από βιωματικές δραστηριότητες οι μαθητές διερεύνησαν το δικαίωμα στην ελεύθερη έκφραση στο πλαίσιο της δημοκρατίας, καθώς και τους περιορισμούς και τις ευθύνες που απορρέουν από αυτό το δικαίωμα. Επίσης, μελέτησαν την κοινωνική ομάδα των προσφύγων και τα στερεότυπα ή προκαταλήψεις που ακολουθούν αυτή την ομάδα.

Στο πλαίσιο του προγράμματος, οι μαθητές είχαν την ευκαιρία να έρθουν σε επικοινωνία με συνομηλικούς τους πρόσφυγες μαθητές και να ανταλλάξουν πληροφορίες, μέσα από ζωγραφιές και κείμενα, για παιχνίδια που παίζουν τα παιδιά στις γειτονιές τους.

#### Δράσεις του προγράμματος



**Ρητορική του μίσους**  
 λόγια που παροτρύνουν σε άδικο και βίαια ή προκαλούν εχθρότητα και μίσος  
 λόγια που παροτρύνουν στην ειρήνη, στην αλληλεγγύη και στην κατανόηση

Συζητώντας για τη Ρητορική Μίσους και τις διαφορετικές μορφές της



**Μελετάμε τις ομάδες που συχνά υποφέρουν από τη ρητορική μίσους και τις επιπτώσεις που μπορεί να έχει αυτή για τα ίδια τα άτομα αλλά και την κοινωνία**





Τετάρτη 3 Μαΐου 2017  
 Μέρα της 3ης Μαΐου

ΙΣΟΤΗΤΑ      ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΑ ΔΙΚΑΙΩΜΑΤΑ      ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΗΣ  
 ΠΡΟΣΦΥΓΑΣ      ΑΣΥΛΟ      ΡΑΤΣΙΣΜΟΣ

Εξοικειωνόμαστε με τους όρους που αφορούν το προσφυγικό ζήτημα



Δημιουργήσαμε "νέους φίλους", τους φροντίσαμε και σκεφτήκαμε ποια είναι τα βασικά ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα που πρέπει να έχουν στη ζωή τους, ώστε να αισθάνονται καλά και ασφάλεια



Βλέπουμε σχόλια που είναι πιθανό να ακούσει ένα παιδί σε μια καινούρια και άγνωστη χώρα ή τάξη και αξιολογούμε ποιες δημιουργούν θετικά και αρνητικά συναισθήματα και γιατί



Διερευνούμε τις κοινωνικές ανισότητες μέσα από παιχνίδια ρόλων



231

Οι μαθητές του σχολείου μας επέλεξαν δυο αγαπημένα παιχνίδια που παίζουν στη γειτονιά τους, ζωγράρισαν σκηνές από αυτά και έγραψαν τις οδηγίες σε Ελληνικά και Αγγλικά. Κατόπιν τα στείλαμε στους μαθητές πρόσφυγες από τη Δομή του Σχιστού που φοιτούν στην απογευματινή ζώνη του 5<sup>ου</sup> Δ.Σ. Κερατσινίου.

**ΜΗΛΑ, ΚΡΥΦΟ**

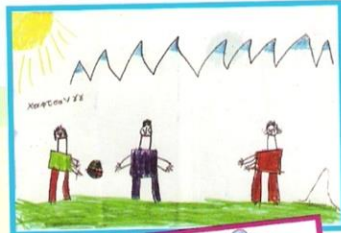


Οι μαθητές πρόσφυγες αφού έλαβαν τις ζωγραφιές μας, απάντησαν στο κάλεσμά μας και έστειλαν με τη σειρά τους δυο παιχνίδια που έπαιζαν στις δικές τους γειτονιές. Οι ζωγραφιές τους συνοδεύτηκαν από κείμενα οδηγιών στα Ελληνικά, στα Αγγλικά, αλλά και στη μητρική τους γλώσσα, πράγμα που εντυπωσίασε τους μαθητές του σχολείου μας.

**ΧΑΦΤΣΑΝΓΚ, ΒΑΣΑΤΙ**

1. ΧΑΦΤΣΑΝΓΚ με 2 ίσες ομάδες.  
 2. Οι ομάδες της Α ομάδας περνούν από πάνω και οι ομάδες της Β ομάδας από κάτω τους.  
 3. Η Α ομάδα περνάει με τα χέρια τους πάνω από το κεφάλι της Β ομάδας και κινούνται από πάνω της και η Β ομάδα περνάει από κάτω τους και θα βάλει πάνω στα χέρια της Α ομάδας και θα βάλει πάνω στα χέρια της Β ομάδας.  
 4. Το παιχνίδι τελειώνει όταν φτάνουν οι τρέτες.

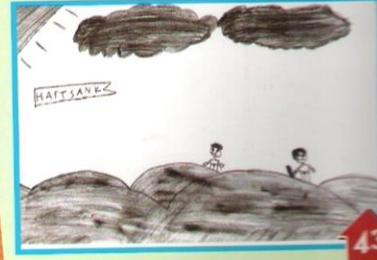
*Basati*



Хафт Сагк  
 1. Хафт Сагк с 2 равными командами.  
 2. Команды А команды проходят сверху, а команды В команды проходят снизу.  
 3. Команда А проходит руками над головой команды В и движется сверху команды В, а команда В проходит под руками команды А и кладет руки на руки команды А.  
 4. Игра заканчивается, когда приходят тротуары.

Haf Sang

1. 2 Teams
2. Team B goes on top of the other
3. Team A throws the ball to hit the rocks.
4. When the rocks are down, then A team takes the ball and tries to hit team B players.
5. Team B tries to put the rocks on top of the other again.





## **CHAPTER 8: STUDENTS' LEARNING JOURNEY AND OUTCOMES**

### **8.1 Introduction to the chapter**

In the previous chapter, I provided a detailed description of the intervention I implemented in class with my 11-year-old students. I described each of the ten workshops in detail, the aim of the activities we did and some of the interactions I had with students. Moreover, I mentioned some of the difficulties I met along the way and the participation of the two class teachers who agreed to join me on this journey.

Students were asked to fill in two questionnaires, one before the intervention and one after the end of it. Moreover, a subsample of them was chosen to be interviewed in more depth regarding their participation in the workshops. The current chapter presents the results of the analysis of this data to show how students began their learning journey with misconceptions about hate speech and limited ability to respond to hate speech incidents and how they came out of it more empowered to deal with hate speech and with increased empathy towards refugees.

### **8.2 How students started their learning journey**

The forty questionnaires students completed before the intervention in March 2017 captured their knowledge about and potential experiences with hate speech at that specific moment. This tool helped me gather useful information from my students, which I took into consideration while finalising the intervention design later on.

This is how my students started their learning journey:

## **8.2.1 Experiences with hate speech**

### **Unfamiliar with the term hate speech**

Students struggled to identify the meaning of hate speech or provide clear examples. In the question of whether they are familiar with the term 'hate speech', only two answered they did, the majority gave a negative response (23 out of 39), while fourteen respondents felt uncertain about its meaning. When asked to provide an example of hate speech, out of the six responses noted, two would repeat that they do not know the term, while other two were asking and guessing for its meaning:

**5A.IQ.13** Is it when one child speaks badly to another?

### **Misconceptions about hate speech**

Students also appeared to have misconceptions about hate speech, most frequently mistaking it for bullying. When asked to provide an example of hate speech, in some cases, they associated hate speech with violence and fighting. For instance:

**5A.IQ.5** I think it's that some kids swear at each other, and a fight starts

This is a misconception also noted by teachers earlier in this research. Teachers interviewed a year before the intervention took place were also unable to distinguish hate speech from bullying (see Chapter 5). Bullying is a deliberate misuse of power in relationships intending to cause harm, but by definition, hate speech is restricted to the words we use and comments we make to target people due to certain characteristics they possess, such as ethnicity, religion, skin colour, gender and others. It may or may not lead to physical and/or emotional violence.

When I asked students about their personal experiences with hate speech, a significant number of students (18 out of 39) responded that they have been a target of offensive comments at school. However, when asked about the reasons they have been commented offensively, there were some vague answers like:

**5A.IQ.2** Because they don't like me

**5A.IQ.7** They have commented on me during a fight

Children mentioned mostly that they had received offensive comments mainly due to external appearances, i.e., wearing glasses or braces, being overweight or not tall enough, which again alludes to bullying.

**5B.FQ.6** Because I'm the shortest in class

**5B.FQ.12** Because they think I'm silly and for my kilos

**5B.FQ.13** Because I wear glasses

Their answers to this question showed that at that specific point in time, hate speech didn't seem to be a problem for that specific population of students. Their concern is mostly around bullying, power relations and intimidation based on external appearance.

### **A main difference between the two classes**

The above confusion regarding the meaning of hate speech is also mirrored in students' answers to whether they have witnessed other children in school becoming the target of offensive comments. The majority responded affirmatively (33 out of 39). When asked to elaborate on the reasons other children were the victims of offensive comments, the two classes responded a bit differently. In the one class, most of the comments had to do with external features, mainly weight and height, but also colour of skin:

**5B.FQ.6** He was the target of offensive comments because he has another skin colour, for his weight and for his height

**5B.FQ.11** Because they have a different colour, because they are ugly, because they are obese, because they are too thin or too short or too tall, etc.

In the other class, students did not seem able to identify reasons. Instead, they remained in the description of the situation:

**5A.FQ.7** Because they were fighting and out of anger, they began to comment

**5A.FQ.10** I honestly don't know. Not sure, I think they had disagreements among themselves

or mentioned the motives of the mockery:

**5A.FQ.5** Maybe they want to make him feel bad

**5A.FQ.20** They probably feel better this way because their parents have not taught them 'rules'

This is an interesting difference between the two classes. It is possibly owed to the fact that they had different collective experiences as classes with their teachers and throughout their learning journeys so far. And perhaps this was also mirrored in their responses. However, I noted this element and considered it during the implementation of the workshops.

## **8.2.2 Online experiences with hate speech**

### **Inability to identify hate speech online**

As hate speech also manifests online, I included questions about the students' online experiences in the Initial Questionnaire. All students claimed to have internet access and use it, no matter how limited. When asked if they had seen groups or individuals targeted with offensive comments online, only one-fourth (11 out of 39) answered that they had witnessed it. When asked to elaborate further on the kind of comments they witnessed, they found it difficult to be specific. Two of the comments referred to external features of appearance, and one to features of character, i.e., a person was accused of being dirty and untidy. Only one student mentioned witnessing offensive language in online gaming. Their answers showed that either they hadn't encountered hate speech in their online world or that they did not know how to identify it. This difficulty resonates with the findings described above that students were unfamiliar with the term hate speech or had misconceptions about it.

### **Limited online experiences**

Another question (Question 6.A.) related to their online experiences seemed confusing for students. They were asked whether they had ever decided to intervene if they saw groups or individuals targeted with offensive comments on the internet. Most of them (28 out of 39) had responded earlier that they had not witnessed groups or individuals

targeted online. From how they answered here, revealed that their answers were mostly based on having witnessed similar incidents in their offline worlds. Even though I did not take into consideration their answers on that specific topic, as it was covered in another section of the questionnaire, it did help me realise one thing. Their internet experiences were not so significant yet, so as to devote time to the intervention on tackling hate speech online. Instead, their everyday face-to-face experiences were more important to them and hate speech offline was a topic worth investing more time into.

### **8.2.3 Responses to incidents of hate speech**

Even though many students could not identify the root cause of offensive language, a large number of them (29 out of 39) claimed to have intervened when they saw a child becoming the target of offensive comments to defend that person. In their further replies, it was apparent that they found difficulty in specifying the kind of actions they take when such incidents happen. However, their replies showed that it is present in their value system to consider offensive comments as something that needs to be tackled and answered for, even though they didn't seem to know how yet. This is further reiterated through the students' replies to the vignettes.

### **Different ways identified for responding to hate speech**

The vignettes, two brief lifelike scenarios that presented a case of hate speech, helped me record how students reported their choice of response to instances of hate speech. Overall, students preferred three main ways of responding to hate speech instances: by taking a personal stand, by involving an adult, or by invoking empathy as a means to lessen the impact of hurtful language.

In the virtual world scenario, only four of the students replied that they would not or could not take any course of action to respond to the situation where another child suffered the consequences of racist language. All the rest expressed regret for the child's situation and would not share racist jokes on their personal profiles.

Six replies included taking action by involving an adult, either a teacher, headmaster, or a parent.

**5A.FQ.15** I tell it to the teacher, and I try to reassure the child from the other country

**5B.FQ.4** I would tell them to stop what they are doing, call the headmaster and tell their mums to scold them so they understand the right thing and delete the material

Other eight students resorted to empathy as a means of tackling the situation:

**5B.FQ.15** I don't do what they say because I feel sorry for this person, and I don't want him to be embarrassed because of me

**5A.FQ.5** I would ask them to stop because if they were in his place, they wouldn't like it at all

However, again here, most of the students could not be specific about what course of action they would take to avoid hurting the child more or support it actively:

**5B.FQ.2** I tell them I won't do it because I don't like it. I also tell them to stop doing that too

**5A.FQ.7** I wouldn't share the jokes because I think it's not right

**5B.FQ.19** I wouldn't send the profile on the internet because I would defend the child and tell them not to say such things

In the scenario of the offline world, only four of the overall respondents replied that they would not take any action and would rather abstain:

**5B.FQ.15** I do not intervene, although I am sorry for the girl. I do not want to interfere because I am scared and may not be related to this incident

Another response (chosen by 6 students) was to seek help from elders, either school staff or parents, to tackle the incident for them:

**5B.FQ.7** I would report it immediately to my headmaster and teacher

**5B.FQ.9** I tell this to the parents of the children to punish them and not do it again

**5A.FQ.20** I'm going to talk to the headmaster and teachers about what is going on [...]

Seven children chose empathy as a coping mechanism to tackle this imaginary scenario of hate speech. They used the feelings and perspectives of others to make an impact on their behaviour:

**5B.FQ.14** I will tell them that all children, even adults, have difficulties. This child has difficulty in lessons, you may have difficulty elsewhere. Please stop mocking her

**5A.FQ.11** I would tell her not to mind and tell them that if they were in her position, they wouldn't like it

The most popular response involved taking personal action to try to mitigate the hurtful behaviour. Almost half of the students (15 out of 39) would display solidarity with the girl (victim), defend her against the haters and/or encourage her to see the positive features she possesses:

**5B.FQ.6** I go to console the little girl and tell her to ignore them, no matter what they say, and not to care about them. Only then will they just stop making fun of her

**5B.FQ.13** I go near her and talk to her with supportive words so she can be happy and stop crying. This way, if she gets mocked again, she can stand on her feet and not be scared

However, most of the time, even though there is a positiveness expressed, few students were able to specify how they would translate their solidarity into action:

**5A.FQ.17** I would go and say nice things to her and tell her not to worry

**5A.FQ.18** I drive them away and tell them to stop

Moreover, only one identified diversity and mentioned it as something positive:

**5A.FQ.10** I would defend her by saying that all people have the right to be different and that this is good

All this information gathered from the vignettes helped me understand some difficulties students had with responding to hate speech. It was made clear to me that I needed to work more on empathy during the intervention and the sense of diversity as a positive element. Moreover, it was noted that there was absolutely no reference to human rights anywhere in their answers. Furthermore, I needed to provide the opportunity of identifying a specific course of action to defend a person whom they feel suffers from discrimination.

### **Low readiness to respond to hate speech**

In both scenarios, most students were not able to come up with specific ways to tackle hate speech. Even though they empathised with the victim, it seems it was unclear to them how they could intervene. This low readiness to respond to hate speech is most

probably linked to their unfamiliarity with the term and/or with misconceptions about its meaning.

**In conclusion**, the Initial Questionnaire completed by students before the intervention helped to establish a baseline of how they embarked on the learning journey. It captures how they understood some aspects of the school world around them, their relations with fellow students and their experiences with hate speech.

By and large, students were not familiar with hate speech and thus were unable to provide any examples of it. They could not distinguish between bullying and hate speech and often merged the two. This corroborates with the findings of Chapter 5 where teachers also attested to the same problem. Regardless, most students had witnessed instances where words had hurt their fellow students. Many of them could not figure out the reasons that led to the usage of offensive language. Moreover, many students reported having been a target of offensive comments at school, but when asked to specify the reasons for the comments, they either couldn't be specific or mentioned physical appearance as the main source for receiving offensive language. Finally, the responses of students to the two vignettes showed they do not approve of actions of discrimination, but they feel perplexed as to how to react to them.

### **8.3 How students came out of their learning journey**

After completing the Initial Questionnaires, students attended a series of experimental workshops in class. In the first four of them, we explored the issue of hate speech. In the following workshops, we approached the social group of refugees and how they can be affected by hate speech (more information in Chapter 7). At the end of this educational intervention, the same students completed one more questionnaire. It aimed to capture some of the progress made regarding students' familiarity with the concept of hate



speech, as well as their awareness of the refugee topic. In addition, it helped me record students' opinions about the structure and the content of the intervention.

Moreover, eight interviews were conducted with a selection of students to gather more in-depth information regarding their experiences during the class workshops and their understanding of hate speech (more information in Chapter 4). They also served to shed more light on some of the answers I received in the questionnaires.

The findings presented below come from both the Final Questionnaire and student interviews. All in all, at the end of the intervention, progress was observed in the understanding of the term hate speech. Students were able to provide clear examples of it, even capturing some of the root causes of hate speech. Their readiness to take action in a case of hate speech was increased. Students showed more confidence in responding to a situation where other people would suffer from the consequences of hate speech. Apart from negating to act as accomplices in a hate speech event, they were ready to take remedial action, quite often by themselves and sometimes by inviting the intervention of adults. In some cases, they would even respond to the perpetrator directly. Students' responses to the lifelike scenarios captured the expression of a bold negation to encourage violence against foreigners. Empathy and human rights were offered as an antidote to racist behaviours.

Here is, in more detail, the picture of my students after our learning journey:

### **8.3.1 Increased awareness about hate speech**

#### **Progress in providing successful examples of hate speech**

Even though in the Initial Questionnaire most students attested unaware of the term 'hate speech' and could not provide examples, in the Final Questionnaire, most of them managed to provide examples. Four respondents chose to leave the answer space blank, and seven described the behaviour of discrimination rather than the root cause of this behaviour:

**5B.FQ.18** Offending someone with bad words

**5A.FQ.4** When someone makes fun of someone else or uses offensive slogans against them

By this stage students did not display the uncertainty captured in the Initial Questionnaires regarding hate speech and were able to respond to the term. Many of them (19 out of 39) provided clearer examples of hate speech:

**5B.FQ.12** You are a foreigner; we don't want you in our company

**5A.FQ.3** [Hate Speech is] if someone says women are inferior

**5A.FQ.2** You are not a man, you are a fag

**5A.FQ.12** Refugees are dirty and carry diseases

This records students' progress in understanding the term 'hate speech', even though there were still some students (6) who blended hate speech with instances of bullying:

**5B.FQ.5** We don't hang out with you because you are black and you wear glasses, go away

**5B.FQ.3** We don't play with you because you are fat. We don't want you because you are from another country. You are nerdy. Go away

All in all, one of the intentions of the intervention to see the students' confidence in providing examples of hate speech was achieved. Well over half of them (26 out of 39) managed to give successful examples capturing some of the root causes of hate speech. Even when their familiar concept of bullying came up, they managed to identify and include hate speech as well. This ability was not there when they filled out the Initial Questionnaire.

Finally, it is notable that some students connected hate speech to violence. This shows that at least some of them understood how hate speech works and that it can pave the way to violence, if we let it escalate.

**5A.I.1** We learnt that hatred is bad and it's not nice to show violence towards another person.

**5B.FQ.10** [...] there are many children who are of a different colour, from another country, [...] and some other children who insult them, speak badly to them, hit them, etc.

## **Dealing with hate speech: A more empowered attitude**

The responses of students before the intervention showed they did not embrace actions of discrimination, but they felt a bit confused as to how to react to them. Moreover, some students were not willing to take any action against hate speech and would rather abstain from such cases. However, after the intervention, students seemed more certain as to what course of action they would take in an incident of hate speech. Students emitted more confidence to tackle hate speech. In addition, contrary to before the intervention, this time, no student replied that they would not or could not take a course of action to respond to a situation where other people would suffer the consequences of racist language.

Before the workshops, a popular response to tackle an incident of hate speech would be to involve an adult, either a teacher, headmaster, or a parent. This time only two answers in total would refer to adults. Thus, suggesting they felt a bit more empowered to handle cases of hate speech by themselves and not resort to the involvement of an adult to tackle the situation for them. Also, the fact that no one answered with uncertainty or declared unaware of hate speech -as discussed above- shows a more empowered attitude towards handling the topic of hate speech in general.

Except for the four replies that were left blank in the scenario question, in all the other (35 out of 39) answers, students would refuse to encourage violence against foreigners. None seemed to fall for peer pressure and even entertain the thought of circulating the video mentioned in the scenario. In addition, they appeared ready to offer explanations why they would not succumb to such behaviour and even sometimes respond to the perpetrator directly. Also, it was impressive that several students would actively ask the hater to delete his video.

**5B.FQ.6** I would not do what he told me to do because I would feel sorry for the foreigners. Then I would try to persuade him to delete it and admit his mistake.

**5B.FQ.19** I would tell him that I am not a racist and that what he did was not right. And I would tell him to delete what he uploaded for the others because they are also humans. They did not publish anything about him or his friends.

Similar are the results coming from the students' interviews. Students seemed more empowered to stand up against hate speech cases and deal with them. Most responded that they would intervene if they were to witness an incident where a fellow student was harmed by hate speech.

Usually, they combined a series of actions. Their first suggestion was to step in personally in an effort to terminate the harassment. Then they would seek the involvement of an adult by reporting the incident, hoping adults (parents, teaching staff) would take a remedial course of action. Finally, action towards the victim was suggested, usually through befriending the person. The following student response is very typical in this respect:

**5A.I.2** I would intervene. I would ask them [the perpetrators] to stop, or I would inform some teacher, and I would befriend the child.

At the same time, students were being realistic by mentioning that they would assess the situation first. They would consider if they knew the perpetrators and if they felt they had the power and abilities to mitigate the situation. If they believed they could handle it themselves, they would get involved. If they assessed that they could not have any impact, they would implicate adults.

**5B.I.7** - Would the perpetrators be friends or unknown to me?  
- *Other kids from the school here.*  
- I would intervene, but without creating a big issue. I don't want the kid [the victim] to get in an uncomfortable position.

**5A.I.4** To begin with, I would study the situation and see who was making fun of him. For a start, I would stay there. I would see for what reason they were making fun of him, and when I gathered all the necessary information, I would inform the school headmaster. And if they continued with it, I would inform the child's parents.

## Dealing with hate speech: A more empathetic attitude

The data provide evidence that empathy is reinforced during the workshops. Even before the workshops, some students would refer to empathy as a means of responding to cases of hate speech. We see that after the intervention, that notion was reinforced and somewhat increased. More replies this time (11 students out of 39) appeal to the feelings and perspectives of others in an effort to show the perpetrator why what he does is harmful to others.

**5B.FQ.12** I would tell him that if we were in the position of foreigners, we wouldn't like it. Also, to them, we are foreigners too.

**5A.FQ.6** I would tell him this: "I will not do it because they are essentially like our brothers!"

Interviews are in the same line and provide more detailed answers.

A student who mentioned diversity as a possible but not a legitimate reason to be harmed by hate speech appealed to empathy as a response and remedy to the harm done. She would mainly deal with the perpetrators and not so much with the victim:

**5A.I.3** I would take the side of the child being mocked. I would tell the other children that they should not do this, because if they were in his/her place, they would not feel nice about it. And what does it matter if s/he is new to school, or if s/he comes from another country or if s/he has a different skin color?

It is interesting that some of the students applied a more empathetic approach to their own classmates as well. While explaining why she liked the activity 'Words that Wound', one participant mentioned that it 'helped some kids to think of the words they use towards their classmates' (5B.I.8). She also provided an example of a classmate they used to make fun of due to his petite appearance and how they stopped doing that after the specific activity.

Regardless of their age, students resisted the eye-for-an-eye logic. One of the students acknowledged this would not be a solution, and he suggested empathy to the perpetrators again to encourage them to change their attitude, resisting peer pressure once again:

**5B.I.6** I would intervene, I could respond to them, not with the swearing, of course. I could tell them nicely that what they do is not proper, and if you were in his/her place, you wouldn't like it. So, think about your actions before you act.

Getting to know the 'other' and befriending the victim is also a coping mechanism, they suggested.

**5B.I.5** I would approach him/her and ask their name. I would ask if they were from another country, about their religion, etc. And if I liked him/her, I would be friends with them.

### **Explicit references to human rights and diversity**

Moreover, there was a significant increase in direct references to human rights. Though before the intervention, human rights were not connected to hate speech, now six students made explicit reference to rights and equality in their effort to explain why racist behaviours cannot be tolerated:

**5A.FQ.16** I would tell him no because we are all human, and we all have rights.

**5B.FQ.8** I would tell him to remove the video because all people have equal rights.

Other students connected hate speech to human rights, especially the right to freedom of expression. They even achieved to put it into perspective and talked about this fine line between the right to express what we believe and the border of offending someone.

**5B.I.7** [...] your freedom ends where the freedom of the other begins. We cannot upset other people with our words, even if we are in a position to say what we want. We say what we want, but there is a fine line.

This reply and comment are even more interesting when we consider that it comes from a student who had medium participation at the workshops and low participation as a student in the general class.

Overall, the striking difference in their answers after the workshops was the tone of determination present in their replies. Apart from negating to act as accomplices to a hate speech event, they were ready to take remedial action, such as asking their classmate to take the video down and/or offering an explanation why such behaviour should stop or how it could cause harm.

In the same light, some students talked about diversity in their answers. One student pointed out that being different is not a legitimate reason to become a target of ridicule.

The course of action she suggested was to take the victim's side by refusing to become accomplice to the perpetrators. The suggestion to display solidarity was accompanied by an appeal to empathy. She suggested talking about the issue, talking with the perpetrators, and helping them understand that diversity is not to be used as a reason for discrimination:

**5A.I.1** I would go and support him/her because it is not nice for other people to make fun of you because you are different. I would defend him/her by being on their side and not joining others in the wrongdoing. I would also talk about this issue and suggest [to the perpetrators] that being different is not a reason to be laughed about.

This comment links with previous comments about befriending the victim. Students usually tend to see victims as alien to them, bearing no resemblance. They cannot think of themselves as possibly being in a similar position. Even though they are estranged from them, they are now willing to invest the effort to get to know someone different.

In one way or another, most students expressed empathy as a learning outcome in their answers in the interviews too. Additionally, many expressed respect for human dignity and equality:

**5B.I.5** I also learned that you don't judge people by the colour of their skin and what religion they follow.

### **8.3.2 Increased awareness about refugees**

#### **New knowledge about refugees used to challenge stereotypes**

Many students mentioned as new knowledge acquired that refugees make a long and often dangerous journey to reach our country. Moreover, they referred to the war as a common cause for refugees fleeing. They also named certain hardships that refugees face and stressed the involuntary movement they go through.

**5B.FQ.17** [I learnt that] Refugees are people who abandon their homes against their will due to war

**5A.FQ.6** I learnt that they are leaving their homeland without their will and are also losing their families

**5A.FQ.14** [I learnt that] That they have a very difficult life and that we need to help them

Another knowledge students seemed to have gained from the intervention, as discussed in interviews, was the actual living standards of refugees. The media usually project a standardised image of them but never go behind the scenes and follow them in everyday reality. So, some students pointed out that through the workshops and the activities we did, they had the chance to see and think about how it was where their neighbouring refugees lived. Also, they had the chance to see the written form of the language they speak and write.

**5A.I.2** Through the activity 'Agree/Disagree' I learned that refugees are not all dirty and that they don't hurt us. [...] I also learned how it is where they live and how they write their language.

There also was a reference to the root causes of refugees are created:

**5B.I.5** Their country is at war, so they flee to other countries to survive.

The fact that they made reference to these things as something they learned shows that they were not really aware of the differences between a migrant and a refugee. Before starting the learning journey, the vast majority was affirmative that they knew the differences between immigrants and refugees. There was a closed question in the Initial Questionnaire asking whether they knew the difference between migrants and refugees. Many students replied that they did, perhaps because they didn't want to admit to not having the knowledge or because they mistakenly thought they had. However, the answers above speak of the opposite. It seems that students came out of this intervention more knowledgeable about some of the realities refugees face. This knowledge serves to alleviate differences and increase empathy for the other group. It also helps students get a better understanding of the world around them. And hopefully, adopt a more critical perspective next time they are exposed to media/family information about the refugee issue.

Some notable answers were the likes of the following:

**5B.FQ.9** [Something I learnt about refugees is] that they are not all thieves, pilferers and stinkers, but they are people who were forced to leave their country because there was a war



**5B.FQ.19** That not everyone harms us. But they came to our country because, in their country, they may have had a war

Phrases like ‘refugees are pilferers and stinkers’ are words that were never heard or used at school. Most likely, this comes from conversations children heard in their homes or elsewhere from older people of their surrounding environment. It is worth reminding here that during the period when this research took place, hate speech targeting refugees was on the rise. They were depicted as pariahs by a number of mainstream media and by some politicians. Before the intervention, I had heard similar phrases being vocalised by a limited number of students. The difference this time was that the same phrase would not finish at a full stop but continue with a mitigating sentence following, like ‘but they had to leave their country because of war’. The word ‘pilferer’ was now replaced by the word ‘person’. That shows they start questioning what they have heard around them as the only truth and reflect critically on possible other aspects of the same situation. That is exactly the compensatory power that school and education hold.

There were five other comments that expressed more clearly stereotypical notions about refugees, however, dismantled:

**5A.FQ.13** [I learned that] they didn’t come to Greece because they liked it, but because they were forced to flee

**5A.FQ.7** [I learned that] they don’t stink

Some other students made straight reference to human rights, acknowledging that refugees are right holders as well:

**5A.FQ.3** They are also equal as far as rights are concerned

**5B.FQ.10** [I learned that] they need help, love, care, food, water, clothes, shoes, toys

Furthermore, in a question referring to the new things students learned from their participation in the workshops, I received some answers about stereotypes.

Through getting to know the ‘other’, a chance was given to challenge some stereotypes. One typical stereotype my students had was that refugees carry diseases and are dirty. One more student used this question space to elaborate on her thoughts about this topic in detail. In her sayings, she seemed to still struggle with this stereotypical notion.

However, this time, she also talked about equality and compassion. Furthermore, she attested to having no prior knowledge of the living conditions of the refugees or their hardships. Now she uses this new knowledge to dismantle the stereotype:

**5B.I.8** Of course, not everyone will be sick. But I wouldn't misjudge them if they were. Nobody knows what they go through. It is one thing to talk about it and another thing to go through it. Crossing a sea may bring various dangers. [...] Most Greeks just turn them away. They don't understand that they are simply from another country. They are equal to us. Simply put, others have different skin colour, others carry diseases. We need to help them as we can.

One answer inclusive of all the above follows below. It was a closing remark towards the end of an interview summing up what the student is left with from the overall intervention:

**5B.I.6** What stays with me is that the refugees are equal to us, that everyone is equal. We should not make fun of them because we would not like it if we went to their country and they made fun of us. And we should help them because some of them do not have money, food or a house. This is mainly something the Municipalities should do. To make some spaces for them to live filled with food supplies.

The same student captured all three notions -refugees, empathy, hate speech- in another reply:

**5B.I.6** I learned that it is not right to make fun because, if we were in the position of the other person, we would not like it in any case. I also learned that it is not nice to use labels and insults because it is not nice, it can spoil a relationship.

### **Increased empathy towards refugees**

Particularly the last quoted student was able to articulate what kind of human rights they are deprived of and need to safeguard. He also included the toys as a basic need, possibly mirroring his own personal needs. That reveals a level of empathy involved.

As a matter of fact, many answers included empathy as a component. Even though the question was articulated with reference to new knowledge students gained about the refugees, at least seven answers included empathetic behaviour as something new gained:

**5B.FQ.12** I learnt that refugees are going through a lot, and it's not nice to see your house on fire or your parents die

**5A.FQ.16** [I learned that] that they are people like us and that we need to treat them nice because we would like the same if we were in their position

Many children mentioned that refugees are people like us, or normal people, or not different from us. This is quite a step for them, considering how they began as blind to diversity. Now they acknowledge it exists but do not assess it as something negative. Possibly, not all students can reach yet the next level of embracing diversity which is all being different and all equal. However, it is the first and very important step for them to where they are now, as opposed to where they used to be before the intervention. I feel that this intervention helped to a certain extent to start seeing beyond the term 'refugee' and looking at the person behind it.

The students' answers in the interviews included comments that refugees are indeed 'regular people' and do not differ much from themselves. In addition, students mentioned how some activities, including narration and self-expression, helped to make the connection between 'us' and the 'others'.

**5B.I.7** I need to say that the story we wrote got most of us sensitised because all of us, here, when we see the other person who comes from their country here, we don't realise the hurdles they've been through.

**5A.I.1** I was struck by the activity with the refugees (describes the process here) because we would express our opinion to the other students. [...] I didn't fluctuate with my positioning because, as I said before, refugees are also equal to regular people.

How the activities and non-formal methodology of experiential learning contribute to that is discussed in more detail later in the current chapter.

Furthermore, another student mentioned that through this intervention, he managed to increase his empathy, not only towards refugees but towards people in general. He felt he increased his sensitivity towards what is happening to other people, contrary to what he labelled himself previously as 'self-centred'. Me wanting to verify that I understood his reply correctly, I asked him what empathy is, and he gave the following reply:

**5A.I.4** Empathy is when you feel what the other person feels, and you understand it.

Even though we never discussed the term 'empathy' explicitly during the workshops, students could express it in their own words and provide examples throughout their answers. Here is a notable answer where a student also manages to capture the essence of the definition, even though this was outside our scope of learning.

### **Welcoming a refugee student into the class**

Given that the conception of my whole intervention was based on the negative atmosphere back then regarding refugees and even some student comments that they might leave our school if refugee children joined it, for me, it was important to see whether they would now be willing to receive refugee students in their class.

None of the students' replies would reveal a hostile attitude towards a prospective refugee fellow student. However, four answers were neutral, that is, they either wouldn't take any course of action or they couldn't decide on what course of action they would take. One, in particular, comments that the reason behind this chosen behaviour is his or her parents:

**5A.FQ.6** I wouldn't dare do anything because my dad would send me to a private school

Even in that case, the child expresses more of a regret or an excuse for their inability to act rather than a negative attitude towards a prospective refugee fellow student.

All the rest of the replies (30 out of 39) expressed a positive attitude towards refugees. Students were able to suggest specific ideas on how to make their prospective new fellow refugee students feel welcomed in the class. Most students suggest *socialising with them* would be the most effective way to make them feel welcome. Addressing them with a 'hello', giving them a school tour, inviting them to join in games in the schoolyard, helping them with coursework, helping them with the language, offering a 'friendship bracelet', throwing them a party, inviting them to sit next to each other during an excursion, are some common answers that came up. Overall, helping the new students out in whatever they need for a better adjustment is the mentality followed in their line of answering:

**5B.FQ.8** I would show him our school, we would all play together, we would make him feel comfortable, and I would help him with his homework.

**5B.FQ.19** I could guide her around the school and bring her a bracelet. I would also keep her company.

**5B.FQ.20** I would organise a welcome party.

The increased sense of empathy my students have functions as a bridge towards reaching the 'other'. Evidence from the data shows that students have put themselves in the place of their peer refugee students and expressed what would have made them feel welcomed in a new environment. The common ground agreed upon by most is the cultivation of friendship. In this age, friendship and acceptance by peers play a pivotal role in their well-being, which is acknowledged by all of them, one way or another.

**5A.FQ.13** I would become his friend and try to help him learn the language

**5A.FQ.16** I would try to get to know the person and become friends

**5B.FQ.18** I would tell her to sit next to me, hang out, and sit together on excursions. I would help her adjust to the new class. I would also ask her if she could tell me some things about her country, and I would tell her about mine

In the examples above, we see that getting to know the 'other' is sometimes highlighted too. We see some students building a bridge to reach the 'other', acknowledging the existing differences but suggesting ways of overcoming them.

Fewer children suggested that showing neutrality towards them would help make refugee students feel that they are not different to the rest of the students.

**5A.FQ.7** I would try to treat him as if he was a regular child

Of course, adults know that 'neutrality' is tricky and treating everyone the same way can cover up or exacerbate inequalities. However, in the eyes of a child, perhaps that seems like acting in a fair way.

# **CHAPTER 9: STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTION**

## **9.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter includes students' and teachers' evaluation of the overall intervention regarding their feedback about the workshops' structure, duration and content. There was a special reference to the impact of different teaching methods applied during the learning process. In addition, the two teachers who accompanied me in implementing the workshops provided suggestions for improvement, feedback on my performance and evaluation of their role during the workshops. Finally, they both attested to increased familiarity with the topic of hate speech.

## **9.2 Students' evaluation of the intervention**

Students had the chance to express their opinion about different aspects of the intervention. Their feedback was recorded through the completion of forty Questionnaires after the end of the intervention in May 2017, alongside eight interviews with a sub-sample of students. All students replied positively regarding their overall impression of the intervention, providing different perspectives. As the question was open, others chose to refer to what they liked about it and others to what they learned from it. Overall, they described it as interesting, informative and entertaining at the same time.

**5A.I.2** We learned things we didn't know (...) It made me think deeper. Now I have changed my opinion completely about refugees and migrants

**5B.I.6** This intervention could help us (...) if we were making fun of some kids, we can improve that, not to make fun of them, not to use offensive words (...)

**5B.I.7** This intervention had such a way to sensitise us that it made us engage in some thoughts and understand some very important things. It was not boring; it was entertaining and informative at the same time.

At the same time, when students discussed what they would have liked to remain the same in the programme in the workshops, half of the total students (16/39) replied that they would have liked the whole programme to remain exactly as it is. This provides positive feedback reflecting how well received the intervention was among the students.

The Final Questionnaire and the short evaluation forms that students were invited to complete halfway through and at the end of the workshops included questions regarding the structure and content of the intervention. Below are some of their comments and advice about elements that worked well and others that could be improved.

### **9.2.1 About the Structure of the intervention**

#### **Duration**

Regarding the duration of the programme, almost half of the students (19 out of 39) expressed the wish it had lasted longer. Another 18 participants found the duration of the intervention adequate. Only two students mentioned they would have liked it to last less. As such, it appears that students enjoyed the workshops and felt that the amount of time spent during the workshops was adequate, or rather they would have enjoyed some more time exploring experiential learning.

Moreover, students suggested what they would have liked to be done differently in the programme. A good number of them (16/35) replied that there is nothing they would have liked to be changed; they liked the workshops as they were structured. Four students refrained from answering the question, and the rest of the answers included various replies. The most popular reply from the various sorts was the wish for more time to be dedicated to this project.

**5A.FQ.6** [I would have liked it] To last longer

**5A.FQ.10** I wouldn't like to change anything

This was also reiterated by the answers students gave in similar questions in the interviews where they discussed whether they would have liked to be different. Half of them mentioned they wouldn't change a thing about the intervention. Two of them suggest that it should have lasted longer and that extra days per week should have been added to it.

**5B.I.5** No, I don't think I would like something to have been different. It was a complete programme and nothing was missing.

**5A.I.4** I'd like it to include more games to play

**5B.I.8** Okay, I liked the whole intervention very much, and I would like to do it every day. However, I would like one more day.

A few other suggestions about changes in the workshops were noted by individual students who expressed the wish to have had more time to play games, paint, engage in discussions and watch videos.

Another very popular topic that came up in the context of the same discussion, was a reference to the teams' formation. Some students expressed their wish to have had the chance to form teams where they could choose their teammates by themselves.

**5B.FQ.20** I would like to choose with whom we will cooperate.

Even when students discussed what they would keep the same, half of the replies would be divided into comments about time, teamwork and activities. Almost ten replies would refer to teamwork. All of them would express positive feelings about it and mention how they enjoyed experiencing work in a different way than the usual one. Some mentioned the cooperation they experienced and the feeling that they all participated in a way. However, half of them add that they would have preferred to work with their own friends or fellow students that they would choose themselves. It is clear that the issue of teamwork bothered students a lot. That is why this topic was investigated in more detail in the Final Questionnaire, and detailed reflections on the process follow.



## Some technical aspects

Students also had the opportunity to talk about potential difficulties in understanding any of the tasks or worksheets of the workshops and/or difficulty completing the two questionnaires.

Regarding the tasks and the worksheets, half of them reported minor problems with a word or two in some of the activities that they couldn't understand but mentioned that once this was clarified or examples provided, they could move easily to the implementation of the exercise.

**5B.I.8** There were some things that I didn't understand. But then, when you showed us some two-three examples, I understood what we needed to do and that was fine.

Sadly, they couldn't give me a concrete example of such instances. That could either be because they couldn't recall the specific exercise or because they had trouble understanding the word or guideline and thus had difficulty conveying it.

The other half of the students either mentioned they didn't have difficulty understanding any of the tasks or worksheets or that the problem they faced in accomplishing an exercise was due to their difficulty in working in teams.

**5B.I.6** We understood what we had to do, but some kids would fight about who would write it, who would report it, who would start saying first, second, third...

Most of the students managed to accurately depict the guidelines given to them for the activities they chose to describe. Some of the students added the element they liked more about the activity, apart from describing what they were asked to do. Overall, it seems that the guidelines were clear to them, and they could follow the activities' purpose and process.

Regarding the completion of the questionnaires, it seems that the wording of the questions was comprehensible, and when there was a difficulty in completion, it was mainly owed to the cognitive gap.

**E.3.I.8** No, not really. [...] Generally, if you know a subject that you have to comment on or write about, it's easy to do so.

**5A.I.3** I had difficulty in one question.

*-Was it difficult to understand it or to provide an example?*

To give an example.

**5B.I.6** *-Did you have any difficulty in completing the two questionnaires?*

No, because I was watching the project, and I liked what we did, and I had no particular difficulty.

*- Did you find the questions difficult?*

No, the questions were related to what we had learned through the workshops. It was something like an exam but without bad grading.

The last comment verifies that the message I had stressed a lot during the completion of both questionnaires -that 'there is no right or wrong answer'- had eventually come across.

Last but not least, in the context of an interview discussion with a student, the 'red card' came up. She expressed appreciation for its existence, as it could be used for managing difficult feelings:

**5A.I.2** What I really liked was the Red Card you introduced. I liked that whoever did not want to ... If someone was angry with someone else and didn't want to hurt him, he could use the red card. Or if someone didn't feel well or didn't want to participate, he could also use it.

## **9.2.2 About the Content of the workshops**

### **Experiential learning**

Students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn through exploration and not be spoon-fed with knowledge. Many of them commented as success the fact that the workshops combined the element of fun with knowledge. They liked the variety of activities they engaged in, some of which they had never tried before.

One student felt so comfortable speaking her mind freely that she compared the intervention to the more traditional teaching we follow during our English language lessons:

**5B.I.8** I really liked it [the intervention] (...) we learned new things and restored some knowledge we thought we had but was incorrect. (...) I liked it [the intervention] a lot, even though I like English too. But this [the intervention] – no offence – I liked it a bit more. (...) I believe it was worth it. To know what is happening around us.

This student may be capturing here the whole problem with the traditional forms of education that sadly still permeate a big portion of Greek schooling; the teacher-centeredness, the top-down decision-making about learning, the neglect of students' real interests and the lack of connection of school knowledge to the external world.

It was also noticed throughout the intervention that some students who were not very 'strong' or willing to participate in our English lessons, were more vocal and active during the workshops. The following comment is indicative:

**5A.I.1** I liked that we all participated

It came from a student who had medium participation in the workshops. However, she is a student with minimum participation in the English lessons we had together that year. So, seeing her participating more in this context was a pleasant surprise. Her comment verifies that she felt more motivated to participate in the non-formal setting of the intervention. Perhaps the experiential activities made her feel more relaxed and feel the new learning space -as opposed to the traditional one- was safe enough to participate more. Instances of increased participation of some unexpected students, who seemed to be indifferent or shy or intimidated to participate more actively in our regular lessons, are depicted in Chapter 7.

Non-formal education and human rights education use cooperative learning and this promotes good relations between learners as they learn to respect different opinions and work together towards a common goal. This does not happen when learning is structured in a competitive way. Competitive learning is usually encountered in formal education

settings. Competition promotes self-interest and disrespect for others, which can easily put off and demotivate learners who are more sensitive or introverted.

Regarding the process of the experiential activities, a student highlighted the importance of debriefing in non-formal learning and the need for 'meaning-making' out of the activities. When explaining, during the interview, what it was she liked the least about the intervention, she referred to one of the activities ['The Sun and the Birds']. When asked to explain further what she didn't like, the student mentioned that she didn't understand the meaning of this activity. This comment stresses the importance of 'debriefing' while performing experiential activities. Even though the specific activity was followed by a debriefing discussion, there was not much time left to devote to it due to unforeseen peculiarities of the process. The following quote shows that if the debriefing part is skipped or not performed diligently, it might leave the learners confused and/or frustrated:

**5A.1.3** -*What did you like least about the intervention?*

The activity we did, the Sun and the Birds.

-*Why?*

I did not understand it.

- *The instructions were not clear enough?*

No, it was not about how we played it. I didn't get its meaning.

Something similar happened in two more instances during the workshops where debriefing was not performed appropriately, and their effect is discussed in detail in Chapter 7. Here is worth noting that apart from time constriction that might interfere with the debriefing process, there is one more factor that can influence the potential outcome: students' inner readiness to absorb and engage with new information. As discussed in Chapter 3, students need to have reached the third Stage of Cultural Identity (Banks, 2006) for them to display readiness to embrace other cultural groups and internalise human rights values. That may explain why some students arrive in different conclusions or feel perplexed during the debriefing process.

Another point that came up during the interviews was the alternative roles a teacher could get within the non-formal setting. For instance, that was discussed by two students while referring to the activity 'Words that wound'. They mentioned how they felt awkward using

such words in a classroom setting in front of a teacher. That was a surprise for them. While talking about it, they would first mention how puzzled the students were during the activity process and how some of them manifested their puzzlement in different, sometimes obtrusive ways. However, they all ended up learning something from it.

**5A.I.2** Some students were making fun of and even wrote swear words. [...] But we understood. I believe some children, including me, are more aware now of what we say.

**5A.I.4** It made an impression on me because usually the swear words are not discussed by teachers at school. And usually, teachers are not concerned with these.

This very last sentence reminds us that teachers sometimes need to transcend their conventional role to have an impact on students. Experiential teaching and learning effectively contribute to that direction.

## **Activities**

After the second round of workshops at the intervention, students were asked to evaluate the activities of the last six workshops. The most popular activity was the 'Balloon Friends' as it managed to combine fun with knowledge and experience:

**5B.B.3a** I liked most the balloons with human rights, which was about joy and safety because we humans need the same

**5B.B.7a** [I liked the most] the one with the balloons because it was a lot of fun and creative

The second most mentioned activity was the one narrating real stories of refugees, which seemed to have succeeded in combining new knowledge with the creation of empathy:

**5B.B.10a** I liked that we created true stories because in our minds, images and situations were created, which made us sensitised. Through cooperation, we came to the position of a refugee

These results were repeated in the students' answers coming from the Final Questionnaire as well as the interviews.

Students were asked in the Final Questionnaire whether they could describe one of the activities we did at the workshops. Through the answers, it was revealed which activity made the biggest impression on them and the reason for that.

It was interesting to read which one they picked out of the ten activities we did. Three activities stood out as the most popular ones. The activity with the balloons was the most preferred one, followed by the activity involving a theatrical play scene. Students connected the activity with the balloons to friendship and the simulation of making a new friend and taking care of someone else, creating compassion. The activity with the theatrical scene was mentioned as creating strong feelings of empathy and satisfaction from their power to intervene and change something they disagree with. The third most preferred kind of activity was those that explored the topic of refugees through narration, real-life stories and photos.

**5B.FQ.17** We painted a face on a balloon and wrote human rights on the back. Then we took care of our buddy and discussed what we had written.

**5A.FQ.16** You read us a story, and then we acted it out, and when we wanted to change something in the story, we said stop, mention the character we want to change and what to make him say.

**5B.FQ.3** An activity was for refugees, we talked and wrote about how they live and how their lives could be made better.

Overall, it seems that activities which involve children mentally, as well as physically, and give them space to express themselves have more impact on them. Moreover, being able to make connections with their own reality is quite important in the learning process.

The above results are recurring through the data coming from the same questionnaire. When discussing which activities students wished to remain the same, the most popular was the activity with the balloons. The second most popular was the activity about refugees, where students were asked to write a story based on photos and keywords. From these fragmented answers, it is visible once again that students enjoy activities that have a game like nature and involve their senses. The reference to such activities, as well as the teamwork and extra time devoted to the programme, resonate with those responses that mentioned the joy of being appreciated and given space to express themselves. Overall, students' answers, I would say, express their thirst for alternative

ways of teaching within the class of the formal education system, ways that put students in the spotlight, asking their opinion explicitly again and again, and reshaping the learning process when needed.

**5A.FQ.15** I would like to remain the same the fact that we all participated.

**5A.FQ.2** [I would keep the same] the teamwork and the topics

**5B.FQ.1** The activity with the balloons

Moreover, when students were asked during interviews which activity made the biggest impression on them, again, the most mentioned activity was the 'Balloon Friends'. The following most popular were the stories with refugees and the activity 'Sun and Birds'. Lastly, was mentioned the activity 'Agree/Disagree'.

The activity with the 'Balloon Friends' was admittedly fun as it involved movement, drawing, creativity, critical thought and engagement. It had the innovation that it involved something playful, i.e., a balloon, and it was related to something dear to their heart which is friendship.

**5B.I.7** I liked it. We felt nice with our new friend. I liked that we wrote the human rights behind them, and then we threw them up in the air and tried to catch them. I liked it!

The fact that they assigned a role to the balloon -that of a good friend- facilitated the process to go on another level, from the objects to the values. Moreover, the fact that they were appointed responsible for taking care of their friend, created an extra bond between the balloons and the students; they almost personified the balloons.

The activity also helped to promote knowledge about human rights, in a way, however, that is different to the conventional one. Instead of presenting them to the students, the activity invited students to engage with their meaning and use. Thus, comes the comment:

**5B.I.6** I was impressed by the activity with the balloon and the human rights, through which we learned about things we can do and what rights we have.

One student recalls and retells in her answer the whole procedure of the activity. That means it was imprinted in her mind. This is true of experiential activities, they involve students physically and emotionally, which is why they are more impactful.

**5B.I.8** I like to make things, and when I do so, they always stick to my mind.

Her particular comment reveals that this exercise catered for her personal learning style; thus, it became more effective. She continued explaining that the element of surprise intrigued her and caught her attention:

**5B.I.8** The activity triggered my curiosity a bit. I wondered how we would use the balloon, and why we made it.

The element of surprise seems to be important for students and most likely serves as a motive for them. At the same time, it is equally important, as the above comment reveals, for a purpose to exist too.

Combining all the above elements pertaining to experiential learning, it is no wonder that this activity was the most popular of the intervention.

## **Methods used**

### *Discussion*

Discussion is a vital part of experiential activities. It takes place either in plenary, groups, or pairs.

When students were asked what they liked the most about the intervention, they referred to the discussions they could have, to the freedom of expression they felt when speaking their minds. It seems they were not used to articulating their opinions on matters outside the standard curriculum, i.e., Maths, Language etc. And they rejoiced in the opportunity they had through the experiential activities to discuss current issues.

**5A.I.2** I liked the group discussions because we don't have many discussions regularly as a class.

**5B.I.8** I liked that we presented and wrote whatever we believed and wanted. Nobody was forcing us what to write, and in general, all this was very nice; cooperating with others and doing various things with our friends.



Some of them mentioned how the workshops also created the space to discuss the topic of refugees, a topic relevant to their community, however, rarely touched upon within their traditional classroom:

**5A.I.3** I liked that we talked about refugees, and that we created the story as if we were them.

**5B.I.5** I liked that we learned to respect refugees and not to consider them dirty and other stuff.

The activity 'Agree/Disagree' was mentioned more frequently in the interviews than in the questionnaires. It was mentioned as giving the opportunity to the student to express her opinion and be heard by others. Part of the activity was to address fellow students and declare why they agreed or disagreed with a statement. Specifically, a student recalls making her feel positive, as fellow students heard her opinion and treated it with respect. Also, through hearing other opinions and defending her own, she reportedly consolidated that refugees are like 'regular' people.

**5A.I.1** I was struck by the activity with the refugees (describes the process here) because we would express our opinion to the other students. [...] I didn't fluctuate with my positioning because, as I said before, refugees are also equal to regular people.

This activity was also noted as original, as they hadn't previously done anything similar in the past.

**5A.I.2** I was impressed with the statements in the activity Agree/Disagree because it was the first time, we did something like that.

### *Narration & story-telling*

The second most popular type of activity that attracted students' attention were the ones involving narration and story-telling techniques.

The activities involving stories and narration seem to have increased students' awareness and sensitisation about facts regarding refugee life.

**5A.I.3** I liked the activity with the stories most because we all saw what happened to those people [the refugees]. While we live in a world where we don't care so much.

**5A.B.17a** [I liked the most] the activity with the Syrian mum who fought for her children to go to school

Story-telling also offers the opportunity for self-expression. Some students saw the opportunity for creativity, creating a story using only their internal resources.

**5B.I.7** We wrote something that came from inside of us. It was not a ready-made subject to answer questions. We wrote a story and thought of something that could be better.

Another student rejoiced in the fact that the whole class would cooperate in a nice atmosphere and cooperate in teams peacefully, working on their stories. Along with the comment about the process of the activity, he also added the learning outcome, which in this case was empathy:

**5B.I.5** For the first time, we sat quietly and wrote a nice story. Also, I liked that we used our brains a bit to think about some things which we have never experienced here

The students' comments show that this kind of activity was also informative. They appeared to know little about the actual life of those people:

**5B.B.6a** I liked the activity with the true refugee stories because I learned what these people went through, and I realised that they need our help

Sometimes we believe that because the media are all over the news about 'refugees', we know a lot about the topic. However, this is a misconception. The fact that refugees are depicted as a bundle of people having one dimension and no subsistence alienates us from their reality. Moreover, they appreciated stimuli like photos or narration -imaginary or real - as a technique to approach a topic.

### *Role-play*

The activity 'Play It Again' involved a theatrical scene that impacted students. It was mentioned as creating strong feelings of empathy. Students also mentioned the negative feelings Ahmed must have felt in the scene, with which they could somehow relate.

Moreover, it was frequently commented that they enjoyed the feeling of having the power to intervene and change something they did not like. Indeed, the specific activity was based on the principles of Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed', which aims to unveil situations of injustice and oppression and allow spectators to turn from a silent audience into actors of change (Midha, 2010; Boal, 2013).

When students discussed this activity in their feedback, they highlighted the element of *originality* as adding value to the workshops. Some students mentioned that as if they couldn't believe that such kind of activities could ever take place in the school setting:

**5A.I.2** The theatrical with Ahmed was original. It was nice because we could stand up and intervene.

### *Games*

The only activity in the intervention that was clearly a game was the 'Sun and Birds'. Due to circumstances, only one class experienced this activity. However, over the interviews, one student expressed excitement about my decision to include such activity in our workshops, as this type of activity deviated from our regular classes. Also, the fact that it included movement and not sitting on a chair, as usual, made her appreciate the activity even more:

**5A.I.1** I was struck wondering how you came up with such an activity. Because we usually do other things and write on the board. We've never done this before, and it was nice. [...] I liked that it included movement.

By this comment, we realise that experiential activities have an added value; they manage to motivate more learners than the traditional way of teaching, as they also cater for their multiple intelligences (kinesthetic and more).

Another student highlights that it struck him how this activity touched upon a life skill that is learned both in school and in the real world:

**5B.I.5** I was struck by the activity because we cannot always have it our way.

In addition, the very favourite activity with the balloons had elements of gaming and playfulness. Perhaps that is why it managed to successfully pass the message of human rights, which on its own can be considered a difficult and perhaps too theoretical message:

**5A.B.9a** I liked the activity with the balloon friend the most because we learned about the rights we have. I also liked it because it was original.

**5A.B.13a** [I liked it more] the balloon friend, because maybe when I grow up, I will take care of the children better. But I also liked it because when we finished the activity, we turned it into a very fun game that we played during the break.

### *Teamwork*

Teamwork was frequently employed as a method to carry out the intervention's activities. This sometimes proved to pose a challenge for students. That is why the Final Questionnaire, as well as the interviews, included questions dedicated specifically to this topic.

On different occasions, students described how they worked in their groups. The most common tactic mentioned was to allocate roles to different team members. First, they would usually read the guidelines of the exercise, then they would come up with ideas collectively of what the appropriate response would be; next, they would try to distribute roles and tasks to individual members.

**5B.I.5** -*How did you distribute roles? Randomly?*

No. Yes, that too. First, we would think of what each of us can do. Let's say someone was good at writing, someone was good at finding ideas, and someone else could come up with ideas.

**5A.I.3** First, we thought about what we wanted to do, and then we assigned something to each other: one to write, the other to give ideas.

The main problem seemed to happen at that specific point: when they had to allocate tasks and decide who did what. At this point, many frictions happened. The collective ability to resolve the disputes was the turning point of whether they would make it in the end as a team or break it.

An interesting comment comes from a student mentioning the strategy their team would employ when an impasse was reached: they would vote for the best idea:

**5B.I.6** First, we read the text, and we each tried to think about what we could write. Then we voted on the best idea and the one that would get the most votes, and we wrote it down.

### Positive aspects of working in groups

Several replies (17 out of 39) highlighted a positive aspect of teamwork: that of collaboration. In those replies where students' thoughts were expanded a bit more, there was consensus that collaborating with other fellow students to reach a common goal was part of the joy that the process brought. Some expressed pleasure in exchanging ideas and having their thoughts and opinions heard. This self-expression was important to them. They liked exposure to different views as part of a pluralistic, enriching experience. They also expressed gratitude and enjoyed a feeling of acceptance when their ideas were embraced by the others in the group and treated with respect. They also mentioned creativity as a joyful product of collaboration. They mentioned moments where different ideas were combined and reached a common goal or produced a successful outcome and found solutions together. Finally, entertainment was an aspect they enjoyed through collaboration. They had the chance to work with friends, 'chat' with them and get to know better fellow students they hadn't worked closely with before, thus allowing them to 're-introduce' themselves.

**5A.FQ.10** [I liked] that we could express our thoughts.

**5A.FQ.17** I liked the fact that I was being accepted.

**5B.FQ.13** I liked that we collaborated with all the kids and got to know new characters.

**5B.FQ.4** I liked that we were all expressing our opinions, and then we were creating the text.

**5B.FQ.5** I liked that with our collaboration, we found solutions and noted them down.

## Challenges of working in groups

When students were asked what it was that they found difficult in teamwork, many of them denied they had difficulties. 21 out of 39 students replied they had no difficulty working in groups, most of them providing a one-word reply: 'Nothing'. The reality in class, as described in Chapter 7, during the workshops, as well as their answers at the interviews, contradict this. Moreover, this contradiction is also present when students discuss what they would have liked to be different at the workshops. They brought up teamwork a lot and especially the formation process. Some wished to have had the chance to form teams where they could choose their teammates by themselves. Complementary to that, two students wished that the work done by teams would have been done by the plenary, that is, the whole class as one group.

**5B.FQ.11** [I would have liked it if] The whole class would do the teamwork as a whole

The reason the students claimed they encountered no problem with teamwork, while evidence shows otherwise, might be because students, especially of this age, rarely like to admit -to their teachers above all- that they do not succeed at everything or have a weakness in something. I know working in groups was sometimes hard for them, especially on an emotional level, so perhaps they couldn't figure out what exactly went wrong in teamwork. Moreover, they have little knowledge and experience of successful real teamwork, so maybe some of them could not discern that this was not effective teamwork.

However, some children responded to the reasons that gave them a hard time while working in groups. Sometimes they would mention specific classmates they didn't get along with in their teams and even express the wish to have been able to choose their own teammates. In addition to that, they mentioned that it was difficult working with other types of characters, sometimes resulting in wanting different things. This consequently resulted in working for individual purposes rather than group goals.

Something else that gave them trouble was the distribution of roles among themselves. They mention that some members of the team were not willing to help or take on an equal amount of workload. Some students would work at a slower pace than others or would be unwilling to participate at all. Others also felt they were not given the space to express themselves. All the above would lead to quarrels and disagreements.

**5A.FQ.5** Some students did nothing

**5A.FQ.12** We had quarrels and disagreements all the time

**5A.FQ.16** My team found it hard to divide the chores

**5B.FQ.6** I couldn't work with some teams, because we wanted different things and everyone was looking after themselves.

**5B.FQ.16** It was difficult for me that we could not choose our teams

**5B.FQ.20** [I found it hard] to work with other people I didn't know well (as characters).

The answers at the interviews were in the same line. Students were asked if they had encountered any problems while participating in the workshops. Almost all the answers revolved around teamwork and relations with fellow students. They mentioned fighting and the inability to allocate roles among the team members as the main source of frustration.

**5A.I.2** The first thing we did was split up some of the work that each one of us had to do. Of course, we had a hard time deciding [who would do what].

**5A.I.4** -*How would you distribute roles?*

By yelling only. We did not share roles. We only shared our ideas, and whoever was the most popular in school was supposed to have the best opinion. For instance, [name of a student], his opinion dominated.

**5B.I.8** I didn't have any problems. Even though some students didn't want to cooperate, and others didn't cooperate as much as they should have.

Also, when they discussed what they liked the least about the intervention, almost all the students referred spontaneously to the times when teamwork was unsuccessful. The main reason they identified was the failure of cooperation between the team members. This inevitably led to disappointment.

**5B.I.6** [A difficulty I encountered was that] we didn't necessarily cooperate nicely with the team members we were teamed up with

**5A.I.1** [It was difficult for me] when we could not work together when we were in groups. Some were fooling around, and some wanted to get involved, but there was a commotion and they could never do the job.

All the above corroborate with the findings of a study by Baines et al. (2015) on implementing effective group work in primary school classrooms. The students in their study encountered similar problems to the ones mentioned above. That is possibly owed to the fact that in primary schools it is common for students to sit in groups but rarely work as groups, with teachers often resorting to whole-class teaching and individual student work. For improving the quality of group work among students, the researchers suggest that students need to adjust in new patterns of working and develop interpersonal skills like planning and decision-making and relational skills like sensitivity and trust towards their classmates.

**In conclusion**, the Final Questionnaire and the Interviews served the purpose of capturing some shifts in their awareness regarding hate speech as a social phenomenon and refugees as a social group. These two tools, along with the short evaluations during the workshops, helped record the experiences students had while participating in the workshops.

As far as refugees are concerned, students agree that they have gained new knowledge. They learnt about the reasons that drive these people away from their countries and about the harsh reality they usually face during their journeys or new lives in the host countries. Moreover, some stereotypical notions about refugees were dismantled. The new knowledge served to increase empathy towards that specific social group and helped to a certain extent start seeing beyond the term 'refugee' and look at the person behind it. Perhaps this is why most students would express a positive attitude towards refugees and would be willing to welcome a new fellow refugee student in their class. Students suggested that socialising with them, getting to know them better and creating friendships would be the most effective way to include a newcomer.



The experiential activities used in the workshops involved various learning methods, such as plenary discussions, games, role-play, narration, and teamwork. The use of such varied methods was welcomed by students. It seems that activities which involved children both mentally and physically had more impact on them. Moreover, being able to make connections with their own reality was quite important in the learning process.

Teamwork was frequently employed as a method to carry out the intervention's activities. It was often the case that they found challenges in it. Working with different types of characters, inability to communicate clearly and difficulty in role distribution often resulted in quarrels, disagreements, and disappointment. However, fruitful collaboration between members was the main element students enjoyed about teamwork, especially when they felt accepted and respected by others and managed to create a collective outcome.

### **9.3 Teachers' feedback on the intervention**

The two teachers who accompanied me to the implementation of the workshops were also interviewed after the end of the intervention in June 2017. Their feedback refers to the structure, duration and content of the workshops but also includes suggestions for improvement, feedback on my performance and reflection on their role during the workshops.

#### **9.3.1 Overall evaluation**

Discussing the overall impression of the intervention, both teachers had positive feedback to give. Class Teacher 1 mentioned it had a positive impact on children by sensitising them. She noticed a change for the better:

I think it affected the children, which was the main concern, it touched them. It had a positive impact on children. A change for the better, I think we have achieved. It went very well.

Class Teacher 2 characterised the intervention as a very positive and creative activity for the students. He particularly distinguished two features of the intervention as valuable: the collaborative learning method that was used throughout the activities, as well as the element of empathy that was cultivated for the kids. Explaining further, he mentioned that through the incentives we gave to the students, they processed information and emotions to discover and realise components of the complex issue of racism present in our lives and country:

The intervention, as you organized it, was very positive and creative for the children. It placed them inside the problem, it made them part of the problem. It is important that what we gave them they processed it and took out of things that they themselves did not know. In essence, working collaboratively with children, they discovered this huge problem that is called racism and prevails in our lives and in our country.

### **About the Structure of the intervention**

As far as the structure of the intervention is concerned, both teachers found that it was adequate and served its purpose. Class Teacher 1 felt the structure was complete and commented favourably that she was consulted beforehand about it. Moreover, she pointed out the flexibility there was between us. We both took into consideration the learning process and we adapted accordingly. As far as the activities are concerned, she found them well structured, complete and to the point:

It [the structure] was complete. You had them structured, you had suggested things to me, we discussed them, and we agreed. Some things changed along the way, depending on the atmosphere. [...] The activities that were organized were structured, complete and targeted.

### **About the Time frame of the intervention**

Class Teacher 2 thought the structure of the intervention was good. However, unlike Class Teacher 1, he would have liked more time to have been allocated to the overall intervention:

The organization of the course was very good. However, more time was needed. He felt that inadequate time had as a result to compress the process of some activities:

No, time was not enough. It was very compressed. You put a lot of effort into squeezing things. We needed more time for the children to get more information, experiences, and opinions, to read, to watch a video, to play a theatrical play, to talk to you.

It is true that experiential learning activities require ample time to allow learners to process all new knowledge and emotions that were created for them during the activities. Also, we saw in practice that when this didn't happen, it had repercussions on the learning outcome, as it was discussed in this chapter earlier.

### **Suggestions for improvement**

Both teachers were asked for suggestions for improvement. They both referred to the activities. Class Teacher 2 mentioned that if he was to run again such an intervention, he would add more activities. He would enrich the learning targets so that learners go even deeper into the topic and would offer a wider variety of activities to engage students. On the other hand, Class Teacher 1 suggested that perhaps she would like to add a bit more movement to the workshops, perhaps by adding some more games. She was impressed to notice the impact the role-play had on her students. Although it took her some time to realize, she understood that the games involving role-play touch upon the feelings of the students and influence them:

Perhaps, I would start with more movement. Children are very emotional; they need the game. [...] I just saw that the game touches the children's emotions the most, it affects them. Although at first, it did not appear so, I saw it in the result. In the end, we discussed it, and we wrote a text about birds. This made a big impression on them; it touched their emotions. Because they get involved in discussions, but getting into a role is different.

The above statement resonates with her answer to the question of which activity she would choose if she had to carry out one of the activities by herself. The activity she chose was 'The Sun and the Birds'. The reason for choosing that was the impact she saw it had on her students; how involving their sentiments, helped to pass some messages easier than using actual words. At the same time, she acknowledged that one of the reasons this activity was so successful was also due to the work we had done with the students beforehand:

I would choose to do the activity 'The birds and the sun'. I saw that it touched them, they comprehended it. Even though, I did not expect them to understand the significance. Of course, a lot of work had preceded on our behalf.

## **Relation between school and families**

Another interesting point Class Teacher 1 raised was the interference between students' families and students' school life. When she was asked about what kind of difficulties, she thought she might encounter, if she was to run this programme again by herself, her answer touched upon the important and reciprocal relationship between school and family. She talked about the opinions and beliefs parents might hold opposing the ones that the school tries to promote. She suggested that the attitude of parents might be able to reduce the effect of experiential learning programmes in schools. One of the reasons for that is *there is not a continuation* in the family of the knowledge and values transmitted in school. Moreover, some parents seem to show resistance to alternative ways of teaching in school. So, she had the concern that what we might teach to the students during the intervention at school, might reach the parents at home and contradict instead of reinforcing the students' experiences in school. This would lead to students feeling perplexed and frustrated:

I don't think it has a continuation. This part seems difficult to me, the one outside school. [...] Most of the difficulties come from the views they carry from their homes. [...] There are parents with firm views on such issues and I was afraid that their opinion would cut off their wings and they would not want to express themselves. [...] Children themselves are receptive, open, and ready to listen. But, if they discuss it at home and their view finds a wall, they come to school a little differently. Closed ears, blinds... This is the difficulty and not the children themselves.

Moreover, she adds one more perspective to the whole picture: the alienation among the members of modern families. She notices that parents do not talk with their children so much these days, they do not engage in dialogue with them.

Did they discuss it at home? This is what is important. To reflect, to open a dialogue with the parents who have been estranged.

### 9.3.2 Feedback on my performance

Both teachers were asked to provide me with some feedback on my performance as the lead facilitator at the workshops. Class Teacher 2 didn't mention something that should have been done differently. His comment was that the challenge for me was maintaining the good level I already possess. The feedback was overall positive, referring to impressions he got while watching me interacting with the students during the workshops:

In practice, your teaching and your general presence in the classroom were of a high standard. As if you were doing 'exemplary teaching' in this subject. You have the comfort, the knowledge, the experience, and with the goals you set, it immediately shows what you give to the children, what they take, and what stays with them. This is what is required. So, it's not a matter of improving, but remaining at that high level.

I understand that possibly he could not provide more specific feedback as he mentioned multiple times, he recently became familiar with the topic of hate speech, as well as non-formal education. What is valuable feedback is his comment that watching me run the workshops helped him learn by watching another colleague put theory into action. His watching me doing it, rather than hearing me talk about how it should be done, seems to be a lot more effective as practice.

Class Teacher's 1 feedback was also positive both regarding my cognitive level on the topic, as well as regarding class management. She couldn't think of something that I could have done differently, as in her opinion everything worked out successfully, even though her class was a particularly challenging one.

It was a very difficult class. I believe that you handled it very well on the cognitive level. Also, as a class, which has a behavioural problem, it is a very intense batch of students, and you did just fine. I would not suggest you change anything.

I understand that maybe she didn't feel she knew a lot about hate speech in order to offer me corrective feedback. However, she could offer criticism and/or tips on class management and the process of teaching and learning. The fact that she did not, could perhaps be partly explained by the answer she gave to the question about her own role in the intervention.

### **9.3.3 Evaluation of teachers' role in the context of the lessons and co-teaching as a practice**

While discussing the teachers' roles during the workshops, it was inevitable that the discussion would lead also to the reflection on co-teaching as a practice.

When Class Teacher 1 was asked to assess her role and contribution to the intervention, she acknowledged her presence was not very dynamic. However, she believes she was in the right post. She made a conscious choice to hold a secondary, supportive role to mine. Explaining further, she mentioned that even though she read all the materials I had provided her with, still she didn't feel comfortable enough to take a more central role. However, having observed me in practice, made her feel more empowered to carry out something similar in the future. Moreover, she would like to try a leading role next time:

I had never thought about this topic, nor would I undertake an entire project on it. I was not ready. I heard it from you for the first time. So, I think I was in the right place. Maybe, if we did it again, I would like to have a more central role.

I asked her about the experience she had with co-teaching. She gave very positive feedback. At first, she expected to be perplexed and perhaps encounter a bit of rivalry, as teachers in Greek schools usually own the class and dominate the teaching. However, her experience was quite different. She believes this was the case because the approach at these workshops was student oriented. Our role had more to do with facilitation, guidance, and encouragement, but the spotlight belonged to the students:

I expected it to feel more awkward. But I did not feel that way. Because the student was in the spotlight. It was not the relationship between us, who will show better, who will explain better ... I did not feel any discomfort, nor embarrassment, anything. It was very good, and I did not expect it at all.

In the same light, Class Teacher 2 discussed his role and contribution to the intervention. He identified his role as secondary and auxiliary, but at the same time 'very creative'. He was happy with this role, and he felt he responded to it successfully. His choice not to take a more central role was conscious because, as he comments, with my help he had the chance to do things he had never thought of before. He also mentioned how fruitful it

can be to work side by side and learn from colleagues who already have knowledge and experience in a specific field. He deemed it's a much faster and more enriching experience than reading some guidelines out of a book or the internet:

My role was subsidiary but very creative. It gave me the opportunity to participate in the intervention and do things with you that I would not have done alone. I would not even have thought of it. With your help, I gained much more than doing the intervention myself, using instructions from a book or a computer. Working with people who have experience and knowledge is much more essential.

That resonates with the discussions I had with Class Teacher 1 that teachers do need training on the topic of hate speech. Furthermore, in-class demonstrations and job shadowing seem to be effective in boosting teachers' confidence and abilities.

Our discussion continued with the experience of co-teaching. He mentioned he supports the cooperation between main class teachers and specialty teachers, and he sees their contributions as pieces of a puzzle that serve the same purpose. He believes that the coexistence of different teachers in the same class at the same time represents a two-way relationship, from which all members can benefit and learn from each other. He regrets that in Greek schools co-teaching is not the norm and is mainly followed in Special Education. He acknowledges there is no respective culture in Greece:

As a teacher in various schools and as a Headmaster I firmly believe in the collaboration of specialties teachers and main class teachers. [...] Many things I did not know I learned from you, and I believe you from me. We serve the same purpose, knowledge is the same, and the picture is completed by both [...] Co-teaching exists in special schools. Unfortunately, there is no culture for co-teaching in Greece as there is abroad.

#### **9.3.4 Increased familiarity with hate speech**

When teachers were asked if they felt more familiar with the topic of hate speech after participating in the intervention, they both agreed emphatically.

Class Teacher 1 mentioned she clearly feels more familiar with the term 'hate speech'. She mentioned she hadn't even heard of the term before, but she found the topic very

interesting and useful. While reading more about it, she realized that it is a technique which is widely employed in our society to influence and manipulate the masses:

It was a topic that I had never thought of like that before, nor as a title had I heard about it. And it stuck with me! [...] I saw how widely it is used to pass policies, to influence the masses, it is something I had not realised.

Class Teacher 2 mentioned he still finds the term 'hate speech' difficult, however, he feels much more familiar with it, because of his participation in the intervention. He expressed some hesitation regarding its full understanding, but at the same time, he felt confident that he was able to explain what hate speech is and provide relevant examples and information about it:

It is a very difficult term. I'm not sure I have fully understood it. However, I feel more familiar with it. I can explain it in simple words to someone who will ask me, through information, actions, through everything I saw and heard and did during the intervention.

Their increased familiarity with the term is reflected in both teachers' expressions of interest in working on that topic with their students again in the future. More specifically, Class Teacher 1 expressed a great interest to work on that topic with her students again in the future because she realized that hate speech gains ground daily and its repercussions are quite negative for society and people's relations:

Definitely! Because I see that unfortunately it is gaining ground, and I do not understand why maligning others is gaining ground. It creates a bad atmosphere, it spoils relationships... I'm definitely willing to work on this topic again.

Moreover, Class Teacher 2 underlined the importance of the topic and suggested it should be added to school life. He suggested that students should have the option through the curriculum and other extracurricular school activities to learn about hate speech and similar topics. In his opinion, hate speech is a current matter that will remain relevant for a long time:

Definitely [I would like to work on hate speech again], because it is a contemporary issue, which will remain current for a long time. I believe that it should be integrated into school life, so that students have a related issue available, along with their other subjects and school activities.



## **CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS**

### **10.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter provides a synthesis of the findings that the three stages of the research yielded, alongside a critical discussion of the results. It also elucidates how the research questions were answered and covers the contribution of the particular research to the field of education. Furthermore, it includes suggestions for teachers who might be interested in implementing similar interventions in their classrooms. Finally, it discusses some self-reflections regarding the implementation of this research project and points to a direction for future research.

### **10.2. Discussion of results**

#### **10.2.1 Students**

##### **Before the intervention**

Before our intervention in class, the majority of my students claimed to be unfamiliar with the term hate speech or felt uncertain about its meaning. Subsequently, they could not provide examples of hate speech, or the few examples they would venture to provide were associated with bullying. Likewise, they could not identify hate speech in their -admittedly limited- online experiences. Students' inability to highlight and report hate speech or mistaking it for bullying is understandable. It could be owed to the fact that bullying is often discussed in Greek schools. Moreover, another explanation is that in the specific schools, apart from a few Roma children, the overall student population was quite homogenous. Most students belonged to the middle or lower socioeconomic class, and most shared the same religion (Christian Orthodox) and ethnicity (Greeks). Even those who had a different country of origin, e.g., Albanian, had been in Greece for too many years to be identified as

'foreigners', and none was of colour. A final explanation could be their age. Perhaps at this age, children are more aware of characteristics that revolve around the individual. They don't pay much attention yet to their social bonds and group belonging.

This resonates with teachers also being confused over the term when interviewed during the initial study of this research, which took place a year before the intervention at school. This is understandable to a certain extent as the school community in Greece back then delved into the subject of bullying, while their exposure to the term hate speech was almost non-existent. It was when the Council of Europe took up the campaign against hate speech in 2016 that the term became more visible to a wider audience.

As far as responses to incidents of hate speech are concerned, before the intervention, students appeared willing to act and protect a peer who may suffer from offensive, racist language. Almost half the students suggested taking personal action to mitigate the hurtful behaviour by showing solidarity with the victim. However, only a few could specify how to translate solidarity into action. Moreover, reference to human rights was completely outside their scope. This low readiness to respond to hate speech, even though there was a willingness to respond, was largely due to the unclarity of the term hate speech and its misconceptions.

### **After the intervention**

After participating in the ten workshops of our intervention, most students seemed certain about the meaning of hate speech. Most of them could articulate clearer examples of hate speech, even mentioning some of the root causes of it.

Students appeared more empowered to challenge hate speech. After the intervention, they all chose to respond to a hate speech incident, most of them sorting it out by themselves. No one would look away, and peer pressure seemed not to influence them. Particularly

about peer pressure, the activity with the role-play about Ahmed had an impact on them, as it seemed to trigger their empathy and emotions to a good extent.

Moreover, students appeared more aware and ready to take remedial action and explain how such behaviour could cause harm or why it should stop. They didn't frequently resort to involving an adult in a scene of hate speech; when they did, this choice was based on realistic criteria, such as assessing the situation, their abilities, and the people involved and not pure uncertainty or fear of how to tackle a hateful situation.

In addition, they resorted more than before to empathy as a response to the harm done by hate speech. Other students opted to deal with the perpetrators and others with the victim. In all cases, they could now be more concrete about which form their evocation to empathy would take, like befriending the victim and getting to know the other person better or asking the perpetrator to put himself in the victim's position.

Regarding human rights, an increase was recorded in direct reference to them as opposed to the start of the intervention, where the notion of rights was not connected to hate speech. This shift was probably owed to the activity with the balloons, where students had a chance to explore human rights and their importance to our lives. Moreover, some students referred to the right to freedom of expression and could articulate thoughts about the fine line between free speech and hateful rhetoric. At the same time, diversity was discussed as something positive and certainly not as a cause for discrimination.

Regarding refugees, there appeared to be a shift in students' knowledge and awareness about refugees after the intervention. Though before the beginning of the workshops, many students claimed certain as to the difference between migrants and refugees, during the workshops, it proved in practice that they had almost no idea about what differentiated refugees from migrants or even basic clear knowledge about the realities of refugees as a social group.

However, after the intervention, students appeared to have increased awareness about refugees. They mentioned new knowledge about the root causes that force them to flee their countries and the long and arduous journeys they often make to reach our country. Moreover, students included insights they have gained about their neighbouring peer refugees, their living conditions, the language some of them speak and write and parts of their everyday life, like games they like to play.

They seemed to be able to use this new knowledge to dismantle stereotypes they had in them, like that refugees are dirty and carry diseases. They acknowledged refugees as human rights holders and were more able to identify what refugees should be offered to thrive in a new society, like better living conditions. This increased awareness about refugees helped students see them as ordinary people and move beyond the estranging label 'refugee'. They saw they shared things in common, and that increased their feelings of empathy towards them.

Last but not least, most students said they would gladly welcome a peer refugee student in their class. This is very important as the overall intervention was designed after spotting the hesitation that some of my students had to receive refugee peers in their school and classes. Moreover, after the intervention, students could suggest specific ways how they would welcome a refugee student in their class, like inviting them to play in the schoolyard or helping them with the Greek language. Their increased sense of empathy helped them build bridges towards people they considered before the intervention to be an outgroup. They projected their own needs for friendship and acceptance by peers and offered them generously to their refugee peers.

### **Evaluation of the intervention**

The intervention was well received by my students. Half of them reported they wished it could have lasted longer. At the same time, almost half of them thought the intervention was well-structured and wouldn't want to change anything. Some suggestions were made to add ample time to play and discuss their thoughts. They also recommended adding watching videos and arts like painting.

As far as the content of the workshops is concerned, they appreciated experiential learning as opposed to the traditional way of learning usually followed in their school. They seemed excited to learn through exploring and feeling. Most of them had not tried something similar before, and some compared how we learned during our intervention and in our English lessons. I tried hard to create a safe learning space, and it seems students felt it and immersed themselves in the process. That is why even earlier, shy students would be more vocal during the workshops and active in engaging with the learning process. Perhaps, the fact that formal education is usually teacher-centred and often neglects students' real interests (Freire, 1979) is why students found more motivation to participate in non-formal education procedures, as they found a chance to express through that and participate. This is something that usually the rigid traditional schooling does not provide for them, especially for students who do not fit in the profile of a medium to upper-class student, otherwise known as the 'good' student (Androusou & Iakovou, 2020).

Another way experiential learning seems to motivate students more than traditional one is through the activation of students' multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2008). Having that in mind, I tried employing a variety of activities to succeed in involving students both physically and mentally (Brander & Keen, 2012). Activating learners' multiple intelligences and abilities allows them to participate fully in the learning process by utilising their internal resources (Gardner, 2008). Sometimes, non-formal education activities demand learners to leave their comfort zone. Even though it may be a bit unsettling at first, it eventually rewards them by triggering feelings of empathy and revealing more perspectives on one subject matter, thus promoting critical thinking.

Students' evaluation of the overall intervention revealed great interest in an alternative way of teaching within the strictly structured formal education setting, which is usually grade oriented and provokes competition. It also revealed teaching practices that worked well with students.

More specifically, regarding the methods employed during the activities, the *Discussion* helped students connect concepts, explore further unclear points, and generate meaning in general. Particularly, in our setting, plenary and group discussions made students feel 'heard' and respected. Some commented that in traditional teaching, they don't get the chance to discuss a lot, and discussion may be considered a waste of time. So, in our context, students felt happy to express their opinion to others and talk about things that involve their everyday reality, connecting knowledge produced in school with life outside it.

*Narration* and *Storytelling* techniques motivated a lot of the interest of students. Apart from increasing their knowledge about refugees, they also helped augment their feeling of empathy towards them. They played a crucial role in dismantling the generic and alienating term 'refugees' and thus assigning personal traits to those people, making members of an outgroup more familiar.

*Role-play* was used in both activities of the theatrical play with Ahmed and the game 'The Sun and the Birds'. It was considered something novel by students, as theatrical and gamification techniques were rarely used, if ever, during their conventional teaching. Acting out roles created strong feelings among students, allowing them to explore issues of injustice and discrimination. Moreover, the power to intervene and change the plot during the theatrical play offered the prospect and the power of change. It showed students the power in their hands to utilise their resources to alter their course of action and achieve desirable changes.

In addition, *Games* are naturally appreciated by children. They involve physical activity, and often, students learn a variety of things simply by following the game's rules. The game 'The Sun and the Birds' involved role-playing but also had specific rules to follow, and there were winners and losers. Students were surprised to see teachers allowing a game inside the classroom, as they were used to playing it in the yard. However, all admitted it was a strong and valuable experience as the rules were structured to offer them a lot more compressed knowledge than a regular teacher-oriented lesson would provide. That is why

games used in non-formal education content are not just any games but are carefully designed to serve the purpose of the learning aims.

Finally, *Teamwork* was frequently used in our activities. Teamwork is central in experiential learning as it exercises many skills at the same time. It helps the individual to come out of self-centeredness, understand the other person, negotiate, and collaborate. Teamwork is also an excellent means for flexing a muscle on democratic skills.

Unfortunately, my students did not have the chance to get involved in real teamwork before our intervention, so they found it challenging to make the most of this process at once. I deliberately chose the team formation to be random, though many students disliked this fact. I aimed to provide them with a chance to work with fellow students they hadn't crossed paths with before, even though they were in the same class. Even though it was initially discomforting, many students admitted afterwards that it was interesting to meet and work closely with fellow students they had not approached before.

Within teams, a big problem was the allocation of tasks. Usually, the predominant student(s) would take the lead and decide everything for everyone or do the main tasks themselves, leaving others excluded. It was difficult for students emotionally to work with different characters, as their negotiation skills and conflict resolution abilities were not fully developed yet. However, through each team working task, my students - with my encouragement- came a bit closer to claiming their space in the team, getting others' ideas on board, and finding solutions together. Several of them voiced in their evaluations the pleasure of reaching a consensus and producing something creative after managing to combine different views and ideas.

### **10.2.2 Teachers**

The teachers who joined me in this venture assessed the intervention positively. Even though before the intervention, they were both unfamiliar with the term hate speech, after

their participation in the intervention, they both attested that they were a lot more familiar with the concept, as well as interested in working on this topic with their students in the future, as they came to realise its importance and the repercussions it can have in our everyday lives.

My colleagues acknowledged that the intervention had a positive impact on students. Two characteristics that made the intervention successful, in their view, were the collaborative learning methods used and the invocation of empathy throughout the activities. These allowed students to discover for themselves new aspects of discriminatory language and the effect it can have on individuals and society.

They both found the intervention structure as complete with activities serving the purpose of the learning goals. However, one of the teachers pointed out that time was not adequate, thus leading to the compression of some activities, sometimes affecting the learning outcome.

Discussing the activities, one teacher suggested adding a bit wider variety, such as including visual arts. The other teacher commented on how impactful she found those activities that involved movement and role-play. She was astonished to see what a strong effect such activities had on her students by motivating their feelings and thus making passing messages a lot easier.

### **The compensatory effect of education**

One teacher raised the issue between students' families and the possible impact on the knowledge acquired at school. She voiced the concern that if there is no support in the students' families for the things being learned at school, this might cancel the learning process. There is indeed a reciprocal relationship between school and family, and even though I share the concern of my colleague, I also believe in the compensatory power of school and education in general (Diez Villagrasa, 2012; Adams & Bell, 2016). When I started this intervention, I knew there would be students' families that would contradict the



ideas and principles discussed during the workshops. But I also believed that those students needed this intervention even more than those students whose families would be supportive or simply indifferent. It is important for students to be exposed to universally accepted concepts and ideas, such as human rights and respect for diversity, even though their parents' beliefs and opinions may be opposing. If students continue being exposed to alternative narratives consistently throughout their school years, in the long run, this could tip the scale and transform children's initial beliefs or at least strengthen their critical thinking. Moreover, instances throughout our workshops (like the discussions we held over the final workshop) made me understand how weak some opinions of my students are and how not very rooted negative images were to them. That is why this young age is ideal for running such interventions, as the stereotypes are not firmly rooted yet (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014) and hopefully, there is time to subvert some of them.

Education cannot, on its own, solve all the problems coming from disrupted social ties within a community. It can help, however, foster the desire to live together, which in turn contributes to the realisation of social cohesion. Schools could contribute to this if they encourage the integration of minority groups by mobilising involved parties and cultivating respect for their personality (Delors & Unesco, 1996).

### **Need for teacher training on the topics of hate speech and experiential learning**

As both teachers were unfamiliar with the term hate speech, as well as non-formal education, they appreciated seeing me taking the leading role in running the workshops. They both took secondary roles willingly during the workshops, as they felt uncomfortable taking a more central role. However, they both attested that observing me in practice made them feel more empowered to carry out a similar intervention in the future.

My colleagues found it interesting and informative to see me handle the process and reveal the world of non-formal education in practice. Discussing our collaboration, one of the teachers mentioned her apprehension before the intervention about how two teachers would work together in the same class. To her relief, she saw the whole process flow

naturally and effectively. She pinpointed flexibility as a facilitating element in our working together. She mentioned how our collaboration was made more effective by both of us adapting accordingly to the needs of the learning process. Indeed, being vigilant of the training process, reflecting on it and making changes, when needed, is a key point to making non-formal education work.

At the same time, she believed our successful collaboration was owed to the fact that these workshops were student-oriented. Our role had more to do with facilitation, guidance and encouragement, and the spotlight belonged to the students. Here, experiential learning had the potential to create alternative relations and dynamics between teachers due to its very nature. Moreover, in-class demonstration and job shadowing seemed to effectively boost teachers' confidence and ability to handle bumpy instances of the learning process.

### **10.3 Points for teachers to consider when implementing experiential interventions in class**

Experiential learning is not always easy to handle. Especially when implemented within the strict boundaries of formal education, it is easier for teachers to feel inadequate to serve its principles. Therefore, I would like to reassure colleagues who might want to run a similar intervention in the future that they are well equipped to do so, given their formal education background, and that the first and foremost prerequisite is the willingness to do it! So, for those who desire to involve non-formal learning within their formal course of teaching, I compiled some points they need to consider when running similar ventures. They are all nuggets of wisdom coming straight from my experiences during the workshops of this thesis' intervention.

#### **Alternative roles for teachers within the experiential learning setting**

Teachers' role in non-formal education deviates from the standard formal education role, where usually the teacher is the source of knowledge and the centre of the teaching process. There, mistakes are not permitted to teachers or any deviant behaviours, i.e. being untruthful or playing roles. However, non-formal education trainers are mostly facilitators of knowledge. Likewise, teachers in human rights education need to transition gradually to the role of a 'facilitator', which is more of a coach, an advisor, an encourager, who will invite critical thinking and support more independent learning.

Their role is to facilitate students and let them reach the knowledge. Not dictate right or wrong. Depending on their inner readiness, learners reach their own truth and conclusions when the time is right for them. This way, students can gradually feel more confident working in a democratic atmosphere where freedom of expression thrives, and questioning authority is allowed. Teachers modelling democratic attitudes and behaviours in their teaching foster the development of democratic and intercultural competencies in learners as well (Barrett, 2020).

A sound preparation for the potential contested topic in discussion in class will help teachers cope with the stress of the unknown. The preparation also involves them getting conscious of their own biases and trigger points. However, the most important aspect is for teachers to embrace this type of teaching consciously to serve the purpose of deliberate action on their behalf.

### **Adequate space and time**

Ample space and sufficient time are two crucial elements for non-formal education activities to work. Physical activity is usually involved in this type of learning, as opposed to formal education, where students are mainly expected to be seated in allocated spaces. For instance, when they work in groups or pairs, participants need to change seating arrangements, and in other activities, they need to be able to wander around the room.

Therefore, ample space needs to be foreseen depending on the planned activity, the number of participants, and provisions for adequate sunlight and good room temperature.

Another serious challenge that teachers are likely to face when implementing human rights education in a school setting is time constriction, as a typical lesson period is shorter than needed to run an experiential activity fully with all its stages (Brander & Keen, 2012, p. 59-60; Taylor et al., 2021, p. 35). Time needs to be ample for participants to elaborate on what is happening, how they feel and how they react to the stimuli they receive. Otherwise, the knowledge that students gain might be compromised or leave limited options for applying what they learnt.

In the case of my intervention timetable, the pressure was overcome by dedicating two typical teaching hours to each activity and opting to use shorter activities that would fit easier in our time available. Regarding the learners' applying what they learnt, I made sure in all our activities to foresee time for asking students to 'do' something or 'produce' some teamwork. Moreover, the whole intervention ended with devising an interaction opportunity with the population that it aimed to sensitise students about.

### **The importance of debriefing**

Connected with time constrictions is the debriefing process. I noticed through practice how important is the stage of debriefing when running an experiential activity. Even some students pointed out its importance in the meaning-making process. In certain instances when we were forced by extenuating circumstances to omit or compress debriefing, this left some students with confusion or frustration. If that happens frequently, it risks losing the meaning of the activity and, ultimately, the interest in the learning process. Facilitators need to find adequate time to close off an activity and discuss its meaning with the participants and the feelings it generated for them. It is significant when multiculturalism and diversity are negotiated in the classroom to allow space for feelings of discomfort and

invite students into supported discussions of difficult or contentious issues (Pettigrew, 2012) rather than conveniently ignoring them. Though this is sometimes hard, it is always rewarding.

### **Creation of a meaningful and safe learning environment**

The teacher who participated in the activity with 'The birds and the sun' mentioned she was impressed to see how involving students' sentiments helped to pass some messages easier than using actual words. At the same time, she acknowledged that the work we had done with the students beforehand contributed to the successful outcome. And that is true in non-formal education. You need to pave the way properly to expect students to open up and truly experience the activity. It is significant to contextualise such activities and not let them exist in a learning vacuum.

Moreover, it is important for participants to feel safe in the learning environment we created so as to open up and embrace new experiences and knowledge. The feeling of respect for each participant's personality and learning style can come a long way. Educational attempts to reduce intergroup hostility may be more successful when the learners are convinced that they are not under attack for their opinions and they are 'allowed initially to express freely their verbal hostilities to instructors who maintain an atmosphere of calm objectivity' (Williams, 1999, p.288).

In the context of a safe learning environment, mistakes are also treated with respect. We keep reminding participants that there is no right or wrong expected answer from them during experiential learning. Besides, there is a chance trainers might also make mistakes. Especially in role-plays, for instance, when sensitive roles are taken, feelings might be hurt. This process has this hazard but is worthy of the positive effects it yields. It is important for those in the facilitating position to be alert for such pitfalls in order to avoid them. If it happens, we must take it seriously, apologise and explain. The more experienced one gets, the more prepared one will be to avoid such probabilities.

## **A final thought**

The previously mentioned points are useful for teachers when they want to tackle problematic issues in their classroom through experiential learning. However, specifically for the topic of hate speech, there needs to be a consideration regarding the usage of the term itself before proceeding to the design or implementation of an intervention.

Both teachers who participated in the intervention with me admitted being unfamiliar with the term hate speech. This resonates with the experience of previously interviewed teachers who also attested confused by the term 'hate speech' (discussed further in Chapter 5). So, considering teachers' non-familiarity with the term and difficulty in its comprehension, a suggestion could be to use an alternative terminology that could make the concept more accessible to Greek teachers and students. For instance, the term 'ρατσιστικός λόγος' (=racist discourse) could be used instead, or 'προσβλητικός λόγος' (=offensive speech), or 'λόγος μίσους' (=speech of hatred). Ideally, when the education community gets more familiar with the topic, they will collectively develop a comprehensive term.

## **10.4 Self-reflection as a Researcher**

Throughout this research journey, I learned a lot. I grew as a person, as a researcher and as a practitioner. My main lesson was that if you trust the process and let go of authority, magical things can happen. Creating a trusting atmosphere was paramount for students to participate effectively and for co-teachers to let go of their typical roles and navigate with me in this unknown territory. I tried actively to incorporate democratic processes in the classroom by involving participants in making decisions, where possible, actively

sought their feedback, and engaged them in co-operative group work using project-based learning. And the moments when an unexpected setback would come up, I tested my skill of struggling with ambiguity, not hesitating to ask for help.

Having undertaken the specific research project, I aspired to fall in the category of 'transformative intellectuals' (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985) who take an active role 'in shaping the purposes and conditions of schooling' (ibid., p. 126) and use their agency consciously to engage students in creative pedagogical practices to inspire them to resist injustices. Jerome (2018) calls these teachers 'heroic' as they try to maintain a careful balance between performing as the education system requires, on the one hand, and providing their students with additional knowledge, multiperspectivity and criticality, as required by HRE, on the other hand. However, I do not share completely the use of this term because heroism alludes somehow to sacrifice. For me, the term 'liberated' is more suitable in this circumstance, as I felt liberated from the burden of a conservative curriculum and anachronistic teaching practices.

Part of reflecting critically on the ethical, social and political aspects of my own practice (Zeichner, 2001) include also the following contributions and limitations of this research.

#### **10.4.1 Contributions of this research**

This research has used the primary school as a setting, identified both hate speech and refugees as topics for sensitisation and approached them through the delivery of EDC/HRE and the blending of formal and non-formal education. To the best of my knowledge, combining the aforementioned elements is something not tried before.

This research highlighted the need for teachers to be trained on topics like hate speech and suggested an intervention that could be used as a roadmap for teachers wishing to handle similar issues in their classes with students. The value of this research lies in showcasing some tested successful teaching techniques to other teacher-researchers who might conduct a similar intervention in their classrooms. It also highlights possible

challenges to anticipate and problems to avoid in their own research and practice. Thus, empowers teachers to take on educational research and defy criticism from those who believe teachers should not engage in research (Wood, 2016) and overcome the artificial simplification that teachers need to leave the specialist stuff to the 'experts' (Bonnell et al., 2011).

For this intervention, I adopted the Council of Europe's EDC/HRE framework for designing and implementing the student workshops. Therefore, it has added to the research regarding human rights education and tested its application in the primary school context and its effectiveness in tackling the issue of hate speech. An added value of this teaching intervention was that it tried to bridge formal with non-formal education for maximum learning results and tested the blending in practice to identify successful teaching practices and possible pitfalls. Moreover, it demonstrated the efficacy of some educational resources published by the Council of Europe and provided valuable evidence and examples of how these published materials can be used in practice.

In addition, my study project bridged human rights education with Contact Theory. In order to weaken essentialist thinking, i.e. members of one group share qualities that are not shared with members of other groups (Bigler & Hughes, 2009), I included the communication opportunity with peer refugees where my students had the chance to see that they do share qualities with outgroups, such as refugee children, for instance, liking the same neighbourhood games. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006), when testing Allport's conditions as optimal for achieving positive results in intergroup contact, noticed that authority support was of special importance for enhancing positive contact effects. In my research case, the authority support was strong as teachers from both local and refugee schools were in full support of the intergroup contact. Moreover, the two group populations had similar statuses and worked towards a common goal. Their contact occurred in a structured programme designed to create optimal conditions for positive intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, p. 766). However, contact alone is not a sufficient condition for positive effects (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014). The strongest effect seems to happen when contact is situated within social-cognitive programmes designed to promote empathy



and perspective-taking (ibid.). In my research project, empathy invocation was central to the objectives of the intervention. Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) also concur that simply knowing more about the outgroup does not reduce prejudice effectively. In contrast, anxiety reduction, empathy, and perspective-taking seem to yield stronger mediational effects.

Furthermore, researchers found the impact of contact to be reliably weaker for members of minority groups which could be due to the differing levels of prior intergroup interaction, knowledge about the outgroup, and anxiety about the actual contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). That verifies my decision to create an intervention for the members of the majority group, who most probably had fewer opportunities to interact with refugee minority members than the opportunities refugee students had; also they probably know less about them than refugees possibly know about Greeks. Targeting the majority group and preparing them for the actual intergroup contact situation contributed also to the anxiety reduction and helped more positive results to emerge from the contact, especially when the first contact was -unwittingly- an indirect one.

In the same piece of work, the researchers point out the need for future research to explore both positive and negative factors in the contact situation to deepen researchers' understanding of the nature of intergroup contact effects. The contribution of my research in this line of investigation has to offer the experience of a contact situation without direct exposure to each other. It seems that a positive outcome is feasible to be achieved in a designed contact opportunity which abides by Allport's suggested optimal conditions, even if the two groups do not come initially in direct contact. Possibly, also the fact that contact was not direct at first could serve in a future meeting endeavour as a factor to reduce anxiety about intergroup contact.

Regarding the duration of an intervention, research suggests that even though typically interventions are one-off events, the most successful ones occur over longer periods of time (Aboud & Fenwick, 1999). Cameron et al. (2006), while discussing their own interventions which aimed at changing outgroup intended behaviour, commented that they conducted their intervention once a week for 6 weeks, which is longer than typical

interventions. In my research project, the workshops were implemented once a week for 10 weeks. This is an added value for my venture and longer than typical intervention studies. Moreover, that occurred in a primary school setting which is even less frequent. I acknowledge that the reason that was made possible for me was that I was an insider of the school, and I figured out a way to embed the intervention into the school's curriculum. In either case, my students seemed to have benefitted from the longer duration of our project.

#### **10.4.2 Limitations**

Some limitations came up while developing and implementing the intervention. The two teachers who joined me in the workshops willingly took a secondary role in the implementation process as they felt they did not know much about either hate speech or non-formal education. Thus, they did not have much active involvement. However, they benefitted from participating in the overall action research project and were encouraged by watching me and empowered to do something similar on their own in the future.

Moreover, despite my best efforts to establish direct contact between my students and their refugee peers, that proved impossible. This, I consider a drawback, which, however, yielded research interest and experience in the discussion of the benefits of indirect contact. Furthermore, the present study focused on the perspectives of students who belong to the majority group (my students) and as such, it did not give voice to the refugee children of the neighbouring school, the students of the minority group. Unwittingly, I had limited access to them. Therefore, I had to rely mainly on the information their teacher was willing to share with me and the documents and drawings they sent us. In my effort to include the perspectives of refugees, I ran the focus groups with adult refugees before the beginning of the intervention, which was enlightening. However, my lack of knowledge of the Arabic language in the focus group with the Syrians resulted in my heavy reliance on the interpreter's translation, and I may have missed some points of interaction between respondents.

## **10.5 Suggestions for further research**

While addressing my research questions unavoidably, more queries arose, which probed me in the direction of further inquiry. It would be useful in the future to replicate a similar intervention with students of other age groups at other levels of education, for instance, in secondary schools or university level. Moreover, it is worthwhile conducting a similar intervention followed by direct contact to compare the results with the indirect contact and test if certain conditions play a role in the positive outcome of the contact. In addition, it would be interesting for future research to reverse the aimed target group. That is, design an intervention following the human rights education paradigm and experiential learning techniques aiming this time to empower refugee children and prepare them for their contact with the majority group. Finally, Pettigrew (1998) asserts that the contact situation should provide participants with the opportunity to become friends. He sees this condition as essential and not merely facilitating positive intergroup contact. Consequently, it would be valuable to follow up an intervention like the one I implemented by devoting time for cross-group friendships to develop and test whether it leads to optimal intergroup contact.

### **In conclusion,**

The aims of this study were to explore the issue of hate speech within the school context in Greece and suggest teaching practices for tackling it. More specifically, it set out with the first research question to examine the extent to which hate speech is an issue in Greek schools. It found out that, indeed, hate speech is an issue that many schools face but do not necessarily manage to deal with. Moreover, a need was revealed for teachers to receive proper training on tackling sensitive and controversial topics like hate speech in their practice.

After highlighting the need for teachers to be trained on topics like hate speech, the need for a roadmap for teachers wishing to handle similar issues in their classes was born. That led to the second research question, which was to test out which EDC/HRE teaching

practices raise awareness about hate speech. Indeed, EDC/HRE was used as the pedagogical framework for delivering the sensitisation workshops to students, which were designed according to its principles based on experiential learning. The findings showed that effective teaching practices are those involving students mentally as well as physically, such as role-plays and games. Moreover, the bridging of formal and non-formal education and mixing of respective techniques can maximise learning results and sensitisation about human rights in general and hate speech in particular.

A third research question was to test whether it is possible to encourage learners to develop empathy towards refugees. The research showed that activities involving story-telling or narration of real stories of refugees had a great impact on students and helped the development of empathy towards refugees. In addition, closing the learning cycle of experiential learning with an action seemed to validate and strengthen the learning outcomes for the students. This particular research intervention was followed by an opportunity to communicate with refugee students from a neighbouring school, which seems to have further encouraged local students to develop a positive attitude towards their peer refugees.

I hope that through my research project, I can contribute to the shaping of future educational policies which aim to facilitate learners to live together peacefully in mutual understanding (Delors & Unesco, 1996). In a world threatened by increased conflict worldwide, it is necessary to encourage positive intergroup attitudes and prevent prejudice through programmes designed for children and youth, so that they 'benefit rather than suffer from social diversity' (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014, p. 21).

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX I – Consent Forms

APPENDIX II – Interview Guides

APPENDIX III - Field Notes Chart Sheet

APPENDIX IV – Questionnaires

APPENDIX V - Full description of workshops

## **APPENDIX I – Consent Forms**

### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (for focus groups)**

Dear participant,

With this letter I would like to inform you about a research that I implement for my doctoral studies at the UCL Institute of Education.

Below I mention details about the research and I answer some of your possible questions.

**Research Title:** "Educational approaches to school hate speech in Greece"

**Researcher:** Aikaterini Boutsia

#### **Description of the research**

This research aims to study the issue of hate speech at school. Through action research, the phenomenon of racist speech in school will be explored. Two classes will participate that belong to two different Primary Schools in Keratsini. There will be experiential education workshops where students will have the opportunity to explore misconceptions and stereotypes about refugees and immigrants, addressing simultaneously the notion of hate.

Before preparing the abovementioned workshops, I will run focus groups with refugees, so that I understand in depth the status, feelings and experiences of a refugee. Moreover, I will use this opportunity to record the participants' encounters with hate speech. Finally, I will seek for any advice and/or suggestion about the student workshops.

The focus group will be a gathering of 2-4 refugees in the same hall at the same time and asked a few questions. The overall process will not last more than an hour and the identity of participants will be kept anonymous. There are no risks that participants can be exposed to during the interview. Moreover, it will be made clear to each participant that they have the right to refuse participation in research and/or not to answer a question if they do not wish. Furthermore, they may withdraw from the interview at any stage.

The process will be recorded, withholding the identity and name of each participant. The recording files will not be used for any purpose other than for the collection and analysis of research data and will be destroyed after the completion thereof.

In the case you agree to participate to the group interview, please complete and sign the consent form below.

For any further information you may contact me by phone 694xxxxxxx or via email katxxxxx@gmail.com

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation.

The researcher,

Aikaterini Boutsia



## DECLARATION

**I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction. Thus, I declare that I accept to participate to the group interview. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I withhold the right to withdraw from the research process at any stage without any consequences.**

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

***\*Note: Please note the consent form to parents was articulated in Greek as it addressed Greek parents. A translation in English follows below.***

## **ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗΣ ΓΟΝΕΑ ΚΑΤΟΠΙΝ ΕΝΗΜΕΡΩΣΗΣ**

Αγαπητοί γονείς,

Με αυτή την επιστολή θα ήθελα να σας ενημερώσω για μία έρευνα που πραγματοποιώ στο πλαίσιο των διδακτορικών σπουδών μου στο Πανεπιστήμιο UCL Institute of Education που αφορά τη ρητορική του μίσους στο σχολείο.

Παρακάτω παραθέτω αναλυτικά στοιχεία για την έρευνα και απαντώ σε ορισμένα πιθανά σας ερωτήματα.

**Τίτλος έρευνας:** «Εκπαιδευτικές προσεγγίσεις στη σχολική ρητορική του μίσους στην Ελλάδα»

**Ερευνήτρια:** Αικατερίνη Μπούτσια

### **Περιγραφή της έρευνας**

Η έρευνα αυτή έχει ως στόχο να μελετήσει το ζήτημα του λεκτικού μίσους στο πλαίσιο του σχολείου. Μέσα από έρευνα-δράση, όπου θα συμμετέχουν δυο τμήματα της Ε' τάξης του 13<sup>ου</sup> - 21<sup>ου</sup> Δημοτικού Σχολείου Κερατσινίου, θα διερευνηθεί το φαινόμενο της ρατσιστικής ομιλίας στο σχολείο. Θα διεξαχθούν εργαστήρια βιωματικής εκπαίδευσης, όπου οι μαθητές θα έχουν την ευκαιρία να επεξεργαστούν παρανοήσεις και στερεότυπα για τους πρόσφυγες και τους μετανάστες, εξετάζοντας ταυτόχρονα και την έννοια του μίσους.

Τα βιωματικά αυτά εργαστήρια θα αποτελέσουν μέρος εκπαιδευτικού προγράμματος που έχει εγκριθεί από τη Διεύθυνση Πρωτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Πειραιά, με αριθμό πρωτοκόλλου 14827/6-12-2016. Μετά το τέλος του προγράμματος, θα επιλέξω ένα μικρό δείγμα των μαθητών, από τους οποίους θα πάρω συνέντευξη. Οι ατομικές συνεντεύξεις θα χρησιμοποιηθούν για να διερευνηθούν εις βάθος κάποια από τα δεδομένα που συλλέχθηκαν κατά τη διάρκεια των εργαστηρίων, αλλά και εν είδη αξιολόγησης αυτών. Οι ερωτήσεις θα περιστρέφονται γύρω από τις δραστηριότητες που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν, τυχόν προβλήματα που προέκυψαν και καινούριες γνώσεις που αποκόμισαν οι μαθητές.

Η συνέντευξη θα διαρκέσει είκοσι (20) λεπτά και θα διαφυλαχθεί η ανωνυμία των μαθητών. Δεν υπάρχουν κίνδυνοι στους οποίους μπορεί να εκτεθεί ο μαθητής/τρια κατά τη διάρκεια της συνέντευξης. Επίσης, θα διευκρινιστεί σε κάθε παιδί ότι έχει το δικαίωμα να αρνηθεί τη συμμετοχή τους στην έρευνα ή/και να μην απαντήσει σε κάποια ερώτηση, εάν δεν το επιθυμεί, καθώς επίσης ότι μπορεί να αποχωρήσει από τη συνέντευξη σε οποιοδήποτε στάδιό της.

Η διαδικασία θα ηχογραφηθεί, αλλά χωρίς να αναφερθεί κάπου το όνομα του παιδιού. Τα αρχεία της ηχογράφησης δεν θα χρησιμοποιηθούν για κανένα άλλο σκοπό παρά μόνο για

τις ανάγκες συλλογής και ανάλυσης των ερευνητικών δεδομένων και θα καταστραφούν μετά το πέρας αυτών.

Τέλος, η συγκεκριμένη έρευνα θα έχει οφέλη για τους μαθητές που συμμετέχουν και όχι μόνο για τους μαθητές θα ακολουθήσουν. Θα έχουν την ευκαιρία να εξερευνήσουν θέματα ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων μέσα από καινοτόμο τρόπο διδασκαλίας, που θα είναι διασκεδαστικός, διαδραστικός και θα βελτιώσει την κριτική σκέψη και τις διαπροσωπικές δεξιότητες των μαθητών.

Εφόσον, λοιπόν, είστε σύμφωνοι για τη συμμετοχή του παιδιού σας στη συνέντευξη, παρακαλώ να συμπληρώσετε και να υπογράψετε το παρακάτω έντυπο συγκατάθεσης.

Για τυχόν περαιτέρω διευκρινίσεις μπορείτε να επικοινωνήσετε μαζί μου στο τηλέφωνο 6947599946 ή στην ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση [katboutsia@gmail.com](mailto:katboutsia@gmail.com).

Σας ευχαριστώ θερμά για τη συνεργασία σας στην προσπάθειά μου αυτή.

Η ερευνήτρια,

Αικατερίνη Μπούτσια

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#### **ΥΠΕΥΘΥΝΗ ΔΗΛΩΣΗ**

**Δηλώνω υπεύθυνα ότι αποδέχομαι τη συμμετοχή του παιδιού μου στην έρευνα. Το παιδί μου διατηρεί το δικαίωμα να αποσυρθεί από τη διαδικασία της έρευνας σε οποιοδήποτε στάδιο της διεξαγωγής της.**

ΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΗ ΓΟΝΕΑ Ή ΚΗΔΕΜΟΝΑ

ΗΜΕΡΟΜΗΝΙΑ

## PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear parents and guardians,

With this letter I would like to inform you about a research that I implement for my doctoral studies at the UCL Institute of Education.

Below I mention details about the research and I answer some of your possible questions.

**Research Title:** "Educational approaches to school hate speech in Greece"

**Researcher:** Aikaterini Boutsia

### **Description of the research**

This research aims to study the issue of hate speech at school. Through action research, the phenomenon of racist speech in school will be explored. Two classes will participate that belong to the fifth grade of the 13th-21st Primary School of Keratsini. There will be experiential education workshops where students will have the opportunity to explore misconceptions and stereotypes about refugees and immigrants, addressing simultaneously the notion of hate.

These experiential workshops are part of an educational program approved by the Directorate of Primary Education of Piraeus (Document 14 827 / 06.12.2016). After the end of the program, a small sub-sample of students will be selected to be interviewed. Individual interviews will be used to investigate in depth some of the data collected during the workshops, but also to evaluate the workshops. Questions will be relevant to the educational activities of the workshops, any problems encountered and new knowledge that students acquired.

The interview will last for twenty (20) minutes and the identity of students will be anonymous. There are no risks that students can be exposed to during the interview. Moreover, it will be made clear to each student that they have the right to refuse participation in research and/or not to answer a question if they do not wish. Furthermore, they may withdraw from the interview at any stage.

The process will be recorded, withholding the identity and name of the child. The recording files will not be used for any purpose other than for the collection and analysis of research data and will be destroyed after the completion thereof.

Finally, this research is expected to have benefits for both the students involved, as well for the students to follow. They current students will have the opportunity to explore human rights issues through innovative teaching mode, which is fun, interactive and will help them improve critical thinking and interpersonal skills.

In the case you agree for your child's participation to the interview, please complete and sign the consent form below.

For any further information you can contact me by phone 694xxxxxxx or via email katxxxxx@gmail.com

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation.

The researcher,

Aikaterini Boutsia

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### DECLARATION

**I declare that I accept the participation of my child in the interview. My child has the right to withdraw from the research process at any stage without any consequences.**

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN

DATE

## **APPENDIX II - Interview Guides**

***\*Note: Please note that all interviews – except the one for refugee participants - were conducted in Greek, therefore the guides were also articulated in Greek. Here is an English translation of them for convenience to the non-Greek speakers.***

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INITIAL STUDY (education stakeholders)**

#### **Hate Speech Definition:**

Hate speech covers all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin. Other forms of discrimination and prejudice, such as antigypsyism, christianophobia, islamophobia, misogyny, sexism and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is the scope of hate speech (Council of Europe).

1. Do you think that the economic crisis has affected the manifestation of hate speech in Greek society?
2. A. Do you think that the issue of hate speech concerns or affects the student and educational community? B. Are you aware of incidents of hate speech in schools?
3. What are the different forms of hate speech (racial, religious, other) in Greece or in schools?
4. A. Do you think our teachers are aware of hate speech and racist violence? B. What is the role they could play in relation to this phenomenon?
5. A. Which groups of students are most often the target and recipients of offensive speech? B. What are the characteristics of students who are usually involved in such incidents?
6. Do you think Golden Dawn or other extremist groups have infiltrated schools?
7. Do you know of a framework regulating hate speech issues in the school context?
8. Any last thoughts on everything we've discussed or the phenomenon of hate speech?

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INITIAL STUDY (teachers)**

[Provide definition of hate speech and then ask the following]

- 1.** Is hate speech taking place in the schools you work with?
- 2.** Are students interested or concerned about it?
- 3.** Where, when and why is it happening?
- 4.** What are the patterns of hate speech?
- 5.** What form does it take (racial/religious/other)?
- 6.** Which groups of students are involved in hate speech?
- 7.** Which are the most frequently targeted groups?
- 8.** What are the consequences of hate speech for the school community?
- 9.** What are the effects of hate speech on students receiving it?
- 10.** Do you believe that teachers are aware of hate speech?
- 11.** What is the role of teachers in school hate speech?
- 12.** Is there any kind of policy that regulates hate speech in schools?
- 13.** Any last thoughts?

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AFTER THE INTERVENTION**

1. What is your overall impression of the programme?
2. What did you like the most about the intervention?
3. What did you like the least about the intervention?
4. Mention two new things you learnt from your participation to the workshops?
5. Did you face problems during your participation at the workshops?
6. Which activity did you like most and why?
7. Could you describe your work in groups?
8. Did you find it difficult to understand any of the activities or worksheets I used in the workshops?
9. Would you like something to have been done differently?
10. Did you have any difficulty completing the two questionnaires?
11. [After reminding the vignette in the initial questionnaire, I asked] Today, if you were to witness a similar incident, how would you react?



## **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AFTER THE INTERVENTION**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION/IMPRESSION**

1. What is your overall assessment of the intervention?
2. What did you think of the structure of the workshops?
3. Do you think the duration of the intervention was adequate? Should it be less / more?
4. Do you have any suggestions for improving the overall intervention?
5. If you had to run by yourself one of the activities, which one would it be?
6. If you had to run again this intervention on your own, do you think you would have any difficulty?

### **FAMILIARITY WITH HATE SPEECH**

7. Do you feel more familiar with the topic of hate speech?
8. Would you work on this topic with your students again in the future? (Why;)

### **FEEDBACK ON MY PERFORMANCE**

9. Having watched me running the workshops, would you like to suggest something I could have done differently?

### **EVALUATION OF THEIR ROLE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LESSONS**

10. How did you see your role in this program?
11. Would you like to have had another role in the whole process?
12. Did you find it easy / difficult to be with another teacher in the classroom at the same time?

## INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUPS WITH REFUGEES

- Would you like to briefly describe your trip from your home country to today's hosting place?
- What was the most difficult thing you had to experience during this trip?
- What is an element that gives you hope and keeps you going?
- Have you faced any discrimination so far? Is there a misconception you feel the world has for the refugees?
- What education are your children receiving now? Have you any suggestions for how their education could be improved?
- I am designing an educational intervention to be used with my students in order to help them welcome refugees. What do you think is important to include in the programme?

## INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE HUMANITARIAN AID WORKER WITH REFUGEES

[Provide definition of hate speech and then ask the following]

1. Could you describe to me the context of your work with refugees?
2. How do you perceive relationships between refugees and local people?
3. What would you recommend for good relationships to be encouraged between locals and refugees?
4. Do you believe hate speech is a problem for refugees in Greece? If yes, could you provide some examples? If no, why not?
5. Why do you think my focus groups' participants refuted that they have faced or still face hate speech in Greece during their interviews to me?
6. I am preparing a school intervention for tackling hate speech that targets refugees. What do you think it should include?

## **APPENDIX III - Field Notes Chart Sheet**

### **FIELD NOTES**

(date: \_\_\_\_\_)

**Why this activity?**

**Procedure and students' reactions:**

**Class teacher's role/presence:**

**Food for thought/ Lessons learnt:**

## **APPENDIX IV – Questionnaires**

***\*Note: Please note that the questionnaires were articulated in Greek, as they were addressing Greek students. Here is an English translation for convenience to the non-Greek speakers***

### **INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire you hold in your hands is intended to study the negative forms of expression you meet at school and on the internet. There is no right or wrong answer. In every section you may choose the answer that best responds to your reality, marking an X in the box next to your response.

The questionnaires are **anonymous**.

Introductory information

Sex: Boy  Girl

Class:

Questi

**1. A)** Are you familiar with the term 'hate speech'?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I'm not sure

**B)** Could you provide an example of hate speech?

**2. A)** Have you witnessed other children in school to become target of offensive comments;

- Yes
- No

**B)** If yes, why were they commented offensively?

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**3.** Have you ever intervened when you saw a child becoming target of offensive comments?

- a) Yes, I intervened in order to defend the child
- b) No, I did not do anything at all
- c) Yes, I intervened in order to agree with the offensive comments
- d) No, I have never seen a child becoming target of offensive comments

**4. A)** Have you ever been a target of offensive comments at school?

- Yes
- No

**B)** If yes, why have you been commented offensively?

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**5. A)** Do you use the internet?

- a) Yes
- b) No

**B)** If yes, have you seen groups or individuals targeted with offensive comments on the internet?

- a) Yes
- b) No

**C)** If yes, what kind of comments were they?

---

**6. A)** If you have seen groups or individuals targeted with offensive comments on the internet, have you ever intervened?

- a) Yes
- b) No

**B)** Why? (mark those answers that suit you)

- a) I have intervened to agree with the comments
  - b) I have intervened to support those people because I don't believe the comments are true
  - c) I have not intervened because I believe nothing will change
  - d) I have not intervened because I fear
  - e) I have not intervened because I agree with these comments
  - f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**7.** Do you know what is the difference between an immigrant and a refugee?

- a) Yes
- b) No

**8.** Think of the following scenario: A child from another country just came to your class. Your friends are laughing at him and have begun to publish racist jokes about him on their social networks. They also invite you to share the jokes on your personal profile on the internet. What do you do?

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**9.** Think of the following scenario: You see a girl in the school yard being alone and crying. You know that the other children tease her because she has learning difficulties and they call her "foolish" and "ugly". Your friends often talk offensively about her when you're all together. What do you do?

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**

# FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

## QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire you hold in your hands is intended to evaluate the educational program about hate speech we ran at school during the past three months. There is no right or wrong answer. You may choose the one that expresses you and responds to your own reality, by marking an X in the box next to your answer.

The questionnaires are **anonymous**.

Introductory information

Sex: Boy  Girl

Class:

Questio

1. How did you like the overall 'hate speech' program you participated with your class during the past few months?

Very much       A lot       So and so       Little       Not at all

2. Could you provide an example of hate speech?

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3. Could you describe one of the activities we did in these lessons?

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4. Mention something you learned about refugees:

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5. What do you think of the duration of the programme?

a) It was adequate    b) I would have liked it to last longer    c) I would have liked it to last less

6. a) What did you **like** most about working in **groups**?

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**b) What was the most difficult part of working in groups?**

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**7. If you were to do this program again,**

**a) What would you like to be done differently?**

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**b) What would you like to stay the same?**

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**8. Think of the following scenario: A classmate has published a video on their profile on the internet where he makes fun of foreigners and claims that they have no right to live in the country, encouraging violence against non-white foreigners. Then he invites you to propagate these ideas. How would you react?**

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**9. What do you remember from the activity we did to get in touch with the refugee children in the neighboring school?**

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**10. If a refugee student would come to your class next year, how would you welcome them?**

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***THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!***



## **APPENDIX V- Full description of workshops**

### **1st ACTIVITY**

#### **WORDS THAT WOUND**

(Adapted from: [http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/chapter\\_4/4\\_40.asp](http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/chapter_4/4_40.asp))

#### **Overview:**

Children give examples of hurtful language and analyze its motives and effects.

#### **Objectives:**

- To reflect on the causes and effects of hurtful language
- To understand how people may respond differently to different terms
- To understand the limits of freedom of expression

#### **Materials:**

- Blackboard and chalk
- Coloured post-its
- Copy of CRC Article 13

#### **Procedure:**

1. Read aloud a simplified version of the CRC Article 13:

Freedom of expression: You have the right to search, receive and share information in all forms (e.g. in print, in the form of art, or through television, radio and the internet), as long as the information is not damaging to you or others.

2. Point out that this article of the CRC gives a child the right to freedom of expression but specifically restricts expression that violates the rights and reputations of others. Discuss freedom of expression by asking questions such as these:
  - Should we always be able to say whatever we like?
  - Should limits be placed on what we can say about our thoughts and beliefs?
  - What kind of language would violate the rights and feelings of others?
3. Explain that this activity will explore some of these questions.
4. Give everyone coloured post-its and ask them to write down hurtful comments they hear people say about other children or names that children call each other, each one on a separate piece of paper.
5. Make a scale on the board such as the one below, ranging from 'Playful / Teasing Words' to 'Words that Hurt A Lot'. Ask the children to put their words where they think they belong on the scale. Encourage them not to talk during this part of the activity.

Playful/Teasing Words	Words that Hurt A Little	Words that Hurt Moderately	Words that Hurt A Lot

- Then ask everyone to examine the wall silently. Usually the same words will appear several times and are almost always rated at different degrees of severity.

### Debriefing:

- When the children are sitting down again, ask them what they observed, guiding their analysis with questions such as these:
  - Did some words appear in more than one column?
  - Why do you think some people thought a word was not hurtful and others though it was painful or degrading?
  - Does it matter how a word is said? Or by whom?
  - Why do people use words such as these?
  - Is hurting others by using words a form of violence? Why?
- Ask the children if they can see any patterns or categories among these hurtful words. As the children begin to identify and mention these categories (e.g. about physical appearances and abilities, mental characteristics or ethnic background), write down the categories on the board. Guide their analysis with questions such as these:
  - Are some words only for girls? For boys?
  - Why do you think hurtful language falls into these topics?
  - In what topics or categories do the words considered most hurtful seem to be?
  - What conclusions can you draw about hurtful language from these categories?
- You may want to have one category labelled 'Other'. When the children are re-seated, ask questions such as these:
  - What categories seem to have the greatest number of words? How can you explain that?
  - Do the words considered most hurtful seem to fall into particular categories?
  - Don't answer aloud but consider: do the words you use yourself fall into a particular category?

## **2nd ACTIVITY**

### **FREEDOM UNLIMITED?**

(Adapted from: *Bookmarks*, p. 69-71)

#### **Overview:**

Participants explore the idea of freedom of expression using a number of case studies. They need to decide what to do with comments or communications which are controversial, abusive or potentially dangerous.

#### **Objectives:**

- To explore the concept of freedom of expression
- To understand why freedom of expression is important – for individuals and for society
- To look at the reasons why limiting freedom of expression may be needed to protect human rights, particularly where hate speech is involved

#### **Materials:**

- Whiteboard and marker pens
- Flipcharts and coloured pens
- Copies of the cases for discussion

#### **Procedure:**

1. Ask participants if they remember what the CRC Article 13 is about. If they do, ask them what Freedom of Expression is about and whether it has any restrictions. If they don't, go through with them the two initial steps of the last activity's procedure.
2. Tell participants that they will work in small groups (4 - 5 people) and will discuss a number of cases in which people publicise (mainly online) comments which are harmful to others and their human rights. The groups need to decide whether this is a case where any of the material should be taken off – in other words, whether freedom of expression should be restricted. – If they decide it should: what should be taken off, and why? – If not, why not? What else can be done and by whom?
3. Divide participants into groups of 4 or 5 people and give each group a copy of the cases. Give them about 20 minutes to discuss each of the cases. They should try to provide reasons for their decisions.

#### **Debriefing:**

Go through each of the case studies asking for groups' responses. Discuss briefly the reasons behind the decisions they took. Use some of the following questions to draw out other key points:

- Were there any cases where you could not reach agreement in the group? What were the key differences in opinion?
- Did it make a difference who was responsible for the comments? Did it make a difference how many people responded, or how they responded?
- Did you arrive at any general principles to decide when freedom of expression can (or should) be restricted? What are the dangers in being over-restrictive? What are the dangers in being overpermissive?
- Do you think that closing down websites or removing harmful posts is an effective way of combatting hate speech online?

## HANDOUTS

### Cases for discussion

1. There is a child in your school who is being laughed at by many children for the way he looks. During breaks, he often has to sit alone because some of your classmates are attacking him verbally. Lately, an online group has been created to upload offensive jokes about this child.

- Is there something that needs to be done at school?
- Is there anything to be removed from the internet? If so, how much of it and why?
- If not, what else could be done?

2. Nicolas is a politician and uses his personal website to demand the removal of a Roma community from his city, accusing them of high levels of crime. Following his allegations, there is a series of attacks on Roma throughout the country. Many media start publishing stories of crimes committed by the Roma - but none mentions crimes that have been committed against them.

- Is there anything to be removed from the internet? If so, how much of it and why?
- If not, why not? What else could be done?

3. Dinos, a well-known journalist, writes an article in a newspaper stating that "women are weak and an inferior human kind". A website is created against Dinos, exposing his personal life. Dinos begins to receive hundreds of personal abusive emails. Some include threats.

- Is there anything to be removed from the newspaper? If so, what and why?
- Is there anything to be removed from the internet? If so, what and why?
- If not, why not? What else could be done?

4. A group called "Protect our nation" creates a website where it promotes ideas against immigrants and refugees. Many of the publications are racist. The website is filled with comments and creates a heated discussion. Part of the discussion includes particularly abusive language, but there is also a large number of commentators who oppose to the racist ideology of the website.

- Is there anything to be removed from the internet? If so, how much of it and why?
- If not, what else could be done?

5. Eleni publishes a video on her public profile that mocks disabled people, portraying them as incompetent, extraterrestrial beings. Site statistics show that almost no one has played the video and there are no comments from visitors.

- Is there anything to be removed from the internet? If so, how much of it and why?
- If not, why not? What else could be done?

### **3rd ACTIVITY**

## **PLAY IT AGAIN**

(Adapted from: *Bookmarks*, p. 92-95)

#### **Overview:**

This activity is based on a role play: someone is drawn into an act of bullying because of peer pressure. Participants are asked to replay the scenario in order to achieve a different outcome.

#### **Objectives:**

- To understand how bullying works
- To develop solidarity and empathy for victims of bullying
- To encourage participants to take action against bullying and hate speech online

#### **Materials:**

- Enough space for the role play

#### **Preparation:**

Identify 4 volunteers before the activity begins. They will be asked to perform a short role play for the rest of the group (not more than 5 minutes). Give them copies of the scenario (below) so that they can prepare beforehand. Help them to get started if necessary.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Tell the group that the activity will begin with a brief role play. Read out the following background to the scenario then introduce the volunteers and invite them to begin the role play.

#### **Background:**

*Yorgos is quiet and is seen as a bit 'different'. He doesn't have many friends and often worries that others in the class don't like him. Sometimes he plays the fool to make the other children laugh, and he is very good at that (even if the teacher doesn't always approve!).*

*After one lesson when he had made all the class laugh a lot, he was approached as he was leaving school by Kostas and Nick, two of the most popular boys in the class. The three of them laughed together about his behaviour, and then walked home together. Yorgos felt very proud, as if he'd at last been accepted.*

2. Now run the role play.

3. After the role play, ask participants for their reactions. Prompt with a few questions if necessary, for example: – Do you think the scenario is realistic? – What do you think about Yorgos' behaviour? – How do you think Ahmed must have felt?

4. Invite participants to think about how they might have behaved if they had been in Yorgos' position. Then tell them that the role play will be run again, but this time you would like to invite others to step in and see if they can produce a better outcome for Ahmed (and Yorgos).

5. Start the role play again (with the same volunteers) but stop it at certain points and ask for new volunteers to change places with one of the characters. You may want to do this a couple of times to allow more people to take part in the activity.

## **DEBRIEFING**

Make sure participants have come out of their roles, if they took part in the role play. Emphasise that the following questions should be answered from their own point of view, not from the point of view of characters that featured in the role play.

- What did you think about this activity?
- What were the things that made Yorgos join in with the bullying?
- How easy do you find it to resist these pressures in your own life?
- Have you ever seen posts on someone's personal profile, or elsewhere on the Internet, which target people in the way Yorgos did in this scenario?
- Is there anything you can do to stop things like this being posted, or lessen their impact?
- Did you learn anything from the activity, or did it make you think about bullying in a different way?

## **Handout** (for volunteers)

### **Instructions**

Prepare a short role play to illustrate the following scenario. It should begin at the moment when Nick and Kostas approach Yorgos after school. Decide who will play the roles of Kostas, Nick, Yorgos and Ahmed.

- ◇ Nick, Kostas – popular boys in school. They start the bullying.
- ◇ Yorgos – a boy who has trouble making friends. He gets taken up by Kostas and Nick.
- ◇ Ahmed – a new boy, originally from Ethiopia.

**START THE ROLE PLAY HERE:**

As Kostas, Nick and Yorgos are walking home, they see Ahmed ahead of them, walking alone. Ahmed has recently joined the class and is from another country. He is teased by some of the children for speaking the language used in school badly, for being smaller than most people in the class, and for his shabby clothes. Kostas and Nick walk a bit faster so as to catch up with Ahmed. Then they start shouting insults at him, teasing his bag and asking whether everyone in Ethiopia wears clothes like him, and whether he should be in the baby class if he can't speak the language used in the school.

Yorgos feels very uncomfortable. Kostas and Nick keep looking at him, encouraging him to join in and asking what he thinks. In the end, Yorgos makes what he thinks is a witty comment about people in Ethiopia living in trees and speaking weird language. Kostas and Nick laugh a lot but Yorgos can see that Ahmed is very upset and frightened of the three boys. He knows what it's like to be teased by other children, and what he'd said to Ahmed had been far worse than anything people had said to him. But it had been good to laugh with Kostas and Nick, and their friendship was worth a lot.

**4th ACTIVITY****UNDERSTANDING HATE SPEECH**

(Adapted from: *Bookmarks*, p. 125-130)

**Overview:**

Participants look at examples of hate speech and discuss its possible consequences for individuals and society.

**Objectives:**

- To understand different forms of hate speech online and their consequences for victims and society
- To explore possible responses to hate speech online

**Materials:**

- Photocopies of the examples of hate speech
- Whiteboard and marker pens
- Flipchart papers and coloured pens

## Procedure:

1. Ask participants what they understand by hate speech online. Ask whether anyone has ever seen hate speech online, either directed towards an individual or towards representatives of particular groups (for example blacks, Muslims, Jews, women, etc.) What do participants feel when they come across it? How do they think the victims must feel? Explain that the term 'hate speech' is used to cover a wide range of content: – Firstly, it covers more than 'speech' in the common sense and can be used in relation to other forms of communication such as videos, images, music, and so on. – Secondly, the term can be used to describe very abusive and even threatening behaviour, as well as comments which are 'merely' offensive.
2. Explain to participants that they will analyse some examples of hate speech online, looking particularly at the impact on the victims themselves and on society.
3. Divide participants into groups and give each group one example of hate speech online from the case studies below.
4. Ask them to discuss their case and answer the questions. Tell them they have 15 minutes for the task.

## Debriefing:

Go through each of the examples asking for the groups' responses. Make a note of responses to the questions on two separate flipchart papers, one titled 'Consequences for victims' and the other 'Consequences for society'. If groups give similar answers, indicate this by underlining the first instance, or put a number next to it to indicate that more than one group arrived at the same answer. After all the groups have presented their results, review the two flipchart sheets, and use the following questions to reflect on the activity with the whole group:

- What did you think about the activity? What were your feelings about the example you analysed?
- What were the most common 'consequences' of hate speech listed by groups?
- Were there any similarities in the consequences, regardless of the target group of hate speech?
- What might some of the consequences be if this behaviour spreads online, and no-one does anything to address the problem?
- What tools or methods can you think of for addressing hate speech online?
- What can we do if we come across examples like these online?

## Handouts

A. claims through his television show that the Holocaust "never happened". He also makes abusive and racist remarks about Jewish people.

- Who are the victims of the hate speech in this example?
- What is the impact of hate speech on these individuals, and on people who identify with this social group?



A football game is interrupted because of insults and slogans by supporters against one of the players seen as “black”. A video with slogans and the interruption of the match goes online and is spread widely. Racist comments are repeated on several websites.

- Who are the victims of hate speech in this example?
- What is the impact of hate speech on this person, and on people who identify with this social group?

A young man posts on his internet profile comments against Muslims, such as “Islam out of my country – Protect our people”. He also proposes banning this religion in Europe.

- Who are the victims of the hate speech in this example?
- What is the impact of hate speech on these individuals, and on people who identify with this social group?

Abusive comments are posted on various news sites claiming that foreigners have no right to be in the country. Some of the comments call for violence against non-white foreigners.

- Who are the victims of hate speech in this example?
- What is the impact of hate speech on these individuals, and on people who identify with this social group?

The article of a leading journalist in a newspaper calls Roma people "animals" and invites readers to stand up against them wherever they find them. It calls for their elimination by any means. The newspaper fails to explain or apologise for the remarks. Other articles appear online which take the same position and use a similar tone.

- Who are the victims of the hate speech in this example?
- What is the impact of hate speech on these individuals, and on people who identify with this social group?

## 5<sup>TH</sup> ACTIVITY

### MESSAGE IN A BOX

(Adapted from: <https://www.seo.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/program-prosfiges-mia-valitsa-kosmos.pdf>)

#### **Objectives:**

- Understanding of the words and concepts: refugee, migrant, human rights, racism, equality, asylum.
- Develop empathy for comments that may hurt or gratify a person who newly joins a group

#### **Materials:**

- A small box
- A card with the message that accompanies the box
- Strips of words and definitions
- Whiteboard and marker pens

#### **Procedure:**

##### FIRST PART

1. Make the following introduction: *"Today is a special day, because something has come from very far for the whole class! It is a Box that has travelled a lot around the world and brings an important surprise for us, a message!"*

2. Show the box and then read aloud the message that accompanies the box:

#### Message:

*"Open the box, it will tell you stories for children, like you, students, who were in another country and yet came here now.*

*Even though they loved their country and had a good time there the war came one day, bombs were falling over and everything changed around there; fear, terror, machine guns.*

*They were forced to leave both their country and their friends, to cross countries, on foot or by boat, using maps trying to find a place without guns and fear, Where they can live in peace and tranquility, to rebuild their home and restart their school.*

*'But, what do I care?' you may ask. 'I do not care!'*

*And yet I know, if you think hard, in your heart you will find concepts such as love, care and compassion.*

*And that you want to help anyone who is at risk.*

*Be honest! Isn't it true?*

*Go ahead, open the box, it will tell you stories.*

*And when you hear all of them, you will have found a treasure!"*

3. Mention that in order to be able to read the Box's stories, they need to create a 'dictionary' of some words that will help them understand the stories better. Explain that the Box used to always carry this dictionary alongside to help it with communication, but during the trip some of the pages were torn and lost. Therefore, participants will have to help rebuild the 'dictionary'.

4. Invite students to go around the class and find the hidden strips of papers that were lost from the dictionary.

Half of the strips have the following words printed on them: refugee, immigrant, racism, asylum, human rights, equality.

The other half strips have the following definitions:

<p>It is the person who is forced or forced to leave their country or the place of their permanent residence to resort to a foreign country. They have a 'justified' fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, ethnic origin or even political convictions.</p>	<p>It is the person who takes freely the decision to move to another region or country, often for better economic or social conditions.</p>	<p>They are ethical principles protected by international conventions that set specific standards of human behavior. Every person is entitled to them from the moment of their birth simply because they are human beings.</p>
<p>It is the perception that people are not all equal to each other, but they are divided into upper and lower, distinguished either by skin color or ethnicity or religion, etc.</p>	<p>It is the equal treatment of individuals. All people should be treated equally and have equal political, economic, social and civil rights.</p>	<p>Provide security, shelter, stay in a protected environment. Asylum is defined as the area in which one takes refuge and enjoys security, protection of his dignity and his freedom of expression.</p>

5. The students read aloud the strips with the single words they hold and the facilitator writes them on the board. Then, the students who hold the definitions, read aloud one by one and the whole group discusses which word every definition describes. After reaching an agreement, stick the strip with definition under each word on the board.

## SECOND PART

6. Now, tell the participants that throughout its voyage, the box gathered lots of memories, but also several voices and feelings, which sometimes made it cheerful and sometimes disturbed. Then, read aloud the new message from the Box:

*"When you travel and change places, apart from memories, you also collect emotions in you. We feel these feelings when we come in contact with other people and talk to them. Likewise, passing through different places, I saved the following comments that I heard children say to other children. How do these comments make you feel you? "*

*Here are some of the comments:*

- ◇ *Why should she sit next to me?*
- ◇ *He smells funny.*
- ◇ *He doesn't speak our language.*
- ◇ *I will show you, don't be afraid.*
- ◇ *Do you want us to be friends?*
- ◇ *Tell me something about your country.*
- ◇ *Do you want to play?*
- ◇ *I don't like her clothes.*
- ◇ *What is this scarf?*
- ◇ *Here, you can have my pencil.*

7. Write the statements above on the board and ask participants to put them in order, from 1 to 10, starting from the one that creates the most positive emotions and ending with the one that generates the most negative ones.

### **Debriefing:**

After the sorting out of statements, the plenary discusses the following questions:

- Was it easy to match each word with the corresponding definition?
- Is there any word you haven't heard before?
- Did you have any disagreements with the rest of the participants?
  
- What has bothered you in statements 9 and 10?
- How would you feel if you were going to a new class where you didn't know anyone and where they spoke an unknown language?
- How would you like to be welcomed?

### **6<sup>TH</sup> ACTIVITY**

## **BALLOON FRIENDS**

(Adapted from: <https://www.seo.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/program-prosfiges-mia-valitsa-kosmos.pdf>)

### **Objectives:**

- Getting to know/remembering Human Rights

### **Materials:**

- Balloons (one for each child)

- Coloured pens
- Simplified list of the Human Rights

**Procedure:**

1. Invite one of the students to read the new message from the Box.

*Message:*

*"Do you know what a balloon is? Ah! So you know! Yes, balloons colour our life. I was once passing by a playground. There I found these balloons. The children kept them high while playing and as their colours filled the blue sky, they felt they had a new friend! So get a marker and draw a friend with eyes, nose, mouth and ears! Think: What does this friend need to be happy and safe? "*

2. Distribute one balloon per child and ask them to draw the face of a new friend on it with eyes, mouth, ears.
3. Once everyone is ready, ask them what they think that this friend needs in order to feel happy and safe. They should write only a few words on the back of the balloon.

Provide a simplified list with the human rights on the wall, so that everyone can consult to help them thinking.

## Human Rights

1. We are all born free and equal.
2. Do not discriminate.
3. The right to life.
4. Not to slavery.
5. Not to torture.
6. You have rights to any part of the world where you are.
7. We are all equal before the Law.
8. Your rights are protected by the Law.
9. No to unjust detention.
10. The right to trial.
11. We are always innocent until proven otherwise.
12. The right to privacy.
13. Freedom of movement.
14. Right to Asylum.
15. Right to Citizenship.
16. Marriage and Family.
17. Right to property.
18. Freedom of thought.
19. Freedom of expression.
20. The right to public gatherings.
21. The right to democracy.
22. Social Security.
23. Employees' rights.
24. The right to play.
25. Food and shelter for all.
26. The Right to Education.
27. The right to intellectual property.
28. A fair and free world.
29. Responsibility.
30. Nobody can take away these Rights.

4. Out of all the words that participants have written on their balloons, they will then have to choose the most important ones, as well as the two rights they believe their new friend must have so that they can survive.

5. In the end, all the students throw the balloons high simultaneously and everyone is responsible to catch their balloon. The aim is no balloon to fall down and everyone to safeguard the rights of their friends.

### **Debriefing:**

After the activity, the plenary discusses the following questions:

- Was it easy to think of what your new friends needs to be happy and safe?
- Did the Human Rights list help in this effort?
- Is one person enough or all of us need to protect the rights of others?

### **7<sup>th</sup> ACTIVITY**

## **THE SUN AND THE BIRDS**

(Adapted from: <https://www.seo.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/program-prosfiges-mia-valitsa-kosmos.pdf>)

### **Objectives:**

Understanding equality (through a game without the same rules for all participants)

### **Materials:**

Chairs, coloured pens, green badges (e.g. ribbons, stickers)

### **Procedure:**

1. Invite one of the students to read the new message from the Box.

*Message:*

*"Close your eyes. Imagine the most beautiful forest there is. With green and tall trees, birds playing on their branches. Listen to how they chirp! See the colours on their wings. Can you imagine? I once found myself in such a forest and I played with the birds a strange chase with ... the Sun! Do you want to play and approach the Treasure?"*

2. Tell participants they will play a game today.

One of the participants gets to be the Sun. All the other children are birds. However, two of them are different and have green tails. The game is played within a certain space. In the center there is the sun and its rays (which can be any object, even pencils or markers). The rays are

scattered on the floor. Within the boundaries of the space there are as many chairs as the children, symbolizing the nests of the birds. Two of the chairs / nests have a green badge.

Birds must gather as many rays as possible without the sun touching them. If he touches them, they remain immovable, they count up to 5 and then continue. When the birds are in the nest / chair, the sun cannot catch them. They have the right to sit in any nest they want. The same rules apply to all children, except for the two birds with the green tails. If the sun touches the birds with the green tails, they will have to count to 10 and not to 5 in order to be able to hide from the sun. They should only sit on certain nests, only on chairs with the green badge.

### **Debriefing:**

After the game, the whole team discusses the following questions:

- How did you feel?
- Were the rules fair?
- Were the conditions more favourable for some?
- Have all children been treated as equal?

## **8<sup>th</sup> ACTIVITY**

### **REFUGEE STORIES**

(Adapted from: ActionAid Hellas for the Global Week for Education 2017  
[[https://education.actionaid.gr/media/1478508/ActionAid\\_GAW2017.pdf](https://education.actionaid.gr/media/1478508/ActionAid_GAW2017.pdf)])

#### **Objectives:**

Get familiar with real stories of refugees

See refugees as individuals and get to know some of their personal stories

Get to know some of the hardships refugees go through

#### **Materials:**

Printed stories of refugees (from ActionAid for the Global Week for Education 2017)

#### **Procedure:**

1. Inform participants that they will hear three real stories of refugees. Then read to the class each story, following it by the corresponding probing questions.



## STORY 1: Israa

**Israa, 13 ετών από τη Συρία**

**Τόπος διαμονής (όταν συλλέχθηκε η μαρτυρία): Κέντρο προσφύγων Zaatari**

Η Israa είναι η μεγαλύτερη από τα 6 παιδιά της οικογένειάς της. Ζούσαν στη Συρία, αλλά αναγκάστηκαν να αφήσουν το σπίτι τους και να έρθουν στη Ιορδανία γιατί τα πράγματα, εξαιτίας του πολέμου, είχαν γίνει τόσο επικίνδυνα που φοβόντουσαν για τη ζωή τους.

Η ίδια περιγράφει παρακάτω την κατάσταση που έζησε.

«Ήρθαν πολλοί βομβαρδισμοί τόσο κοντά στο σπίτι μας. Κάθε απόγευμα μετά τη δόση του ήλιου έπρεπε να πηγαίνουμε στο υπόγειο καταφύγιο γιατί ήταν τότε που ξεκινούσαν οι βομβαρδισμοί. Έπρεπε να βρούμε τρεκάντια από την πόρτα και να διατάξουμε το κωδών για να φτάσουμε εκεί. Μέχρι να φτάσουμε κρυβόμασταν πίσω από τα δέντρα. Φοβόμασταν τόσο πολύ.

Δε μου άρεσε καθόλου να καταβόναμε εκεί. Δεν υπήρχαν φάρμακα, άκις μόνο κερνά. Μερικές φορές μανάμε εκεί λίγες ώρες άλλες φορές ολόκληρες μέρες. Δεν είχαμε τίποτα να κάνουμε εκεί. Τη νύκτα ακούγαμε φωνές από τις συμπληκτικές και πυροβολισμούς. Η μητέρα μου μας είχε φτιάξει μια άμορφη γανήσια να καθόμαστε. Μας άλεγε ότι εκεί είμαστε ασφαλείς και δεν κινδυνεύουμε από τους βομβαρδισμούς.

**Πριν ξεκινήσει ο πόλεμος ήρθα και τα αδέρφια μου είχαμε κανονικές ζωές. Πηγαίναμε στο σχολείο και τα απογεύματα παίζαμε με τους φίλους μας έξω από το σπίτι μας. Αλλά όταν άρκεσαν οι συμπληκτικές όλα αυτά άλλαξαν...**

Όταν ξεκίνησε ο πόλεμος έπρεπε να μανόμεμε στο σπίτι όλη την ημέρα. Οργανώνες μέρες πηγαίναμε στ' ο σχολείο, αλλά όταν άρκεσαν οι βομβαρδισμοί μανάμε σπίτι. Ξανάμε η άρα πολλά μαθήματα, κερνά φορά πηγαίναμε μόνο με μέρα την εβδομάδα. Άλλες φορές καθόμασταν μόνο μια ώρα και μετά πηγαίναμε. Άλλες φορές καθόμας γυρίζαμε προς το σπίτι μας ακούγαμε πυροβολισμούς και κρυβόμασταν στ' σπίτι.»

Τώρα η Israa και η οικογένειά της μεταφέρθηκαν στο στρατόπεδο Zaatari, όπου μανόμεν μαζί με κιλιάδες άλλες οικογένειες σε μια έκτη κερνά, κερνά δικό τους σπίτι, με κιλιάστα κρηματα και προσωπικά αντικείμενα.

Το σπίτι τους είναι κέρνα σαν τρεκάντιο (κερνά να κινείται όμοια) και εκεί μανέ μαζί με τα αδέρφια της και τους γονείς της. Η Israa μας λέει ότι η ζωή εδώ είναι πολύ δύσκολη.

«Εκεί πέρα πολύ άστη μέσα στο τρεκάντιο. Οι τουαλέτες άνα σε πολύ άσχημη κατάσταση και το νερό είναι άσπαστό. Όπως οι περισσότερα εδώ δεν καταφέρουμε να πάρουμε πολλά μαζί μας. Δεν έπρεπε τα παικίδια μας, μόνο μια άλλαθά ρόκκα και ένα ζευγάρι παπούτσια ο καθένας. Όλα τα άλλα τα αφήσαμε πίσω και η μαμά μου τ' άρα μου είπε ότι όλα κέρνακαν. Το σπίτι μας καταστράφηκε.

Τι θυμάμαι από τη Συρία; Δεν έπρεπε αν ήρταμε να σάς πώ το καλά ή το κακό. Το πιο άμορφο που θυμάμαι είναι τα τριαντά άμωλα στο κήπο της μαμάς μου. Το κακό είναι ότι δε μπορού να εκκόσω τη βία των πύργων αν θράταν.»

**Προσπαθήστε να φαντασθείτε πώς νιώδει η Israa με τη νέα της ζωή στο στρατόπεδο Zaatari. Προσέχετε ενέργειες και δράσεις που θα μπορούσαν να οργανωθούν μέσα στο στρατόπεδο, ώστε να καλύτερες η ζωή των ανθρώπων που ζουν μέσα σε αυτό. Πώς θα μπορούσε άραγε η Israa να δαυμάσει ξανά ένα άμορφο τριαντάμωλο;**

## QUESTIONS:

- Try to imagine how Israa might feel with her new life in Zaatari camp.
- What actions could be taken within the camp so that the life of its residents gets improved?
- How could Israa admire again a beautiful rose?

## STORY 2: Asra



**Asra**

Asra (32 ετών), Mustafa (5) και Ruha (3) από τη Συρία

Τόπος διαμονής (όταν στέλλεσθε η μαρτυρία): Κέντρο υποδοχής προσφύγων Μόρια, Αιγάλεω

Η Asra, 32 ετών, έφτασε στο κέντρο υποδοχής προσφύγων στη Μόρια της Λέσβου μαζί με τα παιδιά της, Ruha, 3 ετών και Mustafa, 5 ετών. Η οικογένειά της φεύγοντας από την πόλη τους, το Χαλέπι της Συρίας, ταξίδεψε μέσω Τουρκίας και μετά πέρασε στην Ελλάδα. Οι βομβαρδισμοί στη Συρία ήταν τόσο έντονοι που ο σύζυγός της Asra έχασε την ακοή του από το ένα του αυτί και τότε η οικογένειά πήρε την τελική απόφαση να φύγουν. Δεν είχαν αρκετά χρήματα για να φύγουν όλοι μαζί, έτσι ξόδεψαν όλα τους τα χρήματα ώστε να φύγει ο άντρας της και να καταφέρει να φτάσει στη Σουηδία. Στη συνέχεια ακριβάζον να βρει μια δουλειά και να στείλει χρήματα στην οικογένειά του, έτσι ώστε να μπορέσουν και αυτοί να τον ακολουθήσουν.

Όταν ο σύζυγός της έφτασε επιπλοήσους στη Σουηδία, επί 8 μήνες ήταν αδύνατον να βρει μια δουλειά. Τελικά κατάφερε να βρει διδάσκοντας τη γλώσσα του. Όλο αυτόν τον χρόνο η Asra, ο Mustafa και η Ruha έμειναν στους δρόμους της Συρίας, αφού δεν είχαν χρήματα να νοικιάσουν ένα σπίτι. Τα παιδιά δεν πήγαν στο σχολείο και δεν είχαν χρήματα ούτε για κάτι τέτοιο.

Καθώς μιλούσε για όσα έζησαν, η Asra, μια τόσο δυνατή γυναίκα, ξόρεσε σε λυγμούς λέγοντας: «**Θέλω τα παιδιά μου να πάνε στο σχολείο. Είναι το πιο σημαντικό για εμένα. Δε μπορώ να τα έχω να ζουν στο δρόμο κάθε μέρα.**»

**Για ποιο λόγο πιστεύετε ότι η Asra, ζητά με δακρύματάς, να πάνε τα παιδιά της, σχολείο;**

**Πώς μπορείτε να τη βοηθήσετε και εσείς;**

### QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think Asra is asking with tears in her eyes for her children to go to school?
- How could you help her?

## STORY 3: Ali

**Ali**

«Γεννήθηκα στο Αφγανιστάν όπως απίστευτα και οι γονείς μου. Η μητέρα μου πέθανε πριν 2 χρόνια, ο πατέρας και τα 3 αδέρφια μου, 2 μικρότερα και 1 μεγαλύτερη αδερφή που ριμάνη, ζουν ακόμα στο Αφγανιστάν.

**Δεν έχω πάλι ποτέ σχολείο.** Δοκίμωσα από μικρός σε αγροτικές δουλειές και έπαιζα ποδόσφαιρο. Οι γονείς μου δε με άφησαν να πάω σχολείο, καθώς δεν υπήρχε στην πόλη που μέναμε και θα άρρανε να πάμε σε άλλη μεγαλύτερη πόλη που είχε σχολείο και ήταν κάποια χιλιόμετρα μακριά. Αλλά ακόμα και εκεί, πολλοί γονείς δεν έστελναν τα παιδιά τους σχολείο γιατί πολλά παιδιά πήγαν και δε γύρισαν ποτέ και πιστεύουν ότι τα άρραξαν οι Ταλιμπάν.

Πήγα όμως καθημερινά 5-6 χρόνια, μόνο το χειμώνα γιατί το καλοκαίρι δωάκινα και ακάθιστα να γράφω και να διαβάζω από τους λαθρέμπορους «κουλάδες», τους κληρικούς μουσουλμάνους.

Ήθελα πολύ να πάω στο σχολείο και τσικανόμουν με τους γονείς μου για να τους πείσω να με αφήσουν, αλλά δυστυχώς ο φόβος τους δεν το επέτρεψε τελικά.

Μου άρρασαν τόσο πολλά τα γράμματα, προσπάθησα τόσο πολύ να άμα καλύτερος. Ακόμα και τώρα όλοος βλέπω τα γράμματα μου πιστεύω ότι είναι μορφοφάνιος. Αλλά δυστυχώς δεν άμα.

**Το αγαπούσα πολύ το σχολείο και όταν πήγαινα σε άλλη πόλη και έβλεπα τα παιδιά να πηγαίνουν σχολείο, ζηλευνα πολύ.**

Πιστεύω ότι όλα τα παιδιά πρέπει να πηγαίνουν στο σχολείο και όλοι οι άνθρωποι πρέπει να μορφώνονται, γιατί ο αμόρφωτος άνθρωπος είναι σαν τυφλός, σαν άνθρωπος που προσπαθεί να φτάσει κάπου χωρίς πυξίδα.

Θέλω να μορφατεί μαζί μας πριν κλείσουμε την κουβέντα μας, το λέεις: «**Το σχολείο είναι σημαντικό για όλους και όλοι θα πρέπει να μπορούν να πάνε σχολείο.**»

**Ali Hosseini, 20 ετών από το Αφγανιστάν**

**Τόπος διαμονής (όταν συλλέχθηκε η μαρτυρία): Κέντρο υποδοχής προσφύγων Σχιστό, Αττική**

**Υποθέστε ότι ο Ali γεννήθηκε σε μια χώρα της Ευρώπης. Προσπαθήστε τώρα να φανταστείτε την πορεία της ζωής του ως τα 20 του χρόνια με βάση το παραπάνω δεδομένα. Ποιες διαφορές διαπιστώνετε και πώς μπορείτε να τις εξηγήσετε;**

## QUESTIONS:

- Imagine Ali was born in a European country. How would his life be till the age of 20? What differences would there be and why?

2. If time permits, ask students to narrate an imaginary story. Give them the first sentence and ask them to continue the story by contributing with one sentence per person. The story starts with: “My name is Zahra and I am 11 years old.”

### **Debriefing:**

Debriefing took place with the questions following each story. Also, a good indicator of what students kept from this session, will come out during the narration of their imaginary story.

## **9<sup>th</sup> ACTIVITY**

### **THEY ARE NOT JUST NUMBERS**

(Adapted from: UNHCR booklet ‘They are not just numbers’  
[https://www.unhcr.org/gr/den\\_einai\\_mono\\_arithmoi](https://www.unhcr.org/gr/den_einai_mono_arithmoi))

### **Objectives:**

- See refugees as individuals and get to know some of their personal stories
- Understand why someone decides to flee their country

### **Materials:**

- Six photos from the UNHCR Booklet
- Blu tac to stick photos on the board

### **Procedure:**

1. Stick the photos (relevant to refugee experiences) and write the following key-words on the board: *army, asylum, border, detention center, education, expulsion, fear, family reunion, opportunity, parents, passport, persecution, poverty, protection, return, work.*

2. Ask the participants to form four groups (according to their liking this time, as long as they keep the numbers of members balanced). Ask one team to invent an imaginary story about a refugee using only the photos, the other one using only the key-words and the other two using both photos and key-words. Ask them also to decide how they would like to present their work to the class.

3. Once the allocated time is over, every group is given the space to present their work to the others.

### **Debriefing:**

1. Was it difficult to imagine a story?
2. Did you have any difficulty while creating the story? Why so / why not?
3. Did you have any difficulty working in groups?

## **10<sup>th</sup> ACTIVITY**

### **TALKING IT OUT**

(Adapted from: *Bookmarks* 2014, p. 117-120)

#### **Overview:**

The activity uses a 'fishbowl discussion' to explore common prejudices about particular groups in society and engages participants to think critically about commonly held beliefs and develop arguments against hate speech.

#### **Objectives:**

- To reflect on personal prejudices and negative stereotypes towards refugees
- To develop arguments and explore responses to expressions of hate speech
- To fill gaps in understanding and develop empathy towards groups often misunderstood by society

#### **Materials:**

- Space for participants to move around
- A hat (or small container)

#### **Procedure:**

1. Put the following made-up statements, with the heading 'True Facts', on the whiteboard so that all participants can read them.

#### **True Facts:**

- ◇ Girls perform better than boys at school.
- ◇ Greeks are lazy.
- ◇ Scientific studies have shown that Europeans have smaller brains than Asians.

2. Ask for participants' reactions. After a few responses, tell them that these statements are completely made up! Each statement is actually false. Ask for reactions again, and explore briefly why participants believed these statements (if they did).

3. Ask participants whether they have ever read anything online and either known it was untrue, or wondered if it might be untrue. Did they do anything about it?

4. Explain that a lot of hate speech and many racist attitudes are driven by ignorance. People believe or they are made to believe things about groups of other people that they may never have met. Or they believe things about whole communities on the basis of information about just 1 person! When these beliefs are discussed widely, and go unchallenged, they start to be accepted as 'fact'. We can forget where we heard something, and forget that it may have been false, or just someone else's opinion, and start believing it ourselves.

5. Tell participants that everyone can play an important role in questioning 'facts' or opinions that they come across. Asking why – or explaining why not – is one of the most important things we

can all do to stop the spread of false or malicious ideas. It is also the best way of arriving at reliable opinions for ourselves.

6. Explain that the next activity will explore some of the negative 'facts' or opinions about refugees which have become widely accepted today. Participants will try to develop arguments and 'debunk' common myths using the knowledge and expertise of the group.

7. Ask them to stand on the right side of the class if they 'Agree' or on the left side of the class if they 'Disagree'. The sentences are the following:

- ◇ Some seem to think that refugees are dirty and carry illnesses
- ◇ Immigrants and refugees take our jobs
- ◇ Greece is full of refugees
- ◇ Our children suffer from having refugee children in their classes

8. After students have placed themselves in the allocated spaces, ask some of them why they chose the place they put themselves. Encourage participants to come forward to express their own opinions, but also to express other opinions, which are not necessarily their own. In this way points of view that are controversial, 'politically incorrect', or unthinkable can be aired and the topic thoroughly discussed from many different perspectives. Offensive or hurtful comments directed at individuals in the group are not allowed.

9. Some participants may find it difficult to decide in which corner to stand and hover between the two. In that case, the facilitator can inform participants that they can stay in the middle of the two corners or as close to or far from each end, according to how much they agree or disagree with what they hear. They may also move position during the discussion if what they hear changes their opinion. Students need to explain why they chose to stand where they did, e.g. in the middle, or why they shifted their position.

10. Discuss as many questions as you have time for. Allow a small amount of time at the end to 'wind down' after the discussion and reflect on the activity as a whole.

### **Debriefing:**

Use the following questions to allow participants to reflect on whether the activity has altered their views, or given them arguments to counter examples of prejudice:

- Has anyone found out anything they didn't know before?
- Has anyone's opinion changed on a particular group or issue?
- Do you feel more able to engage in discussion with prejudicial views? Why or why not?
- What can one do when having doubts about a belief they are not sure about?