

Challenges and Perspectives of Multicultural Education for Young Children in the Context of Greek Nurseries: Educators' Views

Eleni Sotiropoulou^{1,*}, Georgios Stroungis Venetas², Vasiliki Giannakou¹ & Anastacia Bercovits¹

¹Educator, Greece

²FEBPRM, Greece

*Corresponding author: Educator. E-mail: esotiropoulou@uniwa.gr

Received: June 24, 2022 Accepted: July 24, 2022 Published: August 12, 2022

doi:10.5296/ije.v14i3.20171 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ije.v14i3.20171>

Abstract

In recent years, Greece has received very high numbers of migrants and refugees from the Middle East, North Africa and Ukraine, including children of all ages. This new and evolving socio-cultural environment has an impact on education, since the application of multicultural principles in education is considered necessary for the development of multicultural respect. To achieve that level of mutual respect, the role of educators is particularly important. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the views of 196 educators working in Greek nurseries on the difficulties they face in implementing multicultural education in young children (children under the age of 3) and the perspectives of that method. Furthermore, the research investigates the goals set by educators, the practices they choose and how competent they consider themselves in implementing multicultural education. A questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to collect the data. The results of the survey show that educators mainly choose fairy tales/books for managing and highlighting cultural diversity, while cooperation with parents is practiced to a very small extent. As for the difficulties that the educators face during that process, these are mainly attributed to the xenophobic attitudes of native parents. Finally, they feel that their knowledge on multicultural education is inadequate, and they express the need for appropriate training. In summary, the survey can provide useful information for educators on multicultural education in the nursery and can be used as a guide for their future training on that field.

Keywords: educator, Greek ECEC, multicultural education, practices of multicultural approach, young children

1. The Context of Multicultural Education

Nowadays, globalization, political conflicts, and the displacement of people from their homes due to human rights abuses lead to massive migration/refugee waves which appear to show an upward trend (UNHCR, 2022). Especially Greece, due to its geopolitical position, is often a passage for people heading to European countries in order to seek safety and a better standard of living. For example, over 1.5 million refugees arrived in Greece between 2014 and 2021 (UNHCR, 2022). That process has created a new socio-cultural situation in Greece, which also has an impact on the education sector (Ang, 2010; Vandembroeck, 2007), as refugee children had to be in schools. In fact, the region of Attica seems to host the highest number of refugees and unaccompanied children than the rest of the cities in Greece (UNHCR, 2022). Therefore, presence of a significant number of children from other countries in all levels of education makes it more important than ever to implement multicultural education.

More specifically, multicultural education is about developing skills that contribute to the constructive coexistence of individuals within a multicultural social environment (Banks, 2019; Govaris, 2011). Its purpose is to develop acceptance, respect for diversity and recognition of different cultural identities through a climate of dialogue, understanding and cooperation (Banks, 2009; Bennet, 2007). Multicultural education utilizes characteristics derived from different cultures to promote human rights, peace, empathy, solidarity and eliminate nationalistic thinking (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2000).

To successfully implement multicultural education, the role of the educator is of particular importance (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Colombo, 2005). The goals he sets, the practices he chooses to implement multicultural activities and his scientific training, determine the educational process (Doucet, 2017; McNeal, 2005). In the process of multicultural education, every educator should teach children that diversity is not a factor of separation and that all people are equal. Also, the educators should form a creative learning environment where respect, cooperation and mutual acceptance prevail (Mascardi et al., 2017; Harwood et al., 2013; Ang, 2010).

Various practices that can be used in multicultural activities, such as appropriate books, play, simulation, etc. can contribute to this process (Ang, 2010). Although a multitude of practices have been described in the literature (e.g., Adams & Kirova, 2006; Byram et al., 2001), drama and role play are considered among the most important because they require the active participation of children and allow the expression of feelings, values, and perceptions (Scrafton & Whittington, 2015). Therefore, through this freedom in children's thoughts and feelings, their intercultural skills such as empathy, cooperation, critical thinking, verbal and non-verbal communication and mutual respect can be more easily developed (Alghamdi et al., 2020; Scrafton & Whittington, 2015).

Another important practice that can be utilized in multicultural education is the collaboration of nurseries with parents. Several studies (e.g., Alaca & Pyle, 2018; Sobel & Kugler, 2007; Driessen, et al, 2005) confirm that through collaboration, educators can utilize children's cultural experiences in pedagogical practice and foreign children can adapt more easily to the

nursery and society in general (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019). Furthermore, as Cummins (2005) states, meaningful collaboration between educators and parents who are culturally different rejects the myth that parents from different cultural backgrounds are not interested in their children's education.

At this point, it should be clarified that multicultural education is not only about children from different cultures, but it is about all children in the classroom since the goal of that practice is to reduce ethnic prejudice and discrimination (Luciak, 2004). Therefore, considering the collaboration between educators and parents, it would be interesting to refer to existing research (e.g., Eliyahy-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019; Su et al., 2018; Tafa & Manolitsis, 2010) on parents' views on children's cultural heterogeneity and co-education, as their negative attitudes could have a negative impact on implementing multicultural education (Vamvakidou et al., 2003).

According to previous studies (e.g., Su et al., 2018; Tafa & Manolitsis, 2010; Stoneman, 2001), parents' views on co-education are determined from their cultural experience and level of education. It appears that parents with higher educational level have more positive beliefs compared to parents with lower educational level (Tafa & Manolitsis, 2010). Furthermore, another factor that may influence parents' views towards multicultural education is the grade level their children attend. Therefore, the younger the children (early childhood), the more negative parents are towards co-education of culturally diverse children compared to the older grades (high school) (Buysse & Bailey, 1993).

However, many researchers (Sotiropoulou, 2019; Hawkins, 2014; Maniatis, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2013; Murray, 2012; Oliveira-Formosinho & Araujo, 2011; Ogletree & Larke, 2010; Araujo & Strasser, 2003) report that early childhood is an important age milestone for the development of intercultural skills. More specifically, infants from the age of 18 months display racial preferences, and by the age of 3 or 4 years they begin to build their ethnic identity (Sotiropoulou, 2019). Also, at this age, children can show empathy (Hawkins, 2014) and awareness of ethnic differences (e.g., language) and the privilege or power associated with them (Murray, 2012).

Therefore, if young children are introduced to a multicultural environment early on, it will be easier for them to accept diversity and develop multicultural respect (Sotiropoulou, 2019; Adams & Kirova, 2006). Besides, being able to collaborate and develop meaningful relationships with people from heterogeneous populations is one of the basic 21st century skills (Burrus et al., 2017), as societies become increasingly culturally heterogeneous. Consequently, nurseries are ideal places to initiate multicultural education and to develop the necessary intercultural skills that children will need later on, as future citizens.

Considering all the above, the aim of this study is to investigate the views of 196 educators working in nurseries in Attica (Greece), regarding the perspectives and difficulties they face in the implementation of multicultural education in young children (under the age of 3).

More specifically, the research questions are the following:

- What are the objectives that educators set when implementing multicultural activities and

which practices do they choose?

- What difficulties do they face when they must deal with children from different cultural backgrounds in their classroom?
- Do they believe that their knowledge is sufficient to implement multicultural education?
- Which are their suggestions for improving multicultural education?

Additionally, the researchers assume that the views of educators are affected by their socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, years of work experience, type of educational qualification and whether they have experience with children from different cultural backgrounds (research hypothesis).

To address the research questions, a sample quantitative research method using a closed questionnaire was chosen. This method offers the researchers the opportunity to approach a large part of the population to investigate specific questions, and to express the phenomenon studied through numerical data (Cohen et al., 2012) using statistical tools.

Finally, the significance of the present study is found in the fact that although there are studies exploring educators' views on multicultural education in kindergarten and older grades in school (e.g., Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2017; Leung & Hue, 2016; Danilidou & Vorvi, 2014; Karupplah & Bertheisen, 2011), to the best of our knowledge there is limited research on young children (e.g., Busch et al., 2018; Van Schaik et al., 2014; Tarman & Tarman, 2011). Especially in Greece we could not identify any relevant research. Therefore, we hope that the results obtained will be useful for educators to understand the issues of multicultural education that exist in the context of nurseries and can be used to plan future training.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

To design the research, the following steps were adopted (Leavy, 2021; Creswell, 2016; Cohen et al., 2012):

(a) Identification of the topic of interest: based on the review of the relevant literature, the researchers clearly identified the scope of the study.

(b) Statement of the purpose of the study and the research questions: the researchers, after examining the literature, identified the research gap in the topic under study (multicultural education and children under the age of 3 in Greece) and developed the purpose and the research questions of the study.

(c) Method and research instrument: the quantitative method and the use of closed questionnaire was chosen to address the research questions. The questionnaire was constructed entirely by the researchers based on the literature, as there are no relevant studies exploring the views of educators on young children.

(d) Pilot study: the questionnaire was completed by 36 educators in order to identify and

correct the weaknesses. From the educators' responses, the questionnaire seemed to serve the purpose for which it was constructed and thus, no changes were required to the questions.

(e) Implementation of the survey: the questionnaire was distributed by the researchers and completed by educators working in nurseries in Attica.

(f) Results and answers to the research questions: the researchers collected the data, analysed them, and answered the research questions.

2.2 Participant Characteristics

The sample in the present study consists of 196 educators working in Attica in Greece. The method by which educators were selected was the simple random sampling. More specifically, the sample was randomly selected from tables, which consisted of numbers that corresponded to educators. In this way, each educator was selected randomly and, therefore, had the same chances of being selected (Creswell, 2016).

Regarding the social and demographic characteristics of the sample, the educators were asked to answer about (a) the gender, (b) the age, (c) the years of work experience, (d) the type of their academic qualifications, and (e) whether they had experience with children from different cultural backgrounds.

Therefore, the results show that (a) 94.4% of the sample is female and 5.6% is male - as the vast majority of educators in Greece are women, (b) 32.5% of the educators are 31-40 years old, 30.2% are 20-30 years old, 23.3% are 51 years old and more, and 14% are 41-50 years old, (c) 31.2% of the sample has 0-10 years of work experience, 23.2% has 11-20 years, 24% has 21-30 years, and 21.6% has 31 years or more, (d) 67.4% of the educators have a university degree, 16.3% have a postgraduate degree and 16.3% have a vocational training degree.

Regarding the ethics of the study, participants were asked to sign a consent form before their participation. That consent form provided information on the purposes of the survey, why their participation was necessary, the voluntary nature of their participation, the possibility to withdraw from the survey at any time they wished and also withdraw any unprocessed data and finally, how the researchers would ensure the participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of the data (Cohen et al., 2012).

3. Results

3.1 Data Analysis

The educators who participated in the research were requested to answer using a five-point Likert scale. Specifically, they answered the questions B1-E8 by reporting the frequency with which they implement activities, objectives and practices related to multicultural education; 1: not at all, 2: rarely, 3: neither often nor rarely, 4: often, 5: very often. Also, the educators answered to questions F1-G4 by reporting the degree of agreement with the corresponding statements of the questionnaire; 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree.

Table 1. The Means of Statements about the Challenges and Perspectives of Multicultural Education

A. Which children are concerned by multicultural education	N	F	F%
A1. Children with different cultural backgrounds	196	58	29,6
A2. All children of the class	196	138	70.4
B. Application of multicultural activities	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
B1. Frequency of implementation in the classroom	196	3.21	.951
C. Objectives of the multicultural activities	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
C1. Empathy	196	4.45	.889
C2. Collective consciousness	196	4.21	1.001
C3. Multicultural respect	196	4.29	.891
C4. Eliminating ethnic stereotypes	196	4.24	1.031
C5. Solidarity	196	4.38	.962
C6. Equality of opportunities	196	4.38	1.011
C7. Sharing cultural experiences	196	4.22	.947
C8. Interaction with other cultures	196	4.10	1.008
D. Practices of multicultural approach	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
D1. Fairy tales/books	196	4.17	.863
D2. Discussion using visual material	196	3.88	1.018
D3. Children's play (guided/free)	196	3.67	.973
D4. Art activities	196	3.68	1.005
D5. Drama/Role-playing games	196	3.24	1.165
D6. Participation of parents	196	2.88	1.152
D7. Project	196	3.11	1.115
E. Difficulties faced by educators with children from other cultural backgrounds	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
E1. Difficulty communicating with foreign children	196	3.07	1.113
E2. Unwillingness of foreign children to participate in group activities	196	2.43	1.039
E3. Foreign children's difficulty in adapting	196	2.95	1.103
E4. Foreign children do not have adequate support in the family environment	196	2.71	1.043
E5. Difficulty in cooperating with foreign parents	196	3.90	1.231
E6. Xenophobic attitudes of native children	196	3.04	1.201
E7. Xenophobic attitudes of foreign parents	196	3.30	1.293
E8. Xenophobic attitudes of native parents	196	4.13	1.233
F. Multicultural readiness	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
F1. Knowledge acquired during their studies on multicultural education	196	2.90	1.358
F2. Competence in the implementation of multicultural education	196	3.29	.944
G. Suggestions for improving multicultural education	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
G1. Training of educators	196	4.38	.987
G2. Change of policy-making community	196	3.14	1.037
G3. Cooperation with parents	196	4.07	1.091
G4. No changes required	196	1.26	.828

3.2 Research Hypothesis

To investigate the research hypothesis of this study, a statistically significant difference was found between the demographic and social characteristics of the sample (gender, age, years of work experience, type of academic qualification, and whether they have experience with children from different cultural backgrounds), and the statements about the challenges and perspectives of multicultural education (A1-G4).

The results showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the educators' work experience and the difficulties they face regarding the adaptation of foreign children ($F=21.112$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.049$). The majority of educators with 0-10 years of work experience (41%), 21-30 years of experience (39%), and 31 years or more (46%) report that they rarely have difficulty with the adaptation of foreign children (scale 2), while the majority of educators with 11-20 years of work experience (43%) state that neither often nor rarely they experience difficulty with the adaptation of foreign children (scale 3).

Also, there is a statistically significant difference between the educators' work experience and with their potential suggestion for future training in multicultural education ($F=20.133$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.017$). The majority of educators with 31 years of work experience or more (36%) report that they disagree with the proposal for future training (scale 2), while the majority of educators with 0-10 years of work experience (45%), 11-20 years of experience (56%), and 21-30 years of experience (61%) strongly agree (scale 5) with the proposal for future training.

Furthermore, there is a statistically significant difference between the type of academic qualifications of educators and parental involvement when implementing multicultural activities ($F=17.836$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.022$). The majority of educators with vocational training (49%) state that they rarely (scale 2) ask for parental involvement when they implement multicultural activities while the majority of educators with university degree (67%) and postgraduate degree (59%) neither often nor rarely (scale 3) ask parents to participate.

However, the most statistically significant differences are observed between educators' experience with children from different cultural backgrounds and the goals they set when implementing multicultural activities. More specifically, there is a statistically significant difference between educators' experience and the goal of developing collective consciousness ($F=22.119$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.036$). The majority of educators who have no experience with children from different backgrounds (68%) stated that they rarely (scale 2) set the goal of collective consciousness, in contrast to the majority of educators with limited (44%), quite a lot (66%) and very much (79%) experience with children from different cultural backgrounds who set the goal of collective consciousness very often (scale 5).

Similarly, there is statistically significant difference between the educators' experience with children from different cultural backgrounds and the goal of eliminating ethnic stereotypes when implementing multicultural activities ($F=30.634$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.002$). The majority of educators who have no experience at all with children from different backgrounds (71%) stated that they rarely (scale 2) set the goal of eliminating ethnic stereotypes, in contrast to the majority of educators with limited (63%), quite a lot (67%) and very much (81%)

experience with children from different cultural backgrounds who set the goal of eliminating ethnic stereotypes very often (scale 5).

Also, there is statistically significant difference between educators' experience with children from different cultural backgrounds and the goal of solidarity when implementing multicultural activities ($F=19.290$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.023$). The majority of educators who have no experience at all with children from different backgrounds (57%) stated that they rarely (scale 2) set the goal of solidarity, in contrast to the majority of educators with limited (65%), quite a lot (78%) and very much (83%) experience with children from different cultural backgrounds who set the goal of solidarity very often (scale 5).

Moreover, there is statistically significant difference between the educators' experience with children from different cultural backgrounds and the goal of equality of opportunities when implementing multicultural activities ($F=25.035$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.015$). The majority of educators who have no experience at all with children from different backgrounds (59%) stated that they rarely (scale 2) set the goal of equality of opportunities, in contrast to the majority of educators with limited (57%), quite a lot (69%) and very much (78%) experience with children from different cultural backgrounds who set the goal of equality of opportunities very often (scale 5).

Finally, there is statistically significant difference between the educators' experience with children from different cultural backgrounds and their methods for multicultural approach. In particular, there is a statistically significant difference between educators' experience with children from different cultural backgrounds and the use of play as a method for implementing a multicultural approach ($F=21.583$, $df=1$, $sig.=0.010$). The majority of educators with no experience (36%) rarely (scale 2) use play in the context of multicultural approach, while the majority of educators with limited experience (42%) use play very often (scale 4) and the majority of educators with a lot of experience (76%) and very much experience (80%) use play very often (scale 5).

4. Discussion

The results of the survey on educators' perceptions of the perspectives and difficulties they face in implementing multicultural education in Greek nurseries, show that educators can identify the desired goals but the practices they choose are limited, and include to a very small extent the participation of parents. The main difficulties they face are xenophobic attitudes from native parents, and their lack of necessary knowledge is also important. Furthermore, their views differ according to years of experience, the type of academic qualification and, most importantly, whether they have experience with children from different cultural backgrounds.

More specifically, in the first research question about the goals that educators set when implementing multicultural activities and the practices they choose, several concerns arise. Educators seem to follow the principles of intercultural education as described in the scientific literature (Banks, 2009; Bennet, 2007); they stated that when they implement

multicultural activities, they emphasize on: empathy, solidarity, equality of opportunity, multicultural respect, eliminating ethnic stereotypes, sharing cultural experiences, collective consciousness and interaction with other cultures. However, the results of this research, which are confirmed by previous studies (Alaca & Pyle, 2018), show that not all educators understand the conceptual framework of multicultural education, as a significant proportion state that it only concerns children from other cultures and not all children in the classroom.

Additionally, the frequency with which educators implement multicultural activities is at an average level. According to the educators' responses, these activities are neither frequently nor rarely implemented. Therefore, despite the fact that educators report that they follow the objectives of multicultural education and try to achieve them, that effort is made occasionally. This finding as confirmed by previous research (Phoon & Abdullah, 2012; Gotovos, 2002) and may be justified by the educators' lack of understanding of the concept of multicultural education.

Regarding the practices that educators choose for the implementation of multicultural activities, these mainly concern the reading of fairy tales/books. Discussion by using visual material, art activities, and children's play has a relatively high frequency, while drama/role-playing games, project and participation of parents are not often practiced. Therefore, educators seem to be limited to the use of books and visual material to highlight cultural differences. This finding is supported by previous research showing that educators commonly choose books as a way to approach diversity (Alaca & Pyle, 2018), while being reluctant to use drama/role-playing games as a means of multicultural intervention (Mac Nevin & Berman, 2017) and to ask for parental involvement (Cummins, 2005).

Regarding the difficulties that educators face dealing with children from different cultures, they mainly mention the xenophobic attitudes of native parents and the difficulty in cooperation with foreign parents. Several studies (e.g., Su et al, 2018; Tafa & Manolitsis, 2010) point out that parents can make it very difficult to implement multicultural education as their views on co-education of children from different cultural backgrounds are influenced by their education, cultural experience (Tafa & Manolitsis, 2010) and the young age of their children (Buysse & Bailey, 1993). Also, the difficulty in cooperation with foreign parents is confirmed by previous studies (e.g, Kontogoannis & Oikonomidis, 2014; Stamou et al., 2014; Vamvakidou et al., 2003) and is attributed to the lack of communication due to the different language and the lack of parents' interest in school life. However, the finding of the present study that contradicts previous research (e.g., Busch et al., 2018; Vamvakidou et al., 2003) is that educators do not experience substantial difficulties with the adjustment, behavior and participation of foreign children in activities within nurseries.

Particularly important is the educators' statement that the knowledge they received during their studies and the knowledge they have about the implementation of multicultural education is not at a satisfactory level. The lack of the necessary knowledge to implement multicultural education among educators working in nurseries is confirmed by Tobin's (2020) research. Therefore, this evidence highlights the need for updating and enriching the curricula of pre-school education departments of Greek universities (Kourti & Androusou, 2013), as

these departments must prepare future educators for the cultural heterogeneity they will encounter in their classrooms and the methods of exploiting that heterogeneity in pedagogical practice.

Regarding educators' suggestions for improving multicultural education in the nurseries, the majority believe that training is necessary and will help to better manage cultural diversity. The need for educators' training has been highlighted by previous research (Angelopoulou & Manesis, 2017; Dejaeghere & Zhang, 2008). Furthermore, a high place in educators' suggestions is given to collaboration with parents, although as shown above they do not often choose that practice. This finding is consistent with previous studies that report the importance of parental collaboration with the educational environment for children's development and progress (Markaki et al., 2016; Driessen, et al., 2005).

Regarding the research hypotheses tested in the present study, a statistically significant difference was found in the opinions of educators according to years of work experience and type of academic qualification. Specifically, only educators with 11-20 years of work experience stated that neither often nor rarely have difficulty with the adaptation of foreign children, while all other educators stated that they rarely have difficulty with adaptation. Furthermore, while educators working 31 years or more stated their disagreement with future training, all other educators strongly agreed with this proposal. In addition, educators with university degree and postgraduate degree try to involve parents in multicultural activities at a greater extent than educators with vocational training.

Finally, the most statistically significant differences were found in educators' views in relation to their experience with children from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the more experience educators have, the more often they set collective consciousness, eliminating ethnic stereotypes, solidarity and equality of opportunity as objectives of multicultural activities. Furthermore, the more experience educators have, the more often they use children's play as a practice for multicultural approach. This finding may be justified by the view that the more experience with children from different cultures educators gain, the easier it is for them to understand and respond to their needs.

5. Research Limitations and Implications for Practice and Further Research

Regarding the limitations of the research, it should be mentioned that the sample comes from only one region of Greece and may not be representative of other regions. Also, the questionnaire used did not explore in depth the educators' lack of training on multicultural education, their intercultural skills, their awareness and attitude towards cultural diversity. Therefore, future research can use a sample from other Greek regions and study the above issues, for a deeper understanding of the implementation of multicultural education in Greek nurseries.

Nevertheless, the results of the survey could be a source of reflection for educators and the basis on which to design a training program for them. That training seems to be necessary because the educators seem to have insufficient knowledge on the conceptualization of

multicultural education and on the practices that can be utilized in pedagogical practice.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the present study attempted to explore educators' views on the challenges and perspectives of multicultural education in Greek nurseries. The results of the study showed that educators can identify the principles of multicultural education but face difficulties regarding its conceptual understanding. Moreover, the practices that educators choose to approach cultural diversity are limited and they state that they are not satisfied with their level of training. Therefore, designing training programs on multicultural education could enhance educators' practices to address cultural diversity, correct misconceptions they may have and provide them with the appropriate skills to prepare children for an effective participation in an international and culturally diverse society.

References

- Adams, L., & Kirova, A. (2006). *Global Migration and Education: Schools, Children and Families*. New York: Routledge.
- Alaca, B., & Pyle, A. (2018). Kindergarten Teacher's Perspectives on Culturally Responsive Education. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 41(3), 753-782.
- Alghamdi, R., DeMarie, D., Alanazi, D., & Alghamdi, A. (2020). Teacher-Child Interactions and Dramatic Play: Stories from Three Continents and Three Cultures. *International Journal of the Whole Child*, 5(1), 64-77.
- Ang, L. (2010). Critical perspectives on cultural diversity in early childhood: building an inclusive curriculum and provision. *Early Years*, 30(1), 41-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140903562387>
- Angelopoulou, P., & Manesis, N. (2017). Intercultural Pedagogy and Counselling Intervention. Teachers' views. *Pedagogical Review*, 63, 13-27.
- Aragona-Young, E., & Sawyer, B. (2018). Elementary teachers' beliefs about multicultural education practices. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(5), 465-486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1435527>
- Araujo, L., & Strasser, J. (2012). Confronting Prejudice in the Early Childhood Classroom. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 39, 178-182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2003.10516402>
- Banks, J. (2009). *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Banks, J. (2019). *An introduction in multicultural education*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bennet, C. (2007). *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice*. USA: Pearson Education, Inc.

- Burrus, J., Mattern, K., Naemi, B., & Roberts, R. (2017). *Building Better Students: Preparation of the Workforce*. Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199373222.001.0001>
- Busch, J., Bihler, L., Lembcke, H., Buchmuller, T., Diers, K., & Leyendecker, B. (2018). Challenges and Solutions Perceived by Educators in an Early Childcare Program for Refugee Children. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1621. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01621>
- Buysse, V., & Bailey, D. (1993). Behavioral and developmental outcomes in young children with disabilities in integrated and segregated settings: A review of comparative studies. *The Journal of Special Education*, 26(4), 434-461. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002246699302600407>
- Byram, M., Nichols, A., & Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853595356>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2012). *Educational Research Methodology*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Colombo, M. (2005). Empathy and Cultural Competence: Reflections from teachers of culturally diverse children. *Young Children*. *Beyond the Journal*, 60(6), 1-8.
- Creswell, J. (2016). *Research in education. Design, Conduct and Evaluation of Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Athens: ION.
- Cummins, J. (2005). *Identities under negotiation*. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Danilidou, E., & Vorvi, I. (2014). Research data on training and perceptions of literature teachers on intercultural education. *Educational-Scientific Review*, 2, 175-190.
- Dejaeghere, J., & Zhang, Y. (2008). Development of intercultural competence among US American teachers: professional development factors that enhance competence. *Intercultural Education*, 19(3), 255-268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980802078624>
- Doucet, F. (2017). What Does a Culturally Sustaining Learning Climate look like? *Theory into Practice*, 56(3), 195-204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0040581.2017.1354618>
- Driessen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P. (2005). Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement. *British Educational Research Journal*, 31(4), 509-532. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/01411920500148713>
- Eliyahy-Levi, D., & Ganz-Meishar, M. (2019). The personal relationship between the kindergarten teacher and the parents as a mediator between cultures. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 27(2), 184-199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2019.1607263>
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research & Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Gotovos, A. (2002). *Education and Otherness. Intercultural Pedagogy*. Athens: Metachmio.
- Govaris, C. (2011). *Introduction to Intercultural Education*. Athens: Diadrasis.
- Harwood, D., Klopper, A. Osanying, A., & Vanderller, I. (2013). 'It's more than care.': early childhood educators' concepts of professionalism. *Early Years*, 33(1), 4-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2012.667394>
- Hawkins, K. (2014). Teaching for social justice, social responsibility and social inclusion: a respectful pedagogy for twenty-first century early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22(5), 723-738. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.969085>
- Karupplah, N., & Bertheisen, D. (2011). Multicultural Education: The Understandings of Preschool Teachers in Singapore. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 36(4), 38-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F183693911103600406>
- Kontogiannis, D., & Oikonomidis, V. (2014). Parental involvement of foreigners from the perspective of kindergarten teachers. *Research in Education*, 2, 117-144. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hjre.8838>
- Kourti, E., & Androussou, A. (2013). Promoting critical awareness in the initial training of preschool teachers in Greece: resistance and perspectives. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 21(30), 192-206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2013.832946>
- Leavy, P. (2021). *Research Design*. Athens: University Studio Press.
- Leung, C., & Hue, M. (2016). Understanding and enhancing multicultural teaching in preschool. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187, 2002-2014. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1203308>
- Luciak, M. (2004). *Migrants, Minorities and Education*. Vienna: EUMC.
- MacNevin, M., & Berman, R. (2017). The Black baby doll doesn't fit the disconnect between early childhood diversity policy, early childhood educator practice, and children's play. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(5), 827-839. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2017.1223065>
- Maniatis, P. (2014). Communication and interaction in the multicultural classroom. Tracing stereotypes and their role in the educational process. In E. Katsarou (Eds), *Teaching and learning in education* (pp. 21-42). Thessaloniki: AUTH.
- Markaki, A., Kyridis, A., & Ziontaki, Z. (2016). The effect of Cultural and Linguistic Background on the Relationships of Pupils in two Kindergartens in Greece. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 15(3), 74- 101.
- Mascardi, J., Brownlee, J., Walker, S., & Alford, J. (2017). Exploring intercultural competence through the lens of self- authorship. *Early Years*, 37(2), 217-234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2016.1174930>

- McNeal, K. (2005). The influence of multicultural teacher education program on teachers' multicultural practices. *Intercultural Education, 16*(4), 405-419. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675980500304405>
- Murray, J. (2012). Learning to live together: an exploration and analysis of managing cultural diversity in center-based early childhood development programmes. *Intercultural Education, 23*(2), 89-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11675986.2012.686019>
- Ogletree, Q., & Larke, P. (2010). Implementing Multicultural Practices in Early Childhood Education. *National Forum of Multicultural Issues Journal, 7*(1), 1-9.
- Oliveira-Formosinho, J., & Araujo, S. B. (2011). Early education for diversity: starting from birth. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 19*(2), 223-235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2011.574410>
- Phoon, H., Abdullah, M., & Abdullah, A. (2013). Unveiling Malaysian Preschool Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes in Multicultural Early Childhood Education. *Asia-Pacific Education Research, 22*(4), 427-438. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-012-00420>
- Scrafton, E., & Whittington, V. (2015). The accessibility of socio-dramatic play to culturally and linguistically diverse Australian preschoolers. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 23*(2), 213-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2015.1016806>
- Sobel, A., & Kugler, E. (2007). Building Partnerships with Immigrant Parents. *Educational Leadership, 64*(6), 62-66.
- Sotiropoulou, E. (2019). *Citizenship Education for Primary School Pupils: Educational Approaches and Practices* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Thessaloniki: Aristotle University.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2013). *Multicultural teaching in the Early Childhood Classroom: Approaches, Strategies and Tools*. Columbia: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Stamou, A., Griva, E., & Bessi, M. (2014). Kindergarten teachers talk about language learning development of bilingual children and their cooperation with immigrant parents. In E. Griva, & A. Stamou (Eds.), *Exploring bilingualism in the school environment. Perspectives of teachers, students and migrant parents* (pp. 308-330). Thessaloniki: Despina Kyriakidis.
- Stoneman, Z. (2001). Attitudes and Beliefs of Parents of Typically Developing Children. In M. Guralnick (Eds.), *Early Childhood Inclusion: Focus on Change* (pp. 101-126). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes
- Su, X., Guo, J., & Wang, X. (2018). Different stakeholders' perspectives on inclusive education in China: parents of children with ASD, parents of typically developing children, and classroom teachers. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 24*(9), 948-963. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1502367>
- Tafa, E., & Manolitsis, G. (2003). Attitudes of Greek parents of typically developing

- kindergarten children towards inclusive education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 18(2), 155-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0885625032000078952>
- Tarman, I., & Tarman, B. (2011). Developing Effective Multicultural Practices: A Case Study of Exploring a Teacher's Understanding and Practices. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 4, 578-598.
- Tobin, J. (2020). Addressing the needs of children of immigrants and refugee families in contemporary ECEC settings: findings and implications from the Children Crossing Borders study. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 28(1), 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2020.1707359>
- UNHCR (2022). *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2021*. Denmark: Statistics and Demographics Section UNHCR Global Data Service.
- Vamvakidou, I., Dinas, K., Kiridis, A., & Karamitsou, K. (2003). The end of homogeneity and the beginning of diversity in the modern Greek kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers talk about the problems they face in multicultural classrooms. In E. Tressou, & S. Mitakidou (Eds.), *Teachers talk to teachers about their experiences* (pp. 46- 55). Thessaloniki: Observer.
- Van Schaik, S., Leseman, P., & Huijbregts, S. (2014). Cultural diversity in teachers' group-centered beliefs and practices in early childcare. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(3), 369-377. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.04.007>
- Vandenbroeck, M. (2007). Beyond anti-bias education: changing conceptions of diversity and equity in European early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(1), 21-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930601046604>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)