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**Educational Leadership,
Inclusion and Social
Transformation /**
*Liderazgo educativo, inclusión y
transformación social*

Octaedro  **Editorial**
Barcelona, 2026



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*Educational Leadership, Inclusion and Social Transformation /
Liderazgo educativo, inclusión y transformación social*

EDICIÓN / EDITED BY: Alexánder López Padrón, Veronica Orazi (Eds.)

Revisión y maquetación: Esperança Martínez

Primera edición: junio 2026

© De la edición: Alexánder López Padrón y Veronica Orazi

© Del texto: Las autoras y autores

© De esta edición:

Ediciones OCTAEDRO, S.L.

C/ Bailén, 5 – 08010 Barcelona

Tel.: 93 246 40 02 – Fax: 93 231 18 68

www.octaedro.com – octaedro@octaedro.com

ISBN: 978-84-1079-420-7

Producción: Ediciones Octaedro

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Publicación en *Open Access* – Acceso abierto

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Introduction / Introducción

On the Significance of the Contribution to Education, Inclusion and Leadership: Perspectives for Social Transformation

Alexánder López Padrón

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Veronica Orazi (Eds.)

(Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia)

The volume *Educational Leadership, Inclusion and Social Transformation* presents an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary processes of educational leadership, inclusion, and social transformation. It is coherently structured into three major thematic sections: educational leadership and governance; teaching, inclusion, and educational practice; and society, equity, and educational communities. This organisation makes it possible to address educational phenomena from different levels of analysis, encompassing institutional and administrative dimensions as well as pedagogical and socio-community perspectives. The book stands out for its clear research-oriented, comparative, international, and interdisciplinary focus, together with its sustained concern for inclusion, educational innovation, the professionalisation of educational actors, and the construction of more equitable systems. Overall, the volume provides a broad examination of the role of education as a driving force for social transformation.

The first section, entitled “**Educational Leadership and Governance**”, comprises six chapters focusing on leadership, public administration, educational professionalisation, and institutional management. This section develops a vision of educational leadership closely connected to governance, professionalisation, evaluation, and innovation, highlighting the importance of organisational structures for the development of effective and inclusive educational systems.

The chapter by Angeliki Ntinieraki and Christos Lalos, “The Two Pillars of the Executive State: A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Capital in Greek Public Administration and Education”, situates its analysis at the intersection of public administration and education. It offers a comparative exploration of the concept of leadership capital in both domains, emphasising the significance of leadership capacities for the functioning of both the state and educational institutions.

Subsequently, Angeliki Ntinieraki, in “Educational Capital and Professionalization in Vocational Leadership: A Comparative Analysis of the Educational Level of EPAL Directors in Greece and Europe”, addresses the issue of professionalisation in vocational leadership. The emphasis on educational capital and on the comparison between Greece and Europe points towards a reflection on the educational profiles of those occupying leadership positions.

For his part, Christos Lalos, in “Transforming the Leviathan: Modern Trends in the Training of Greek Civil Servants and European Comparative Perspectives (2020–2025)”, introduces the topic of civil servant training. He specifically examines recent trends and European comparative perspectives, linking administrative modernisation with processes of professional development and training.

Maria Poulou presents “Review of Modern Practices in Teachers’ Evaluation in Europe and in Greece”, a review of contemporary practices in teacher evaluation. The comparative approach between Greece and Europe situates teacher evaluation within current debates on educational quality and professional development.

The chapter “The Role of Secondary School Principals as Leaders in the Introduction, Implementation and Diffusion of Innovations”, by Stavroula Nanou, focuses on the leadership role of secondary school principals. It examines how the introduction, implementation, and dissemination of innovations may be optimised, positioning leadership teams as strategic agents of educational change.

Finally, Vasiliki Theochari analyses in “Leadership and Administrative Frameworks for Evidence-Based Practice in Greek Special Education: A Critical Analysis of the Transition to Single Education” the relationships between leadership, administrative frameworks, and evidence-based practices in Greek special education. The chapter explores the transition towards a unified educational model in relation to processes of inclusion and institutional reorganisation.

The second section of the volume, “**Teaching, Inclusion and Educational Practice**”, brings together nine chapters focusing on teaching, inclusion, pedagogical innovation, and support for education professionals, integrating pedagogical, historical, technological, and professional perspectives.

Maria Chaireti opens this section with “Humanities, Knowledge, Inclusion, and Inclusive Literacy: A Human-Centered Framework for Teaching Reading Comprehension in Greek ELF Classrooms”. The chapter integrates the humanities, inclusion, and inclusive literacy within a human-centred framework applied to reading comprehension in English as a Lingua Franca contexts.

In “Innovation, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Adult Education for People with Disabilities: Principles, Practices, and Evaluation of Education Programs”, Gkiolias Lampros addresses the education of adults with disabilities. The chapter articulates innovation, accessibility, and inclusion through an examination of principles, practices, and evaluation processes.

The historical dimension emerges in “Special Education in Greece from 1828 to 2000: Key Stages and European Impact”, by Kechrakou Anastasia, which provides an overview of the development of special education in Greece and its connections with broader European dynamics.

Despoina Mavrovounioti contributes two chapters. The first, “How to Manage Your Classroom Successfully: Theory and Practice”, focuses on effective classroom management from a perspective combining theoretical foundations and practical applications. The second, “English as a Lingua Franca in European Education: Policy, Practice, and the Case of Greece in Comparative Perspective”, examines the presence of English as a lingua franca within European education, paying attention to both educational policies and practical implementation.

Technological innovation takes centre stage in “Robótica social y mediación lingüística en escenarios educativos multimodales”, by Rosabel Martinez-Roig and Belén Lozano Sañudo. The authors analyse the educational possibilities arising from the interaction between social robotics, communication, and multimodal learning environments.

Ioanna Margiolaki presents “From Random to Systematic Support: Institutional Reform as a Catalyst for Educator Empowerment”, focusing on institutional reform as a mechanism for strengthening and empowering education professionals through more structured support systems.

The chapter by Apostolos Kaltsas, “Similituds i fractures invisibles: una revisió sistemàtica sobre les condicions de treball i la resiliència docent als tres nivells educatius”, incorporates a systematic review of working conditions and teacher resilience across different educational levels, addressing issues related to professional well-being.

Finally, Foteini Tsiavea contributes “From Classroom to Community: How Social Workers Enhance Student Success: Integrating School Social Work for Holistic, Equitable, and Sustainable Student Development”. The chapter highlights the role of school social work in promoting educational success and the holistic, equitable, and sustainable development of students.

The third section, “Society, Equity and Educational Communities”, broadens the analysis towards the social dimensions of education and their relationship with equity.

Foteini Tsiavea contributes to this section with “Supporting the Whole Child: Integrating Social Work into the Educational System: Holistic Approaches to Student Well-Being and Equity School Communities”. The chapter further explores the integration of social work within the educational system from a perspective focused on holistic well-being and the development of more equitable school communities.

This section, and indeed the volume as a whole, concludes with “La diáspora venezolana, violencia y aporofobia”, by Luisa A. Messina Fajardo. This chapter introduces a highly significant social issue related to migration processes, violence, and forms of discrimination associated with poverty. Its inclusion in the final section reinforces the connection between education, social justice, and community transformation.

The structure and contents of the volume provide important insights into a broad understanding of education as an institutional, pedagogical, and social phenomenon. The three sections establish a progression that moves from educational leadership and governance to teaching and inclusive practices, culminating in issues of equity and community. The chapters make it possible to identify several cross-cutting themes: educational leadership, professionalisation, evaluation, innovation, inclusion, special education, accessibility, student well-being, school social work, and social transformation.

The strategic vision underpinning the volume is successfully realised through an interdisciplinary contribution that connects educational research, institutional analysis, and a commitment to inclusion and equity, offering an integrated perspective on the contemporary challenges facing educational systems and their transformative potential within society.

INTRODUCCIÓN

De la importancia de la aportación a la Educación, inclusión y liderazgo: perspectivas para la transformación social

Alexánder López Padrón

(Universidad Técnica de Manabí, Ecuador)

Veronica Orazi (Eds.)

(Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia)

La obra *Educational Leadership, Inclusion and Social Transformation* presenta una aproximación interdisciplinar a los procesos contemporáneos de liderazgo educativo, inclusión y transformación social. Se estructura coherentemente en tres grandes bloques temáticos: liderazgo y gobernanza educativa; enseñanza, inclusión y práctica educativa; y sociedad, equidad y comunidades educativas. Esta división permite abordar el fenómeno educativo desde diferentes niveles de análisis, que abarcan

tanto las dimensiones institucionales y administrativas como las pedagógicas y sociocomunitarias. El libro destaca por su clara orientación investigadora y comparativa internacional e interdisciplinaria, así como una preocupación constante por la inclusión, la innovación educativa, la profesionalización de los agentes educativos y la construcción de sistemas más equitativos. En conjunto, el volumen realiza un análisis amplio sobre la función de la Educación como motor de transformación social.

La primera parte, titulada “**Educational Leadership and Governance**”, reúne seis capítulos centrados en el liderazgo, la administración pública, la profesionalización educativa y la gestión institucional. Esta primera parte configura una visión del liderazgo educativo estrechamente vinculada a la gobernanza, la profesionalización, la evaluación y la innovación, subrayando la importancia de las estructuras organizativas para el desarrollo de sistemas educativos eficaces e inclusivos.

El capítulo de Angeliki Ntinieraki y Christos Lalos, “The Two Pillars of the Executive State: A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Capital in Greek Public Administration and Education”, sitúa el análisis en la intersección entre la administración pública y la educación. Realiza una exploración comparativa del concepto de capital de liderazgo en ambos ámbitos, destacando la relevancia de las capacidades directivas para el funcionamiento del Estado y de las instituciones educativas.

A continuación, Angeliki Ntinieraki, en “Educational Capital and Professionalization in Vocational Leadership: A Comparative Analysis of the Educational Level of EPAL Directors in Greece and Europe”, desarrolla la cuestión de la profesionalización en el liderazgo de la formación profesional. El énfasis en el capital educativo y en la comparación entre Grecia y Europa apunta hacia una reflexión sobre los perfiles formativos de quienes ocupan cargos directivos.

Por su parte, Christos Lalos, “Transforming the Leviathan: Modern Trends in the Training of Greek Civil Servants and European Comparative Perspectives (2020–2025)”, introduce la temática de la formación de los funcionarios públicos. Analiza específicamente a las tendencias recientes y a la comparación europea, vinculando la modernización administrativa con los procesos de capacitación profesional.

Maria Poulou presenta “Review of Modern Practices in Teachers’ Evaluation in Europe and in Greece”, una revisión de las prácticas contemporáneas de evaluación docente. El enfoque comparado entre Grecia y Europa permite situar la evaluación del profesorado dentro de los debates actuales sobre calidad educativa y desarrollo profesional.

El capítulo “The Role of Secondary School Principals as Leaders in the Introduction, Implementation and Diffusion of Innovations”, de Stavroula Nanou, se centra en el liderazgo de los directores de educación secundaria. Estudia cómo optimizar la introducción, implementación y difusión de innovaciones, lo que sitúa a los equipos directivos como agentes estratégicos del cambio educativo.

Finalmente, Vasiliki Theochari analiza en “Leadership and Administrative Frameworks for Evidence-Based Practice in Greek Special Education: A Critical Analysis of the Transition to Single Education” las relaciones entre liderazgo, marcos administrativos y prácticas basadas en la evidencia en el ámbito de la educación especial griega. Profundiza en la transición hacia una educación unificada sobre procesos de inclusión y reorganización institucional.

La segunda parte del libro, “**Teaching, Inclusion and Educational Practice**”, reúne nueve capítulos centrados en la enseñanza, la inclusión, la innovación pedagógica y el apoyo a los profesionales de la educación, integrando perspectivas pedagógicas, históricas, tecnológicas y profesionales.

Maria Chaireti abre esta sección con “Humanities, Knowledge, Inclusion, and Inclusive Literacy: A Human-Centered Framework for Teaching Reading Comprehension in Greek ELF Classrooms”. El

título integra humanidades, inclusión y alfabetización inclusiva dentro de un enfoque centrado en la persona aplicado a la comprensión lectora en contextos de inglés como lengua franca.

En “Innovation, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Adult Education for People with Disabilities: Principles, Practices, and Evaluation of Education Programs”, Gkiolias Lampros aborda la educación de personas adultas con discapacidad. Articula innovación, accesibilidad e inclusión mediante el análisis de principios, prácticas y procesos de evaluación.

La dimensión histórica aparece en “Special Education in Greece from 1828 to 2000: Key Stages and European Impact”, de Kechrakou Anastasia, que propone un recorrido por la evolución de la educación especial en Grecia y sus conexiones con las dinámicas europeas.

Despoina Mavrovounioti contribuye con dos capítulos. El primero, “How to Manage Your Classroom Successfully: Theory and Practice”, se centra en la gestión eficaz del aula desde una perspectiva que combina fundamentos teóricos y aplicaciones prácticas. El segundo, “English as a Lingua Franca in European Education: Policy, Practice, and the Case of Greece in Comparative Perspective”, examina la presencia del inglés como lengua franca en la educación europea, prestando atención tanto a las políticas educativas como a las prácticas concretas.

La innovación tecnológica adquiere protagonismo en “Robótica social y mediación lingüística en escenarios educativos multimodales”, de Rosabel Martínez-Roig y Belén Lozano Sañudo. Realizan un análisis de las posibilidades educativas derivadas de la interacción entre robótica social, comunicación y entornos multimodales de aprendizaje.

Ioanna Margiolaki presenta “From Random to Systematic Support: Institutional Reform as a Catalyst for Educator Empowerment”, centrado en la reforma institucional como mecanismo para fortalecer y empoderar a los profesionales de la educación mediante sistemas de apoyo más estructurados.

El capítulo de Apostolos Kaltsas, “Similituds i fractures invisibles: una revisió sistemàtica sobre les condicions de treball i la resiliència docent als tres nivells educatius”, incorpora una revisión sistemática sobre las condiciones laborales y la resiliencia docente en distintos niveles educativos, abordando aspectos relacionados con el bienestar profesional.

Por último, Foteini Tsiavea contribuye con “From Classroom to Community: How Social Workers Enhance Student Success: Integrating School Social Work for Holistic, Equitable, and Sustainable Student Development”. Pone de relieve el papel del trabajo social escolar en la promoción del éxito educativo y del desarrollo integral, equitativo y sostenible del alumnado.

La tercera parte, “Society, Equity and Educational Communities”, amplía el análisis hacia las dimensiones sociales de la educación y su relación con la equidad.

Foteini Tsiavea participa en esta parte con “Supporting the Whole Child: Integrating Social Work into the Educational System: Holistic Approaches to Student Well-Being and Equity School Communities”. El capítulo profundiza en la integración del trabajo social dentro del sistema educativo desde una perspectiva centrada en el bienestar integral y en la construcción de comunidades escolares más equitativas.

Esta parte y el libro concluyen con “La diáspora venezolana, violencia y aporofobia”, de Luisa A. Messina Fajardo. Este capítulo introduce una temática de gran relevancia social relacionada con los procesos migratorios, la violencia y las formas de discriminación asociadas a la pobreza. Su inclusión en la sección final refuerza la conexión entre educación, justicia social y transformación de las comunidades.

La estructura y contenidos del libro aportan claves para una comprensión amplia de la educación como fenómeno institucional, pedagógico y social. Las tres partes del volumen establecen una pro-

gresión que va desde el liderazgo y la gobernanza educativa hasta las prácticas de enseñanza e inclusión, culminando en las cuestiones de equidad y comunidad. Los capítulos permiten identificar varios ejes transversales: el liderazgo educativo, la profesionalización, la evaluación, la innovación, la inclusión, la educación especial, la accesibilidad, el bienestar estudiantil, el trabajo social escolar y la transformación social.

La apuesta estratégica el libro se cumple al realizar una contribución interdisciplinar que conecta investigación educativa, análisis institucional y compromiso con la inclusión y la equidad, ofreciendo una visión articulada de los desafíos contemporáneos de los sistemas educativos y de su potencial transformador en la sociedad.

Part I

Educational Leadership and Governance

1. The Two Pillars of the Executive State: A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Capital in Greek Public Administration and Education

Angeliki Ntinieraki and Dr Christos Lalos

(University of Alicante, Greece)

Abstract: This report provides a comparative analysis of the “two speeds” of leadership capital within the Greek “Executive State”. It examines the divergence between Public Administration Executives (PAE), governed by Law 4940/2022, and Education Executives (EE), governed by Law 4823/2021. While the Central Administration is shifting toward a competency-based model emphasizing “soft skills,” goal-setting, and 360-degree feedback, the Education sector remains rooted in a credential-based hierarchy characterized by “points accumulation,” low autonomy, and industrial resistance. The study highlights institutional asymmetries, particularly the robust training infrastructure of EKDDA for civil servants versus the fragmented training available to school leaders. To bridge this divide, the authors recommend the professionalization of school management and the creation of a National School for Educational Leadership to harmonize management practices across the public sector.

Keywords: Executive State (*Epiteliko Kratos*), Human Capital, Educational Leadership, Public Administration Reform

1. INTRODUCTION: THE ADMINISTRATIVE DUALISM OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC

The modernization of the Greek public sector has been the central narrative of state reform for the better part of the last decade, driven initially by fiscal conditionality during the economic crisis and subsequently by an endogenous drive towards digitization and administrative efficiency. Within this overarching project of the “Executive State” (*Epiteliko Kratos*), codified primarily in Law 4622/2019, two distinct yet interconnected ecosystems of human capital have emerged: the executive cadres of the Central Public Administration and the leadership corps of Public Education (School Principals and Education Executives).

This report provides an exhaustive comparative analysis of these two pillars. While both groups share the constitutional status of permanent civil servants, they operate under fundamentally divergent regulatory frameworks, cultural expectations, and professional trajectories. The Central Administration, particularly following Law 4940/2022, is increasingly aligning with New Public Management (NPM) principles, emphasizing goal-setting, soft skills, and 360-degree feedback mechanisms. In contrast, the Education sector, governed by Law 4823/2021, remains tethered to a “pedagogical bureaucracy” where leadership is defined by a hybrid identity of administrative compliance and instructional guidance, selected through a rigid, retrospective quantification of academic credentials.

The significance of this comparison lies not merely in their differences, but in the systemic friction these divergences create. As the Greek state attempts to implement a Unified Mobility System (ESK) to allow fluid movement of talent, the incompatibility of the “managerial” profile of the civil servant with the “pedagogical” profile of the educator creates barriers to synergy. This chapter explores these

dynamics through the lenses of knowledge frameworks, skills acquisition, and evaluation cultures, substantiated by recent legislative reforms and European benchmarking data.

1.1 The Reformist Context: From Stabilization to Transformation

The trajectory of Greek public administration reforms can be traced from the stabilization efforts of the memorandum era to the “digital leap” of the post-2019 period. The introduction of Law 4369/2016 marked an early attempt to depoliticize the selection of managers through the National Registry of Executive Staff. However, the seminal moment was the enactment of Law 4622/2019, which sought to separate the strategic “executive” functions of the state from the operational bureaucracy. This law introduced principles of good law-making, transparency, and a technocratic approach to governance.

Parallel to this, the education sector underwent its own series of reforms, culminating in Law 4823/2021 on the “Upgrading of the School and Empowerment of Teachers.” While nominally aiming for similar goals—accountability, autonomy, and quality—the mechanisms chosen for education differed sharply from the rest of the public sector, reflecting the unique political and social weight of the teaching profession in Greece.

1.2 Defining the Populations

For the purposes of this analysis, we distinguish between two specific target groups:

1. **Public Administration Executives (PAE):** Heads of Units, Directorates, and General Directorates in Ministries and Public Entities, whose role is primarily managerial, strategic, and operational within the framework of Law 4940/2022.
2. **Education Executives (EE):** School Principals (Headteachers), Directors of Education, and Education Advisors (formerly School Advisors), whose role combines administrative management of school units with pedagogical supervision under Law 4823/2021.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LEGAL ARCHITECTURES

To understand the divergence in human capital management, one must analyze the legal scaffolding that constructs the “ideal leader” in each sector. The comparison reveals a Public Administration moving towards a competency-based model versus an Education sector relying on a credential-based model.

2.1 The Public Administration Framework: The Competency Shift (Law 4940/2022)

The most radical shift in the management of Greek civil servants was introduced by Law 4940/2022, titled “Goal-setting, performance assessment and Reward System for Enhancing the Efficiency of Public Administration”.⁵ This legislation represents a departure from the Weberian tradition of procedural legality towards a results-oriented culture.

2.1.1 The Architecture of Law 4940/2022

The law structures the identity of the public manager around three pillars:

- **Goal Achievement (50% Weighting):** Managers are evaluated on the extent to which their units achieve specific, measurable quantitative and qualitative targets set at the beginning of the year. This directly links individual performance to organizational strategy.

- **Skills Assessment (40% Weighting):** The law formally introduces a “Competency Framework” (*Dexiotites*) into the Greek civil service. This includes “soft skills” such as adaptability, team management, emotional intelligence, and citizen orientation.
- **The “Team Pulse” (10% Weighting):** Perhaps the most innovative element, this introduces a form of 360-degree feedback. Subordinates anonymously assess the “climate” and functioning of the team, effectively evaluating their supervisor’s leadership style. This measure aims to check authoritarianism and promote collaborative leadership.

2.1.2 Institutional Support

This framework is supported by the **National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA)**, which has developed specific manuals and certification programs for “Coaching” and “Mentoring” to support this transition.⁹ The explicit inclusion of coaching—a concept borrowed from the private sector—signals a desire to transform the “Director” into a “Leader-Coach.”

2.2 The Education Framework: The Credentialist Hierarchy (Law 4823/2021)

In contrast, the framework governing educational leadership, defined by Law 4823/2021 and supported by Law 4547/2018, constructs leadership as a derivative of teaching experience and academic accumulation.

2.2.1 The “Primus Inter Pares” Model

The School Principal is legally defined as an “education officer” (*stelechos ekpaidefsis*), reinforcing the notion that they are first and foremost teachers.¹¹ The selection process is strictly regulated by a **Points System** (*Moriidotisi*) detailed in Ministerial Decisions (e.g., Φ.361.22/6/149788/E3/2022).

- **Scientific Training:** Points are awarded for PhDs, Master’s degrees, and second bachelor’s degrees. This has led to a “credential inflation” where aspiring leaders accrue degrees to maximize points rather than acquiring specific management skills.
- **Service Tenure:** A minimum of eight years of teaching service is required. In practice, successful candidates often have two decades of experience, weighting the system heavily towards seniority.
- **Evaluation of the Principal:** Principals are evaluated by the Director of Education and the Quality Supervisor on criteria such as “pedagogical climate,” “allocation of resources,” and “promotion of inclusion”.

2.2.2 The Autonomy Paradox

A critical divergence is the scope of authority. While a Director in a Ministry (PAE) has authority over unit goals and some resource allocation, a School Principal (EE) operates with “little autonomous decision-making”. They cannot hire or fire staff, have limited control over the curriculum (which is centrally determined by the Institute of Educational Policy - IEP), and function largely as intermediaries for central directives. This lack of autonomy is a key finding in OECD reports, which classify Greek schools as among the least autonomous in Europe.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

The mechanism by which an organization selects its leaders determines its future culture. The comparison between the two sectors reveals a stark contrast between *prospective* selection (potential) and *retrospective* selection (reward for past achievement).

3.1 Selection of Public Administration Executives

The selection of PAEs focuses increasingly on the “**Best Fit**” principle.

- **Process:** Supervised by ASEP (Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection), the process involves a scrutiny of formal qualifications followed by structured interviews that assess managerial capability and alignment with the specific job description.
- **Innovation:** The introduction of the “**Executive Branch**” (*Klaados Epitelikon Stelechon*) represents a fast-track stream. Candidates for these high-level analyst positions undergo rigorous testing, including AI-proctored exams and case studies, focusing on public policy analysis and law drafting. This creates a technocratic elite selected for specific competencies rather than general tenure.
- **Criteria Weighting:** While tenure matters, the weighting of the structured interview and the specific relevance of experience allows for younger, highly skilled professionals to advance if they demonstrate superior competency fit.

3.2 Selection of Education Executives

The selection of EEs is dominated by the **Objective Point System** (*Antikeimenika Moria*).

- **The Rubric:** The selection matrix is rigid. A PhD grants a specific number of points; a Master’s grants fewer; years of service are converted into points with a cap.
- **The Interview:** While Law 4823/2021 assigns significant weight to the interview (assessing personality and general conduct), this component has historically been the subject of intense litigation and union suspicion, often viewed as a mechanism for political favoritism.²⁰ To mitigate this, recent reforms have introduced case studies (pedagogical scenarios) into the interview process.
- **Key Deficiency:** There is no requirement for a specialized degree in *Educational Management* (though it grants points). A candidate with a PhD in Archaeology is technically eligible to run a school, provided they have the teaching tenure, regardless of their lack of financial or HR management training.

3.3 Comparative Table: Selection Drivers

Feature	Public Administration Executive	Education Executive (Principal)
Primary Selection Logic	Competency-based («Best Fit»)	Credential-based («Accumulation»)
Minimum Tenure	Variable (often 4+ years for specific roles)	8 Years Teaching Service
Key Credential	Proven Managerial/Policy Experience	PhD/Master’s (Subject or Ed.) + ICT Cert
Interview Focus	Strategic Planning, HR Management	Pedagogical Scenario, Personality
Evaluators	Specialized Councils (ASEP/EKD-DA)	Local Selection Boards (Director + Supervisor)
Fast Track?	Yes (Executive Branch Program)	No (Strict Seniority Ladder)

What does a Greek public manager know, and what can they do? The divergence in competency frameworks highlights a “skills gap” that hinders the modernization of the education sector.

3.4 The “Soft Skills” Revolution in Administration

Law 4940/2022 explicitly lists nine soft skills required for public managers, including:

1. **Leadership:** The ability to inspire and guide teams.
2. **Adaptability:** Managing change in a volatile environment.
3. **Teamwork:** Fostering collaboration.
4. **Citizen Orientation:** Designing services around user needs.

This framework is operationalized through the “Team Pulse” and supported by the “Common Assessment Framework” (CAF), which encourages self-assessment at the unit level. The existence of official manuals for mentoring and coaching suggests a deliberate attempt to model behaviors, not just enforce rules.

3.5 The “Pedagogical-Administrative” Hybrid in Education

The competency profile for School Principals is less explicitly defined in law but can be inferred from the evaluation criteria of Law 4823/2021:

1. **Pedagogical Guidance:** Supporting teachers in instructional methods.
2. **School Climate:** Managing student behavior and conflict.
3. **Administrative Consistency:** Adhering to deadlines, managing the “MySchool” information system.
4. **Inclusion:** Promoting the integration of students with disabilities.

The Gap: While “Digital Policy” and “Crisis Management” are core competencies for the administration, school principals are only required to have “Level A” ICT certification (basic usage). This creates a “digital leadership” deficit, where principals are expected to lead the digital transformation of schools (e.g., during COVID-19 or with new interactive whiteboards) without the advanced digital competencies possessed by their administrative counterparts.

3.6 Management vs. Administration

A critical distinction found in the literature is the difference between *Leading* and *Administering*.

- **PAEs:** Are increasingly trained to *Lead*—to analyze data, formulate strategy, and manage change.
- **EES:** Are structurally confined to *Administering*—implementing central circulars and managing routine bureaucracy. Research indicates that Greek principals spend a disproportionate amount of time on clerical tasks due to the lack of secretarial support, leaving little room for the “transformational leadership” envisioned in academic theory.

4. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: INSTITUTIONAL ASYMMETRIES

The mechanism for generating these skills reveals the most significant structural inequality between the two sectors: the existence of a National School for Administration versus the absence of one for Education.

4.1 EKDDA: The Strategic Academy

The **National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA)** is a robust, well-funded institution that serves as the “brain” of the civil service.

- **The National School (ESDDA):** Produces a stream of highly trained, permanent officials (“epi-

telika stelechi”) who undergo years of specialized education in law, economy, and digital governance.

- **Continuous Training (INEP):** Offers hundreds of certified programs annually, ranging from “Public Procurement” to “Emotional Intelligence”.
- **Targeted Interventions:** EKDDA reacts swiftly to state needs, launching specific programs for the “Executive State” reforms or digital skills.

4.2 The Training Void in Education

In contrast, there is no “National School of Educational Leadership” in Greece.

- **Fragmented Providers:** Training is provided ad-hoc by the **Institute of Educational Policy (IEP)**, Universities, or Regional Training Centres (PEKES).
- **The “Introductory” Model:** While induction training exists for new teachers, leadership training is often a short, “introductory” seminar *after* a principal has been selected. This means principals often learn on the job, a “sink or swim” approach.
- **Self-Funding:** Aspiring principals rely on self-funded Master’s degrees from universities (e.g., Hellenic Open University) to gain management knowledge. While academically rigorous, these programs are often theoretical and disconnected from the daily operational realities of a Greek public school.
- **Teacher Demand:** Research shows a high demand among principals for practical training in conflict management, legal issues, and financial administration, which is currently not systematically met by the state.

The implementation of evaluation systems highlights the deep cultural divides and the varying power of trade unions in the two sectors.

4.3 The Civil Service: Linking Evaluation to Reward

Under Law 4940/2022, evaluation in the public administration is explicitly linked to a **Reward System** (Bonus).

- **Mechanism:** Evaluation is annual, digital, and involves goal-setting discussions. The “Team Pulse” introduces a democratic element that has largely been accepted as a tool for improvement.
- **Culture:** While bureaucratic inertia exists, the principle of evaluation is generally accepted as a prerequisite for the “Executive State.”

4.4 Education: The Battlefield of Evaluation

In education, evaluation (Assessment) has been the subject of a forty-year ideological conflict.

- **The Conflict:** The **Greek Primary Teachers’ Federation (DOE)** and the **Federation of Secondary School Teachers (OLME)** have historically resisted individual evaluation, viewing it as a punitive mechanism leading to categorization and dismissal.
- **Law 4823/2021 Implementation:** The law mandates the evaluation of the school unit (Self-Assessment) and the individual teacher. Principals are required to evaluate their staff. This has placed Principals in the crossfire: they are legally obliged to evaluate but face union strikes and “stop-work” orders urging them not to participate.
- **Role Conflict:** This requirement fundamentally alters the Principal’s role from “colleague” to “manager,” creating intra-school conflict and stress that is largely absent in the more hierarchical civil service.

- **External Evaluation:** The reintroduction of external evaluators (Education Advisors) is seen by unions as a return to the “Inspectorism” of the past, despite the Ministry’s framing of it as supportive guidance.

5. MOBILITY AND THE “UNIFIED” SYSTEM: BARRIERS TO SYNERGY

The **Unified Mobility System (ESK)** was designed to allow civil servants to move freely across the public sector to where needs arise. However, the movement between Education and Administration is unidirectional and problematic.

5.1 The “Metataxi” Phenomenon

There is a significant flow of personnel from **Education to Administration** (*metataxi* or *apospasi*), but almost zero flow in the opposite direction.

- **Drivers:** Teachers often seek administrative posts to escape the stress of the classroom, burnout, or the geographic instability of placement in remote schools.
- **The “Administrative Solution”:** The Ministry of Education relies heavily on seconded teachers to staff its central and regional directorates. This reveals a structural weakness: the lack of a permanent, specialized administrative corps for education.

5.2 The Skills Mismatch

When teachers move to administrative roles (e.g., in a Directorate of Education), they bring pedagogical knowledge but often lack **administrative hard skills** (public accounting, administrative law, procurement procedures).

- **Consequence:** This results in inefficiencies, as “educators are doing the work of clerks” without proper training. Conversely, administrative entities lack the pedagogical insight to make informed decisions about schools, creating a disconnect between policy (Admin) and practice (Education).

5.3 Barriers to Reverse Mobility

An administrative executive cannot easily become a school principal, even if they have relevant leadership skills, due to the strict requirement for **teaching service** (8 years).³ This “closed shop” protects the teaching profession but insulates schools from the influx of professional management expertise that could handle financial or HR functions, allowing Headteachers to focus on pedagogy.

5.4 OECD/TALIS Data: High Qualifications, Low Preparation

Data from the **OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018** paints a specific profile of the Greek School Principal:

- **Highly Educated:** Greek principals have some of the highest rates of postgraduate qualifications (Master’s/PhD) in Europe.
- **Low Preparation:** Conversely, they report significantly lower levels of completion of *formal school administration training programs* prior to taking office compared to the EU average.
- **Low Autonomy:** TALIS confirms that Greek principals have less decision-making power regarding staffing and budgeting than almost any other OECD country.

5.5 European Practices

- **France/Spain:** Similar to Greece, these countries have a tradition of selecting principals from the teaching corps. However, France has the **École Supérieure de l'Éducation Nationale**, a dedicated academy for training education executives, which Greece lacks.
- **Northern Europe:** Countries like the Netherlands or UK often view school leadership as a distinct profession. Principals may be recruited based on management skills and have significant autonomy over hiring and budget, aligning more with the Greek “Public Manager” profile than the “Head Teacher” profile.

6. POSSIBILITIES FOR COOPERATION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The analysis suggests that the current siloed approach is inefficient. The “Executive State” cannot fully succeed if its largest branch—Education—remains operationally distinct from modern management practices.

6.1 Synergy 1: EKDDA as a Bridge

The most immediate opportunity for cooperation is the **opening of EKDDA to Education Executives**.

- **Proposal:** Establish a “School Leadership & Management” department within the National School of Public Administration (ESDDA). This would create a cadre of principals who are trained in public law, digital governance, and crisis management alongside their pedagogical expertise.
- **Joint Training:** Common training modules for Public Managers and Directors of Education on “Strategic Planning” or “Digital Transformation” would foster a shared language and culture.

6.2 Synergy 2: The “Managerial” Principal

Greece could experiment with a **dual-leadership model** in large school units, common in some Anglophone systems:

- **Pedagogical Head:** A senior teacher focused on curriculum and instruction.
- **School Manager:** A public administration executive (graduate of ESDDA) responsible for budget, facilities, procurement, and HR compliance.

This would utilize the specialized skills of both cadres and relieve the “burden of bureaucracy” that principals currently lament.

6.3 Synergy 3: Harmonized Evaluation

Adopting the “**Team Pulse**” (360-degree feedback) in schools could offer a way out of the evaluation deadlock. Instead of top-down inspection (which unions resist), a bottom-up assessment of the “school climate” by the teachers’ board could provide accountability that is consistent with the collegial culture of schools, while aligning with the Law 4940/2022 framework.

6.4 Future Outlook

The “Executive State” reform is still maturing. As Law 4940/2022 takes root, the disparity between the “modernized” civil service and the “traditional” education sector will likely widen unless specific convergence policies are enacted. The challenge for the Greek state is to introduce managerial efficiency into education without eroding its pedagogical soul—a balance that requires not just new laws,

but a fundamental rethinking of how leaders are selected, trained, and valued.

7. CONCLUSION

The comparison of executives in Greek Public Administration and Public Education reveals a tale of two speeds. The Public Administration is accelerating towards a technocratic, competency-based model supported by robust institutions like EKDDA and Law 4940/2022. The Education sector, while undergoing “upgrading” via Law 4823/2021, remains caught in a web of credentialism, low autonomy, and industrial resistance.

Key Findings:

1. **Selection:** Administration prioritizes *competency* (“Best Fit”); Education prioritizes *credentials* (“Points”).
2. **Training:** Administration has a *National Academy*; Education relies on *fragmented seminars*.
3. **Evaluation:** Administration uses *360-degree goals*; Education uses *hierarchical inspection*, triggering conflict.
4. **Mobility:** Flows are *unidirectional* (Teachers -> Admin), draining schools and filling offices with untrained staff.

Recommendations:

To bridge this divide, the Greek state should:

1. **Create a National School for Educational Leadership** under the auspices of EKDDA.
2. **Introduce Soft Skills Assessment Centers** for school principal selection, moving beyond the “paper tower” of points.
3. **Harmonize Evaluation Cultures**, potentially introducing the “Team Pulse” to schools to foster collaborative accountability.
4. **Professionalize School Management**, allowing non-teaching executives to handle administrative burdens in large schools.

Only by treating School Principals as high-level Public Executives—entitled to the same quality of training, autonomy, and support as their Ministry counterparts—can the vision of the “Executive State” be realized in the classroom, the foundational unit of the nation’s future.

Table 1: Comparative Matrix of Leadership Selection

Criterion	Public Administration Executive (Law 4940/2022)	Education Executive (Principal) (Law 4823/2021)
Philosophy	Competency-Based («Best Fit»)	Credential-Based (Points Accumulation)
Academic Req.	Degree relevant to position; Master’s preferred.	PhD/Master’s heavily weighted for points. ¹⁸
Experience	Relevant managerial experience; Private sector recognized.	8 Years Teaching Service (Minimum). ³
Skills Test	Assessment Centers (increasingly); Soft Skills Framework.	ICT Certification (A’ Level) ; Foreign Languages. ³
Interview	Structured; Focus on Strategic Planning & HR.	Structured; Focus on Pedagogical Scenario & Personality. ¹²
Selection Body	ASEP / EKDDA Councils.	Local Selection Boards (Director + Supervisor). ²²

Table 2: Comparative Evaluation Systems

Feature	Public Administration (Law 4940/2022)	Education (Law 4823/2021)
Core Metric	Goal Achievement (50%)	Pedagogical/Admin Competence
Feedback	«Team Pulse» (Subordinate feedback - 10%)	Hierarchical (Director + Supervisor)
Skills Focus	Soft Skills (Leadership, Adaptability)	Instructional Guidance, Inclusion, Climate
Consequence	Linked to Bonus/Reward System	Linked to Promotion; «Remedial» training if low.
Union Stance	Generally Accepted / Bureaucratic Compliance	Active Resistance / Strikes / Litigation

Table 3: Training & Development Infrastructure

Feature	Public Administration	Education
Primary Body	EKDDA (National Centre for Public Admin)	IEP (Institute of Educational Policy)
Structure	National School (ESDDA): Long-term induction.	No Leadership School; Ad-hoc seminars.
Certification	Certified Programs (Points for promotion).	Certificates of Attendance (Minor points).
Content	Digital Governance, Law Drafting, Crisis Mgmt.	Pedagogy, Inclusion, Skills Labs.
Induction	Mandatory & Intensive (for Executive Branch).	Introductory (often post-selection).

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2. Educational Capital and Professionalization in Vocational Leadership: A Comparative Analysis of the Educational Level of EPAL Directors in Greece and Europe

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Abstract: This study examines the educational profile of Greek Vocational Upper Secondary School (EPAL) directors within the context of European professionalization trends. Driven by the “moriodotisi” (point system) of Law 4823/2021, the Greek workforce has become highly credentialed, with 69.3% of directors holding Master’s degrees and 13.9% possessing Doctorates. Despite this high “educational capital,” a comparative analysis with Germany, France, and Finland reveals a “credentialism paradox”: Greek directors often lack specialized VET-specific leadership training and possess significantly less administrative autonomy than their European peers. The findings suggest that while the selection system successfully incentivizes academic attainment, it creates “highly educated bureaucrats” rather than strategic vocational leaders.

Keywords: Vocational Education and Training (VET), Educational Capital, Credentialism, School Leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Imperative of Leadership in Vocational Education and Training (VET)

In the contemporary landscape of European education policy, the governance and leadership of Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions have emerged as critical determinants of systemic efficacy and economic competitiveness. No longer relegated to the periphery of educational administration, the role of the VET principal—specifically, the Director of the Vocational Upper Secondary School (Epaggelmatiko Lykeio - EPAL) in the Greek context—is increasingly viewed through the lens of high-stakes accountability and strategic management. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have consistently argued that the complexity of modern VET systems, characterized by the dual imperative of pedagogical rigor and labor market responsiveness, necessitates a leadership cadre that possesses not merely administrative competence but a sophisticated portfolio of academic and professional qualifications.

This chapter aims to provide an exhaustive examination of the educational level of EPAL directors in Greece, situating their profile within the broader European discourse on school leadership professionalization. The inquiry is driven by a central paradox observed in the Greek educational system: while the formal academic qualifications of school leaders have risen exponentially over the last two decades—driven by a legislative framework that incentivizes the accumulation of degrees—questions persist regarding the translation of this “educational capital” into effective managerial practice within the specialized environment of vocational schools. By analyzing the legislative mechanisms of selection, specifically Law 4823/2021, and contrasting the Greek model with the leadership paradigms of Germany, Finland, and France, this study seeks to elucidate the relationship between formal credentialism and functional leadership capability.

1.2 The Specificity of the Greek Educational Context

To understand the educational profile of the Greek EPAL director, one must first navigate the idiosyncrasies of the Greek public administration. Unlike many northern European nations where school leadership is a distinct career track often decoupled from classroom teaching, Greece adheres strictly to a “*primus inter pares*” (first among equals) model. The principal remains, fundamentally, a teacher who assumes administrative duties for a fixed tenure. This transient nature of the role, combined with a centralized bureaucracy that historically limited institutional autonomy, has created a unique selection ecosystem.

In an effort to ensure objectivity and combat clientelism (*rousfeti*), the Greek state has developed a highly complex, algorithmic selection process known as “*moriidotisi*” (point system). This system quantifies a candidate’s profile, assigning specific numerical values to years of service, foreign languages, and, most significantly, postgraduate titles (Master’s and PhDs). Consequently, the pursuit of higher education among Greek teachers is often driven not solely by intrinsic professional development needs but by the extrinsic necessity of accumulating “points” to secure promotion to leadership positions. This chapter investigates the outcome of this policy: a leadership corps that is statistically among the most highly educated in Europe, yet operates within a framework that often offers limited scope for applying this advanced theoretical knowledge.

1.3 Methodology and Scope

This analysis draws upon a triangulation of sources:

1. **Legislative Analysis:** A detailed exegesis of Law 4823/2021 and preceding statutes (Law 1566/1985, Law 4547/2018) to understand the structural incentives for educational attainment.
2. **Statistical Review:** Utilization of data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), the KANEP-GSEE Annual Reports, and recent empirical studies (e.g., Damianou et al., 2023) to construct a demographic and academic profile of serving principals.
3. **Comparative International Data:** Leveraging the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 datasets and Eurydice reports to benchmark Greek findings against European peers.

The scope of this chapter is specifically focused on the *educational level*—defined here as formal academic degrees (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate) and certified training—of directors in the Vocational Upper Secondary sector, distinct from general education where appropriate, though acknowledging that the selection legislation is unified across secondary education.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF VET LEADERSHIP

2.1 From Administration to “Edupreneurial” Leadership

The academic discourse surrounding school leadership has shifted from a focus on “administration”—the maintenance of stability and adherence to regulations—to “leadership,” which implies vision, strategic change, and the improvement of teaching and learning outcomes. In the VET sector, this evolution is further complicated by the need for “edupreneurial” leadership—a hybrid style that combines pedagogical sensitivity with entrepreneurial acumen to foster partnerships with local industries and manage apprenticeship programs.

Researchers such as Saitis and Saiti (2018) and Koutouzis (2020) have highlighted that in centralized systems like Greece, the transition to this modern leadership model is hindered by bureaucratic

inertia. However, the *expectation* of such leadership has influenced the qualification requirements. The state, recognizing the need for more capable managers, has used the requirement for postgraduate degrees as a proxy for managerial competence. The underlying assumption is that a principal with a Master's degree in Educational Management or a PhD is better equipped to handle the complexities of the modern school unit than one relying solely on experience.

2.2 New Public Management (NPM) and Credentialism

The emphasis on measurable qualifications can be understood through the lens of New Public Management (NPM). NPM reforms in education advocate for professional management, performance indicators, and competition. In Greece, the implementation of NPM principles has been fragmentary, often resulting in a “credentialist” culture. Since direct performance evaluation of teachers was politically contentious and suspended for decades (only reintroduced effectively with Law 4823/2021), the state relied on “input” controls—specifically, the educational qualifications of candidates—to assure quality. This has led to an “inflation” of qualifications, where the threshold for obtaining a leadership post rises continuously as the candidate pool becomes increasingly credentialed.

In the context of EPALs, this theoretical framework is crucial for interpreting the data. The directors of these schools are not merely educators; they are managers of complex organizations with laboratories, equipment budgets, and adult education components (in evening EPALs). Therefore, the demand for high educational qualifications is theoretically aligned with the increased complexity of the role, even if the practical alignment remains a subject of critique.

2.3 Historical Trajectory: From Seniority to Scientification

For much of the late 20th century, typically under Law 1566/1985, the selection of school heads was heavily weighted towards seniority (years of service) and democratic participation (teacher council votes), with formal academic qualifications playing a secondary role. A Bachelor's degree was the standard, and postgraduate degrees were rare exceptions held by the intellectual elite of the teaching force.

The paradigm shift began in the 2000s and accelerated with Law 3848/2010 and Law 4547/2018, which began to aggressively value “scientific criteria.” The state signaled that experience alone was insufficient for leadership in the 21st century. This “scientification” of the selection criteria compelled a generation of teachers to return to university, sparking a boom in postgraduate enrollments in the Hellenic Open University (EAP) and other institutions offering degrees in “Educational Administration”.

2.4 The Current Regime: Law 4823/2021

The current selection process is governed by **Law 4823/2021**, titled “Upgrading of the school, empowerment of teachers and other provisions.” This law represents the culmination of the trend towards credential-based selection. It establishes a rigorous point system that makes it mathematically nearly impossible to secure a director's position in a competitive urban EPAL without at least a Master's degree.

2.4.1 The “Moriidotisi” (Point System) for Educational Titles

Article 33 of Law 4823/2021 outlines the specific valuation of academic titles. The system is designed to create an objective hierarchy of candidates. The points awarded for educational qualifications are significant when compared to the points awarded for years of service or interview performance.

Table 1: Detailed Breakdown of Points for Academic Qualifications (Law 4823/2021, Art. 33)

Qualification Category	Points (Monades)	Conditions & Implications
Doctoral Degree (PhD)	6 Points	Must be relevant to the candidate’s scientific field or Educational Administration. This is a massive advantage, equivalent to multiple years of service or superior interview performance.
Second Doctoral Degree	5 Points	Recognizes breadth of expertise, though less heavily weighted than the primary relevant doctorate.
Master’s Degree (MSc/MA/MEd)	4 Points	Relevance is key. This has driven the mass demand for Master’s in Education Management.
Second Master’s Degree	3 Points	Encourages double-specialization. Common among EPAL directors who may have an MSc in Engineering and an MEd in Administration.
Bachelor’s Degree Grade	Variable	Calculated as 0.5 points for every grade unit above 5 (e.g., a “10” yields 2.5 points). Rewards basic academic excellence.
Foreign Language (Level C2)	2.5 Points	Often English, French, or German. Essential for participation in Erasmus+ VET programs.
Didaskaleio (Post-training)	2 Points	Primarily relevant to primary education, but indicative of the system’s valuation of certified training.

Source: Consolidated analysis of Law 4823/2021 and Ministry of Education circulars.

This table illuminates the “rules of the game.” A candidate with a PhD and a Master’s degree enters the selection arena with a 10-point baseline advantage over a candidate with only a basic degree. In a competitive system where positions are decided by decimal points, this creates an irresistible imperative for advanced education.

2.4.2 Relevance to Vocational Education

Crucially, while the law values degrees, it does not explicitly mandate that these degrees be in *Vocational Pedagogy* or *VET Management*. A generic Master’s in School Administration is weighted equally to a specialized Master’s in Vocational Training Systems. This is a critical point of differentiation from systems like Germany’s, where the qualification is deeply tied to the vocational context. However, for EPAL principals, the base degree is often in Engineering, Economics, or Agriculture (5-year diplomas from polytechnics), which are legally equivalent to an Integrated Master’s (Level 7 EQF), providing EPAL principals with a high “base” educational level compared to some General Lyceum counterparts.

2.5 Certification Requirements: ICT and Management

Beyond academic degrees, Law 4823/2021 mandates specific certifications that further define the educational profile:

- **ICT Certification (Level A):** A mandatory prerequisite. A candidate cannot even apply without certified computer proficiency. This ensures a baseline of digital literacy essential for managing the “MySchool” information systems and digital gradebooks.

- **Certified Management Training:** Points are awarded for training courses (e.g., from the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government - EKDA). This has led to a workforce that is not only academically credentialed but also continuously “trained” in short-course formats.

3. THE STATISTICAL PROFILE OF GREEK EPAL DIRECTORS

Having established the legislative incentives, we now examine the empirical reality. What is the actual educational level of the individuals leading Greek vocational schools? While national statistics often aggregate secondary education (General and Vocational), specific studies and sub-set analyses allow for a detailed profile of EPAL directors.

3.1 Demographic Context: An Aging Leadership

The educational level must be contextualized by the demographic profile. Research by Damianou et al. (2023) and ELSTAT data indicates that the Greek school principalship is an aging cohort.

- **Age Distribution:** Approximately **88.1%** of school principals are over the age of 50. Specifically, the 50–59 age bracket dominates (70.6%). This is a direct consequence of the requirement for substantial teaching service (minimum 8 years, but realistically 15-20 years to be competitive in points).
- **Implication for Education:** This demographic implies that most principals received their *initial* tertiary education in the 1980s or early 1990s. Their postgraduate qualifications (Master’s/PhD), however, are often recent acquisitions, obtained mid-career to meet the changing legislative requirements for promotion.

3.2 High Prevalence of Advanced Degrees

The most defining characteristic of Greek school leadership is the exceptionally high rate of postgraduate attainment. The “moriodotisi” policy has successfully created a highly credentialed workforce.

Table 2: Educational Attainment of School Principals in Greece (Sample Data)

Educational Level	Percentage of Principals	Notes
Bachelor’s / Basic Degree	100%	Prerequisite for employment. Many EPAL principals hold 5-year Polytechnic diplomas (Integrated Master).
Postgraduate Degree (MSc/MA)	69.3%	A significant majority hold at least one Master’s degree.
Doctoral Degree (PhD)	13.9%	A remarkably high figure compared to European averages for school-level leadership.
Management Training	67.9%	Participation in certified administration seminars (e.g., ASPETE).

Source: Adapted from Damianou et al. (2023) and representative sample studies of Greek secondary education principals.

Analysis of the Figures:

- The **69.3%** Master's attainment rate signifies that the “teacher-principal” with only a basic degree is becoming an anomaly. In the EPAL sector, this is often a mix of technical Master's (e.g., M.Eng) and educational Master's (M.Ed).
- The **13.9%** PhD rate is particularly striking. It suggests that nearly one in seven principals holds the highest possible academic qualification. In the context of EPALs, these PhDs are often in the principal's subject specialty (e.g., Chemistry, Informatics, Engineering) rather than in school leadership per se, although PhDs in Educational Administration are increasing. This high level of “intellectual capital” is a distinct feature of the Greek system.

5.3 Subject Specialization in VET

Unlike General Lyceums, where principals overwhelmingly come from the Humanities (Philologists) or Natural Sciences, EPAL directors possess a more diverse academic background. They are drawn from the ranks of:

- **Engineers (Civil, Mechanical, Electrical):** Often holding 5-year diplomas equivalent to Integrated Masters.
- **Economists and IT Specialists:** Who often have strong links to the private sector and higher rates of digital skills.
- **Technologists:** Graduates of Technological Educational Institutes (TEI), many of whom have subsequently obtained university Master's degrees to equalize their status for promotion.

5.4 Evening EPAL Directors: A Special Case

A study by Konstantinidou (2021) focusing on Evening EPALs—schools that cater to adult learners and workers—reveals that while these directors are highly educated in terms of degrees, they often lack specific training in *Adult Education (Andragogy)* or *Vulnerable Group Management*. Their impressive academic titles (PhDs/Masters) usually do not cover the specific soft skills needed to manage students who are simultaneously working adults with complex social needs. This highlights a gap between *statistical* educational level and *functional* qualification suitability.

5.5 European Comparative Analysis

To evaluate whether the high educational level of Greek EPAL directors is a European norm or a national exception, we must compare it with the systems of major European VET providers. The structure of VET leadership varies significantly across the continent, influenced by different administrative traditions (Napoleonic vs. Humboldtian vs. Nordic).

5.5.1 Germany: The “Berufsschule” and Dual Leadership

Germany represents the “gold standard” of VET with its Dual System. The leadership of a *Berufsschule* (Vocational School) differs fundamentally from the Greek model.

- **Qualification Structure:** German principals are highly qualified, but the pathway is different. They typically hold the *Zweites Staatsexamen* (Second State Examination) after a university degree (Master's level equivalent). However, the focus is on *Vocational Pedagogy (Berufspädagogik)*, a distinct academic discipline that is less developed in Greece.
- **Preparation vs. Accumulation:** Unlike Greece, where degrees are accumulated for points, German states (Länder) often require a mandatory *Schulleitungsqualifizierung* (School Leadership Qualification) *before* assuming office. This is a functional training program, not just an academic degree.

- **Comparison:** While Greek principals may have higher rates of *academic* PhDs (often in unrelated subjects), German principals have higher rates of *specialized* VET leadership training. The German system values the functional competence to manage the school-industry interface, whereas the Greek system values the academic title itself.

5.5.2 France: The “Provisieur” as a State Corp

France offers a model of professionalized administration that contrasts sharply with the Greek “teacher-principal” concept.

- **The “Concours”:** In France, the director of a *Lycée Professionnel* is known as a *Provisieur*. They are selected through a rigorous national competitive examination (*concours*). To enter the contest, one must have a Master’s degree and teaching experience, but success depends on passing the exam, not strictly on having a PhD.
- **Professional Status:** Once selected, they enter the corps of *personnel de direction*. They cease to be teachers and become career civil servants in administration. They undergo intensive training at the *Ecole Supérieure de l’Éducation Nationale* (ESEN).
- **Educational Level:** While the baseline is a Master’s, the legitimacy of the French leader comes from the *concours* and state training. In Greece, legitimacy is derived from the “objective” counting of degrees (PhD = 6 points). The Greek model results in more principals with Doctorates, but the French model results in a more cohesive administrative corps.

5.5.3 Finland: Pedagogical Autonomy and Trust

Finland, a high-performer in PISA and VET outcomes, presents a third model.

- **Universal Master’s:** In Finland, a Master’s degree is the *minimum requirement* for all permanent teachers. Therefore, **100%** of principals hold a Master’s degree. This makes the “Master’s” less of a differentiator than in Greece.
- **Leadership Certification:** To become a principal, one must possess a Certificate in Educational Administration authorized by the Finnish National Agency for Education (25 ECTS).
- **Comparison:** Greek data (69.3% Master’s) lags behind Finland’s 100% baseline. However, the Greek focus on PhDs is less prevalent in Finland, where the emphasis is on *pedagogical leadership* and autonomy. Finnish VET principals manage budgets and recruitment with freedoms Greek principals do not possess, requiring their education to be practical and applied.

5.5.4 Comparative Statistics (TALIS 2018 Data)

The OECD TALIS 2018 survey allows for a direct statistical comparison of school leaders (lower secondary, but indicative of the upper secondary VET profile due to unified selection criteria in many countries).

Table 3: Comparative Profile of School Principals (OECD TALIS 2018 & National Data)

Indicator	Greece	OECD Average	Finland	France
Principal holds a Master’s Degree (or equiv.)	~70% (National Data)	63%	>98%	High (Concours req.)
Principal holds a Doctoral Degree (PhD)	13.9% (Study Data)	Variable (Lower)	Low	Low

Indicator	Greece	OECD Average	Finland	France
Completed School Administration Training	Varied (Self-initiated)	54%	Mandatory	Mandatory (ESEN)
Instructional Leadership Training (pre-service)	Low	54%	High	High
Average Age	>55 Years	52 Years	50 Years	52 Years

Source: Synthesis of OECD TALIS 2018 results and Damianou et al. (2023).

Key Comparative Insight: Greece is an outlier in two respects:

1. **The “PhD Spike”:** Greece appears to have a disproportionately high number of principals with Doctorates compared to the functional requirements of the role in other countries. This is a rational response to the «moriodotisi» system.
2. **The Preparation Gap:** While highly educated academically, Greek principals often lack the *mandatory, state-provided pre-service induction* seen in France or the specific qualification seen in Finland/Germany. Their management training is often acquired voluntarily to gain points, rather than as a structural requirement of the job description.

6. CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS: THE “CREDENTIALISM” PARADOX

The analysis reveals a significant phenomenon in the Greek VET system: **Credentialism** (Greek: *Prosontologia*). The rigid legislative framework of Law 4823/2021 has succeeded in populating EPAL directorates with highly educated individuals. However, several critical issues arise from this “diploma-centric” approach.

6.1 The Relevance of Qualifications

A central critique is the disconnect between the subject of the degree and the needs of the Vocational School. A Principal with a PhD in “Byzantine History” or “Theoretical Physics” receives the same 6 points as one with a PhD in “Vocational Counseling” or “Apprenticeship Management”. While recent laws attempt to prioritize “relevant” degrees, the definition of relevance is often broad. Consequently, an EPAL may be led by a brilliant academic who lacks the specific competencies to negotiate with local chambers of commerce or manage complex workshop safety protocols—tasks inherent to VET leadership.

6.2 The “Brain Drain” and Over-Qualification

The economic crisis in Greece led to a freezing of appointments, creating a bottleneck where highly qualified individuals remained in the teaching ranks for years. When leadership positions opened, the competition was fierce, driving the “point threshold” ever higher. This has resulted in a form of **over-qualification**, where principals possess academic credentials far exceeding the requirements of their daily administrative tasks, which remain heavily bureaucratic and centralized. This mismatch can lead to job dissatisfaction or a feeling that their intellectual capital is underutilized in a system that allows little deviation from central ministry circulars.

6.3 Lack of Managerial Autonomy

European comparison highlights that high educational levels usually correlate with high professional autonomy (e.g., Finland, Netherlands). In Greece, however, EPAL directors are among the most educated in Europe but possess some of the lowest levels of decision-making power regarding budget, hiring, and curriculum. They are “highly educated bureaucrats” rather than “strategic leaders.” This creates a dissonance: the state demands PhD-level qualifications for a role that it structurally treats as a low-autonomy administrative function.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The educational level of Vocational Upper Secondary School (EPAL) directors in Greece stands as a testament to the high academic potential of the country’s public servants. With approximately **70% holding Master’s degrees** and nearly **14% possessing Doctorates**, Greek EPAL principals are, statistically, an elite group within the European educational landscape. This profile is the direct result of a legislative environment (Law 4823/2021) that uses academic degrees as the primary currency for professional advancement, creating a meritocratic yet rigid hierarchy based on “moriidotisi.”

However, the comparative analysis with Germany, France, and Finland suggests that high academic qualifications do not automatically equate to the specialized leadership required for Vocational Education. While European peers emphasize functional competence, vocational pedagogy, and professional autonomy, the Greek system prioritizes the objective accumulation of academic titles.

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3. Transforming the Leviathan: Modern Trends in the Training of Greek Civil Servants and European Comparative Perspectives (2020-2025)

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Abstract: This paper examines the radical transformation of Greek Public Administration training between 2020 and 2025, marking a shift from traditional bureaucracy to a digital-first “Executive State”. Driven by the “Digital Transformation Bible” and the “Greece 2.0” plan, civil servant training has evolved into a central pillar of national strategy. The study analyzes key developments, including the professionalization of senior officials through the new “Executive Branch”, the rapid digitalization of learning modalities accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and innovative public-private partnerships like the Microsoft Civil Servants Academy. Through a comparative analysis with France, Estonia, and Germany, the research highlights Greece’s successful “leapfrogging” in digital skills while identifying persistent challenges such as the “credentialism trap” and the need to foster a genuine culture of “learning organizations”

Keywords: Public Administration, Reform Digital Transformation, Civil Service Training, Executive State

1. INTRODUCTION: THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN GREEK PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The trajectory of Greek Public Administration (PA) over the quinquennium 2020-2025 represents a profound ontological shift, transitioning from a rigid, Weberian bureaucracy characterized by legalistic formalism to a nascent “Executive State” model driven by digital transformation and strategic human resource management. This period, demarcated by the immediate post-financial crisis recovery and the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitated a radical reimagining of how the state educates its workforce. The training of civil servants moved from the periphery of administrative routine to the epicenter of national strategy, acknowledged as the critical variable in the successful absorption of the European Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) funds and the implementation of the “Greece 2.0” plan.

Historically, the Greek civil service training landscape was fragmented, supply-driven, and often disconnected from the operational needs of the service. However, the introduction of the “Digital Transformation Bible 2020-2025” and the “Executive State” law (Law 4622/2019) introduced a demand-driven logic, where training is aligned with specific public policy goals: interoperability, digital citizenship, and green transition. This chapter provides an exhaustive analysis of these developments, exploring the structural, pedagogical, and technological evolutions in Greek civil service training. It situates these national reforms within the broader European context, offering a comparative analysis with leading EU administrations such as France, Germany, and Estonia. The central thesis posits that while Greece has achieved a mechanism of “leapfrogging” in digital infrastructure training through aggressive public-private partnerships and EU funding, challenges remain in deepening the culture of “learning organizations” and decentralizing skills development.

1.1 The “Digital Transformation Bible” as an Educational Blueprint

The “Digital Transformation Bible 2020-2025” serves not merely as a technical roadmap but as the foundational pedagogical document for the modern Greek state. Unlike previous modernization attempts that focused on hardware, the “Bible” explicitly categorizes digital skills as a prerequisite horizontal enabler for the digital state. It acknowledges a critical “digital skills gap” in the human capital of the public sector, which historically lagged behind the EU average in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI).

The strategy outlined in the Bible necessitates a shift from generalist administrative training to specialized technical upskilling. It mandates that civil servants are not just users of IT systems but active participants in a digital ecosystem involving interoperability, open data, and cybersecurity. The document operationalizes this through specific projects, such as the establishment of the “National Academy of Digital Competences,” designed to aggregate educational content and provide a unified learning pathway for public employees.

1.2 The “Executive State” and the Professionalization of Leadership

A defining characteristic of the 2019-2025 period is the legislative attempt to depoliticize and professionalize the upper echelons of the administration through the “Executive State” reform. This reform introduced the “Executive Branch” (Klados P.E. Epitelikon Stelechon), a dedicated corps of high-level civil servants recruited and trained to ensure continuity and expertise in policy-making, irrespective of political alternations.

This structural change necessitated a new training curriculum. The National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA) was tasked with designing a rigorous certification program for these executives. The curriculum marks a departure from traditional legal training, focusing instead on:

- **Public Policy Analysis:** Evidence-based policy making and impact assessment.
- **Legislative Drafting (Nomotechnics):** Standardizing the production of law to avoid polysemy and contradiction.
- **Digital Policy Analysis:** Understanding the governance of digital ecosystems.

This initiative draws explicit inspiration from the French administrative tradition, specifically the reforms of the *École Nationale d’Administration* (ENA) into the *Institut National du Service Public* (INSP). The collaboration between EKDDA and Expertise France to design this curriculum highlights the Europeanization of Greek administrative training.

2. THE DIGITAL LEAP: CRISIS AS CATALYST AND THE NEW TRAINING MODALITIES

2.1 The COVID-19 Shock and the Unfreezing of Resistance

Organizational change theories suggest that deep reform often requires an external shock to “unfreeze” institutional inertia. For Greek public administration training, the COVID-19 pandemic served as this catalyst. Prior to 2020, distance learning was marginal, viewed with skepticism regarding its efficacy and integrity. The imposition of lockdowns forced an immediate migration to remote modalities.

This transition was not merely technical but cultural. EKDDA and the Institute of Training (INEP) had to rapidly digitize their course catalogue. In 2020, for the first time, institutional frameworks were adjusted to recognize synchronous and asynchronous distance learning as equivalent to physical presence. This shift allowed for the continuity of training during the crisis but, more important-

ly, democratized access. Civil servants in remote islands and border regions, who previously faced logistical barriers to attending training in Athens or Thessaloniki, gained equal access to high-quality vocational education.

2.2 The Microsoft Civil Servants Academy: A Hybrid Model

Perhaps the most innovative disruption in the Greek training landscape was the establishment of the “Microsoft Civil Servants Academy” in 2021. This initiative, part of the “Gr for Growth” investment, represents a large-scale Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in the domain of civil service education—a rarity in the statist tradition of Greek administration.

The Academy aims to certify 20,000 civil servants in cloud technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and cybersecurity. This program signifies a pragmatic recognition by the Greek state: the internal mechanisms of EKDDA could not generate cutting-edge technological curriculum at the speed of the market. By partnering with a global tech giant, the state leapfrogged the curriculum development phase, offering immediate access to world-class certification.

Table 1: Key Metrics of the Microsoft Civil Servants Academy (2021-2024)

Metric	Description
Target Audience	Executive managers, ICT specialists, General administrative staff
Certification Goal	20,000 certified employees by 2025
Curriculum Focus	Cloud Computing (Azure), AI Fundamentals, Security Compliance
Integration	Certifications recognized in HRMS for career progression
Training Model	Hybrid (Self-paced online + Instructor-led virtual labs)

The implication of this partnership is profound. It introduces “vendor-specific” skills into the public sector, which, while efficient, raises questions about technological neutrality. However, given the ubiquity of Microsoft ecosystems in public administration, the immediate efficiency gains have been prioritized over theoretical neutrality concerns.

2.3 The Role of the IT Trainer: From Instructor to Change Agent

In this digitized environment, the profile of the trainer has evolved. The document analysis suggests that the modern IT trainer in the Greek public sector must function as a “Change Agent.” The curriculum is no longer just about “Hard Skills” (how to use the software) but “Soft Skills” (how to adapt to digital culture).

Trainers are tasked with bridging the gap between the hierarchical nature of the bureaucracy and the principles of **Andragogy** (adult learning). They must manage the “defensive routines” of older employees who fear digital obsolescence. By framing digital tools like *DocuTracks* or *Diavgeia* not just as compliance requirements but as tools for professional empowerment, trainers facilitate the cultural acceptance of the digital transformation.

2.4 The Emergence of Green Skills

While the digital transition has dominated the narrative, the period 2020-2025 also saw the nascent integration of “Green Skills” into the civil service training curriculum, driven by the European Green Deal and the RRF’s green transition pillars. The Public Employment Service (DYPA)

launched massive reskilling programs targeting 80,000 unemployed and employed individuals in green economy sectors, creating a spillover demand for green literacy within the public sector monitoring these projects.

EKDDA introduced specific thematic cycles on “Sustainable Development,” covering topics like Circular Economy, Energy Efficiency in Public Buildings, and Green Public Procurement (GPP). This training is crucial because public administration is the largest consumer in the economy; training procurement officers in green criteria can have immediate market-shaping effects.

2.5 GreenComp Implementation

Greece is in the early stages of adopting the European sustainability competence framework (**GreenComp**). Unlike digital skills, which have a clear technical definition (DigComp), green skills are often transversal and value-based. The integration of GreenComp into the Greek curriculum involves training civil servants to “envision sustainable futures” and understand “interconnectedness,” moving beyond simple compliance with environmental laws to proactive sustainable management. Academic research indicates that Greek vocational teachers and trainers often feel unprepared for this shift, highlighting a need for “train-the-trainer” programs specifically focused on sustainability pedagogies.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: GREECE VS. EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS

To understand the magnitude and direction of the Greek reforms, it is essential to juxtapose them against established European models.

3.1 Greece vs. France: The Elite Training Model

The reform of the Greek “Executive Branch” is a direct emulation of the French model, specifically the *Institut National du Service Public* (INSP, formerly ENA).

- **France:** The French model is characterized by a rigorous, centralized selection and training of a generalist elite. The recent “Common Core” reform in France mandates that all senior civil servants, regardless of their corps, must be trained in the secular values of the Republic, digital transition, and ecological transition.
- **Greece:** Greece has adopted the structure (a specific branch for executives) and the rigor (AI-proctored exams). However, the Greek model is still in its infancy. While France has a centuries-old tradition of the “Grand Corps,” Greece is attempting to construct this institutional memory from scratch in a few years. The collaboration with Expertise France for the curriculum design ensures high standards but implementing this in a clientelist-prone system remains the primary challenge.

3.2 Greece vs. Estonia: Digital Culture vs. Digital Shock

- **Estonia:** The Estonian model represents the gold standard of digital government. Training there is continuous and embedded in a culture where “digital” is the default. The Estonian “Digital State Academy” focuses on high-level digital leadership and service design, assuming basic digital literacy is already present.
- **Greece:** In contrast, Greece is in a “catch-up” phase. The training strategy is characterized by “violent digitalization”—rapid, massive scale upskilling to raise the baseline. Where Estonia refines sophisticated skills, Greece must still invest heavily in basic digital literacy (DigComp levels 1-3) for a large portion of its aging workforce. The Greek approach is more centralized and top-down (via the Digital Bible), whereas the Estonian model relies more on a distributed digital culture.

3.3 Greece vs. Germany: Federalism and Standardization

- **Germany:** The German *Federal Digital Academy* (BAkōV) operates within a federal structure, offering flexible, hybrid learning that emphasizes “New Work” and cultural change alongside technical skills.
- **Greece:** Greece’s system is highly centralized through EKDDA. While this allows for rapid deployment of uniform standards (e.g., one certification system for the whole country), it lacks the flexibility of the German system to adapt to local state needs. However, the centralization in Greece has proven advantageous in rolling out the unified *gov.gr* platform training, avoiding the fragmentation often seen in federal systems.

Table 2: Comparative Overview of Civil Service Training Models

Feature	Greece (2020-2025)	France (INSP)	Estonia (Digital Academy)
Primary Driver	Recovery Fund (RRF) & Crisis Response	Republican Values & Elite Consolidation	Digital-First Culture & Efficiency
Digital Training	Massive upskilling (Microsoft Academy)	Integrated into leadership curriculum	Advanced Service Design & Data Governance
Leadership Model	New «Executive Branch» (Depoliticization attempt)	Established «Grand Corps» (Generalist Elite)	Competency-based Top Civil Service
Key Innovation	AI-proctored mass exams; Private sector partnerships	Common Core Curriculum (Green/Digital/Values)	Micro-learning modules; Digital Leadership
Green Skills	Emerging; Project-based (DYPA)	Mandatory core module	Integrated into digital service sustainability

4. PEDAGOGICAL TRENDS: THE SHIFT TO THE “LEARNING ORGANIZATION”

4.1 Andragogy and Adult Learning Principles

The modernization of the Greek curriculum reflects a deeper pedagogical shift. The traditional “seminar” model—lecture-based and theoretical—is being replaced by workshops, case studies, and problem-based learning. This aligns with the principles of **Andragogy**, which posit that adult learners are self-directed and motivated by the immediate applicability of knowledge to their job functions.¹⁵

Training programs now increasingly utilize “Blended Learning” (mixed methods), combining synchronous tele-education with asynchronous study on platforms like Moodle. This flexibility respects the time constraints of working adults and allows for self-paced learning, a crucial factor for modern civil servants balancing increasing workloads.¹⁰

4.2 The Rise of Soft Skills

A significant trend in the last five years is the reevaluation of **Soft Skills**. In a highly digitized environment, skills such as empathy, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and remote team management have become critical. EKDDA has introduced modules on “Well-being,” “Resilience,” and “Change Management”.²⁹ This acknowledges that the bottlenecks in administrative reform are often psychological (resistance to change) rather than technical.

4.3 Challenges and Critical Assessment

Despite the impressive progress, structural pathologies persist.

- **Fragmentation:** While the *gov.gr* interface is unified, the back-office systems of various ministries often remain fragmented. Training civil servants on interoperability is difficult when the underlying systems themselves are not fully interoperable.³
- **The Certification Trap:** The Greek system places immense weight on “certification points” (*moiiodotisi*) for promotion. This can lead to a culture of “credentialism,” where civil servants attend training solely to gather points rather than to acquire skills. Contrast this with the competency-based progression in Northern Europe, where demonstrated performance often outweighs formal certificates.³⁰
- **Demographics:** The aging profile of the Greek civil service presents a barrier to digital upskilling. “Reskilling” a workforce near retirement age requires different pedagogical strategies than training “digital natives,” a nuance that mass training programs sometimes miss.³¹

5. CONCLUSION

The period 2020-2025 marks a decisive turn in the history of Greek public administration training. Driven by the twin engines of the “Digital Transformation Bible” and the “Executive State” reform, Greece has moved from a laggard position to a dynamic adopter of modern training practices. The strategic use of RRF funding to establish initiatives like the Microsoft Civil Servants Academy and the Executive Branch training pipeline demonstrates a newfound agility and willingness to experiment with hybrid public-private models.

When compared to Europe, Greece is effectively converging with EU standards in terms of curriculum content (DigComp, GreenComp) and methodology (e-learning). However, the distinction lies in the depth of the culture of learning. While countries like Estonia and France have mature, embedded systems of continuous development, Greece is still in the process of institutionalizing these reforms against a backdrop of historical bureaucratic inertia.

The future success of these initiatives will depend on moving beyond the quantitative metrics of “number of certified employees” to qualitative measures of administrative impact. The challenge for the next quinquennium will be to transform the newly acquired individual skills into organizational capabilities, creating a public service that is not just trained, but truly transformed.

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4. Review of modern practices in teachers' evaluation in Europe and in Greece

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Abstract: A major problem of last year's educational policy in European countries is the evaluation of teachers. The question is not only if they should be evaluated but also how it should be done. There have been researchers that have tried to examine the effect of evaluation in teachers' performance and the methods that have been used. It seems that the only way that educational systems used in the past in order to evaluate teachers were the headmaster's observation of classes. However it seems to exist plenty of new aspects that we should take under consideration in order to evaluate teachers, such as: logistical infrastructure and new technologies, qualitative adequacy and differentiated teaching, organization of school life and self-evaluation, planning of teaching materials. This review aims to show how modern practices can improve teachers' evaluation in Europe and in Greece. Finally, we have concluded that modern educational practices can help governments to establish an up to date way of evaluating teachers. There are good reasons to expect that well-designed teacher-evaluation programs could have a direct and lasting effect on individual teacher performance. In this way, institutional management can be improved and schools can become more effective.

Keywords: new technologies, teachers' evaluation, policy of evaluation, evaluation in Europe, evaluation in Greece

1. INTRODUCTION: TEACHERS' EVALUATION IN HISTORY

There is no doubt that teachers' evaluation is an important topic for discussion between the academic society of Greece and Europe in general. It seems that the only way that educational systems used in the past in order to evaluate teachers were the headmaster's observation of classes. Specifically, before World War II, teachers' evaluation was not very popular because it was a common belief that students were responsible for their learning. During the Victorian Era, started the first organized program of evaluation. This was an initiative of English government that aimed to categorize teachers worldwide, depending on their assessment's results and reward them accordingly(Clark, 1993). Between World War II and 1970's, the idea of teachers' evaluation was predominant and it was based on the results of student's performance. After 1970's, the evaluation was based on certificates, seminars and other academic competences. However there is a gap in the literature in last year's researches and especially in modern practices (Colby, 2002). Modern practices are mostly based on four aspects. First of all, the logistical infrastructure. New buildings technologically advanced educational tools as tablets, laptops, internet connection and well equipped classrooms. It is well known that new technologies have affected all aspects of human lives. As a conclusion, it is clear that new technologies contribute also to the educational system. There are hardware and applications that teachers can use to stimulate their students and make teaching more interesting. That is why an important aspect of logistical infrastructure is if teachers use new technologies during their classes (Looney, 2011). Secondly, the qualitative adequacy of teachers based on years of service, academic studies and service status. Europe is a multicultural continent, as a result schools consist of different types of students. That's

why, in this second index, teachers are evaluated based on their capacity of differentiated teaching. Thirdly, the organization of school life through appropriate decision-making and self-evaluation of the educational project. Recent decades have witnessed a remarkable rise in the regulation of public services and servants, education being a case in point (Peterson, 2000). External evaluation and inspection has been an important element of this trend. Increasingly, however as the limitations of external surveillance systems have become clear the concept of internal or self-evaluation has grown in importance (Taylor, 2012).

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to proceed with this review we have used global scientific databases, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC and JSTOR. We used key words such as “evaluation of teachers”, “educational evaluation”, “and new educational technologies”, “new technologies and evaluation”, “policy of teachers’ evaluation”. We categorized our results in date order and by considering the impact factor of each one. Afterwards we examined the papers with detail and we gather all the information appropriate for our work. So in this paper we present a systemic review of teachers’ evaluation in Europe and in Greece.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Modern practices of teachers’ evaluation

As we have already said, there are many new methods for teachers’ evaluation nowadays. In this study we will present some of them. The basic aspects we take into consideration when evaluating teachers are the logistical infrastructure that is available at each school, and the use of new technological tools, the qualitative adequacy of teachers regarding their abilities, motivation experience e.t.c. and their ability to organise the school life and contribute to school climate.

3.1.1 Logistical infrastructure and new technologies

The quality of education depends on both intangible and tangible inputs, such as infrastructure and the various factors that influence it. When it comes to quality within a school, the concept is more complicated and includes a range of characteristics, making it challenging enough to define or apply in a uniform way. The term «quality in education» has not been clearly defined on a conceptual, institutional, or even ideological level. However, there appears to be a greater emphasis on aspects related to continuous improvement (Murillo, 2011).

Several elements contribute to defining educational quality, including: alignment with set objectives, the conditions that foster knowledge construction, the administrative framework of a country, the financial resources available for education, and the prevailing school culture (Barrett, 2019). The physical environment where teaching and learning take place plays a significant role in determining their effectiveness. This is especially true for younger children, where the quality and layout of the school space can influence their development by offering motives and opportunities for interaction. Such environments encourage communication, not just with others, but also with the environment (Cuesta, 2016).

Moreover, there is a notable correlation between the quality of the educational setting and student academic success or failure. This is particularly relevant in the Greek school system, which often struggles to accommodate social diversity, unique needs, and expectations that deviate from the traditional student archetype (Paraskevopoulos, 2013).

Therefore, the rational design of educational facilities should consider key criteria and standards to ensure a safe, pedagogically sound learning environment that fully supports the educational process. Research that captures the perspectives of teachers, students, parents, specialists (such as educators, psychologists, sociologists, and architects), as well as policymakers, contributes significantly to shaping a comprehensive understanding of school design.

3.1.2 Qualitative adequacy

Key Factors Influencing Learning and Teaching Effectiveness

Abilities: Teaching becomes more effective when it identifies and enhances both the general and specific abilities of students. General abilities are associated with intelligence, while specific ones relate to particular attitudes, such as music, painting, dance, etc. (Gursoy, 2005)

Motivation: Motivation refers to the conscious or unconscious factors that stimulate, maintain, regulate, support, and direct an individual's behavior toward a goal. The learning process is significantly influenced and reinforced by the motivational drivers behind human behavior (Hamdan, 2015).

Readiness: The term «readiness» refers to the physiological and anatomical maturity required for learning, along with the presence of sufficient prior experiences that are deemed necessary for acquiring new competencies (Mbarek, 2013). Characteristic example is the readiness of teachers towards new technologies. During pandemic, for example, a lot of teachers were not ready to use e-learning tools for their classes.

Experience: Experience is the dynamic combination of impressions, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and skills. It relates to what we live and perceive through the engagement of our senses, emotions, and cognitive processes (Yao, 2023). Practical period during university studies, should be mandatory for all students from pedagogical universities, in order to help new teachers gain more experience.

Adaptation: Adaptation refers to an individual's ability to live in harmony with their environment while preserving their personal integrity. When a student successfully adapts to the school environment, they become an integrated part of it and can actively engage in the learning process (Carasco, 1996). The adaptation is a very important factor, especially in our society which is a multicultural one.

Method: A teaching method is the pathway through which educational objectives are achieved. There is no single method suitable for all cases, students, or teachers, as goals vary, the nature of the subject matter differs, and students have diverse levels and personalities. The success or failure of a teaching method depends on several factors, with the teacher's skill, pedagogical choices, student engagement, and alignment between instructional goals and the chosen method playing a critical role (Alza, 2025).

3.1.3 Organization of school life and school climate

One of the key characteristics of an effective school and an effective teacher is a positive school climate. Therefore, we can assume that there is a strong relationship between the working atmosphere and the overall performance of the school. In fact, the effective operation of a school, like any organization, is facilitated when there is productive collaboration between the principal and the teaching staff, good communication between teachers and students, and when the individual needs of educators are acknowledged and met (Anderson, 1982).

In other words, healthy interpersonal relationships within the school community play a crucial role and positively impact the functioning of the school. Conversely, a negative or oppressive school climate creates a sense of deterioration and disappointment. It adversely affects the quality of teaching provided by educators and ultimately undermines the effectiveness of the school as a whole. The emotional atmosphere within a school can generate both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. These, in

turn, influence teachers' emotional well-being and motivation to carry out their duties, which inevitably impacts student performance. Schools that foster a positive working environment—characterized by collegiality among staff, strong teacher-student collaboration, and a clearly defined action plan—tend to function more effectively (Zullig, 2018).

Factors Influencing School Climate

As mentioned earlier, climate can be seen as the personality of the school organization, which is shaped and influenced by its structure and subsystems. According to the literature, the main factors affecting school climate include:

Organizational Structure: It is argued that the more standardized and rigid the tasks assigned to individuals by an organization, the more strict and threatening the working climate becomes. In contrast, when employees—teachers, in this case—are granted autonomy and freedom, and leadership shows genuine concern for their needs, the work environment becomes much more favorable (Hoy, 1990).

Size of the School: the size of the organization, including schools, is a major factor influencing its climate. A related study found that smaller schools tend to foster a more open and positive climate compared to larger institutions.

External Environment: the external environment—economic, technological, and other external factors—plays a dynamic role in shaping both the structure and climate of a school (Thapa, 2013).

Individual Differences: Schools are made up of individuals with diverse characteristics, including gender, age, education level, years of experience, and personal ambitions (Wang, 2016).

Therefore, the emotional states and aspirations of staff significantly influence the overall school climate. When there is a disconnect between the personal expectations of teachers and the actual working environment, this often leads to dissatisfaction and a decline in morale.

3.2 Evaluation of Educational Work in Europe

In May 2006, an ENTEP meeting was held in Nicosia, Cyprus, focusing on the theme Teacher Evaluation in Europe. Representatives of each ENTEP member country shared information about how teacher evaluation is carried out in their education systems (entep.eu). As earlier sections have shown, teacher evaluation practices vary widely across Europe.

Evaluation systems differ in emphasis: some nations rely heavily on structures imposed from above—such as inspectorates—and others employ more internal forms, including school-level or individual self-evaluation. The term “evaluation” itself can refer either to assessing individual teachers (often through external bodies) or to appraising an entire school, which includes teacher performance among other factors. In many nations, external evaluation remains central. Inspectorates play a key role: in places like France and Cyprus they report directly to national ministries; in countries such as Spain or Austria, inspections may be handled by regional agencies (Isore, 2009). Some countries, for example Sweden, involve both national and local authorities. In these systems, classroom visits and lesson observations are often core components of inspection. Performance indicators such as student outcomes or results in national testing are frequently used as part of external evaluation. In several countries – including the UK, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Estonia – teacher evaluation is heavily tied to these results. In some cases, the criteria and indicators designed by central authorities serve both for external evaluation by ministries and for guiding school self-evaluation. A probation or induction period—such as those in Portugal, Cyprus, Greece, and the UK—serves as an external evaluation for newly entering teachers, assessing whether they meet externally-defined criteria to become fully qualified (Grek, 2009).

Many educational systems have developed internal evaluation systems to complement external oversight. In Hungary, Sweden, and the Czech Republic, for instance, school self-evaluation is an established process. Headteachers in countries such as Belgium, Greece, Lithuania, Austria, Romania, and Sweden often take responsibility for evaluating the teachers in their schools. In the Netherlands, the school head's individual evaluation of teachers is widespread. In Latvia, evaluation is carried out by heads of teaching departments. Large schools in the UK may use hierarchical evaluation: the headteacher assesses the management team, which in turn evaluates classroom teachers. In Ireland, "whole-school evaluation" approaches are employed to assess all aspects of school performance. In Sweden, all public schools prepare annual self-evaluation reports framed around centrally designed criteria and indicators; a similar model is followed in Ireland. In Luxembourg, formal school evaluation applies in secondary education, and the school principal evaluates teachers. Meanwhile, in Malta, schools follow a school development plan which is reviewed and assessed each year. Hungary incorporates annual self-evaluations by the teacher community as a part of its school quality assurance systems (Nevo, 2006)

Individual self-evaluation is promoted in several countries as a way to foster ongoing professional growth from within. For example, in Iceland, self-evaluation is the primary method of teacher evaluation. In other countries it supplements external evaluations (Hendriks, 2010). In the Czech Republic and Estonia, self-evaluation includes assessment of teacher performance. Some systems allow schools to use ministry-developed frameworks for self-evaluation. In Hungary, self-evaluation schemes are part of the school's internal quality assurance. In Austria, principals encourage teachers to focus on student achievement rather than only on teacher performance—this is more advisory than evaluative (Hatzikakou, 2010). In Finland, teacher autonomy is emphasized heavily: teachers are largely responsible for their own professional development. In Estonia, career stages (novice, teacher, advanced teacher, expert) are defined, each with distinct evaluation criteria. Common tools in individual teacher evaluation include teacher portfolios, which trace professional growth from initial training through continuing development—used in places like Estonia to encourage self-reflection (Gadusova, 2016). Peer evaluation is less widespread; it occurs in Greece (where school advisers sometimes evaluate teachers) and in Slovenia (through teachers' councils composed of teachers of similar level and subjects). Financial incentives tied to evaluation exist in a few countries—Belgium, Bulgaria, Portugal, and the UK, for example—often through performance management systems. In Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania, bonus systems are in place. Also, continuous professional development (courses, in-service training, seminars) may serve as indirect evaluation in countries such as Malta, Cyprus, and Portugal (Schwarz, 2004).

3.3 Evaluation of Educational Work in Greece

The evaluation of educational practices in Greece operates within a specific institutional framework. Several national laws are referenced as pivotal checkpoints in shaping how educational work and teachers are assessed. The term "educational work" was introduced during the 1980s as part of an effort to redefine the content and scope of educational evaluation. Literature often cites Law 1566/85 as the moment when the term became official in Greek education policy.

Further developments followed. A 1988 Presidential Decree linked the evaluation of educational work to the "collective and participatory efforts of teachers within particular school settings." Later, Presidential Decree 320/1993 defined educational work evaluation as the assessment of the quality of education being delivered as a whole. In 1998, the specific objectives of educational evaluation

were articulated, emphasizing the improvement and qualitative enhancement of all participants in the educational process (Magopoulos, 2023).

The history of educational evaluation in Greece is long and complex. It began in the 19th century. Initially, evaluations were assigned to individuals or committees; subsequently, they became the domain of school inspectors. The inspectorate was among the longest-standing institutions in Greek education. Law 1304/1982 replaced the inspectorate with the institution of the School Counselor. The abolition of the inspector's role in general education marked the symbolic end of a particular example of teacher oversight and opened a search for new models more fitting to modern schooling and Greek society (Matsopoulos, 2018).

Under P.D. 320/1993 (“Evaluation of Teachers’ Work in Primary and Secondary Education”), school principals and School Counselors were designated as the primary evaluators. With Law 2327/1995, the Center for Educational Research was established to support research in education, especially in areas like organizational development, teaching methods, and continuous training; the National Council of Education was also founded to advise the government on education policy across all levels. Law 3848/2010, titled “Upgrading the role of the teacher – Establishment of evaluation and meritocracy rules in education,” laid out the procedures for planning and evaluating school units, and defined the authorities responsible for drafting and publicizing action programs and evaluation reports. One year later, Law 3966/2011 introduced evaluation mechanisms specifically for Model Experimental Schools, institutionalized through the Institute of Educational Policy (Matsopoulos, 2018).

By 2012, a ministerial decision defined criteria for the evaluation of principals and teachers in Model Experimental Schools. In 2013, additional instruments and legal texts were published: a ministerial decision (15/03/2013) regarding school selfevaluation, Presidential Decree 152/5112013 for teacher evaluation. These documents define the purpose, scope, legal framework, and procedures for evaluating educational work at the school unit level, as well as the supportive structures and supervisory bodies at regional and central levels. The Presidential Decree stipulates that teacher evaluation be based on five categories, each with a specific weight: educational environment, interpersonal relations, expectations, classroom climate, and classroom organization (Papakonstantinou, 2019).

Most recently, Ministerial Decision 108906/ΓΔ4/2021— in reference to Laws 4692/2020 and 4823/2021 — regulates the internal and external evaluation of school units with regard to their educational work. According to Article 1, its goal is to elevate the quality of education through a dynamic process involving the entire school community, identifying both strengths and weaknesses. The school unit plays the central role in planning educational work, executing improvement actions, and designing initiatives to enhance pedagogical, learning, administrative, and professional functions (Brouskelis, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

As it was made clear above, teachers’ evaluation is an important aspect of schools and education in general. In recent years, a shift has been observed in most European countries from the evaluation of individuals to the evaluation of systems, alongside a strong trend towards adopting internal evaluation methods at the school unit level. External evaluation functions complementarily, supporting the school in its process of selfevaluation. There is also a recognized need for the qualitative upgrading of education, along with trends toward the decentralization of school operations based on the logic and principles of economics and production. In other words, emphasis is placed on the development of the school unit where internal evaluation and teacher selfevaluation shape a different culture within the

school, one in which teacher participation strengthens their professional identity. In order to evaluate properly the school stuff though, we have to take under consideration aspects as the school infrastructure, the organization of school life and school climate and the qualitative adequacy of teachers. We live in a society where new technologies play a significant role in school life, so teachers' evaluation must be done in an appropriate and up to date manner.

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5. The role of secondary school principals as leaders in the introduction, implementation and diffusion of innovations

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Abstract: This article explores the relationship between environmental leadership and innovation. It examines the leadership attitudes and practices of school principals in relation to the introduction and implementation of innovative actions in education. In particular, it analyzes the leadership profile of the principal who supports the introduction and effective implementation of innovative practices, as well as the ways in which such leadership influences teachers' overall perceptions of innovation. Furthermore, the study investigates leadership-related factors that hinder the introduction, implementation, and promotion of innovative teaching practices. Inhibiting factors include the absence of vision, strategic planning, clearly defined goals, incentives for teachers, and the creation of a safe school climate by the principal, as well as the principal's inability to transform the school into a learning organization through the organization of processes for teachers' professional training and specialization. At the same time, the most significant negative factor related to teachers is the lack of willingness to undertake pioneering initiatives due to fear of the "unknown." Finally, distributive and transformational leadership styles were found to demonstrate a positive attitude toward the school's innovative activity, particularly when appropriate leadership practices are combined with support for innovation.

Keywords: educational leadership, leadership attitudes, educational innovation, lifelong learning

1. INTRODUCTION

In the following sections, a literature-based analysis and discussion of the topics addressed in this article is undertaken. Initially, the importance of the principal's role in relation to innovative actions is examined, as one of the key determinants of innovation. The article then concludes—emphasizing its primary aim—by presenting a literature review of the characteristics and practices of leaders who promote innovation, including an analytical description of various leadership types for which research evidence indicates that they support and consolidate the introduction, implementation, and institutionalization of innovations in schools. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the situation in Greece regarding the implementation of innovations.

2. WAYS TO INTRODUCE INNOVATIONS IN EDUCATION

A change implemented within the classroom can be transformed into an innovative action when it is linked to the needs, problems, and objectives of the school organization. Such a change may also lead either to the restructuring of the school as a small organization or to a radical reform of the educational system, provided that the implementation of changes and innovations is disseminated on a broader scale. This constitutes a bottom-up, non-standardized process of innovation and change, which is most often supported by the voluntary involvement of teachers. However, it is very likely to exhibit a lower degree of implementation and diffusion, particularly in highly centralized educational systems, such as the Greek one. (Ramirez-Montoya, 2020).

2.1

In centralized systems, changes and restructurings usually occur through top-down processes, based on a broad national plan of a compulsory nature; for this reason, a significant degree of diffusion may be observed. The central educational system designs and promotes innovations that tend to aim at incremental rather than substantial changes in teaching and learning practices. In top-down innovation processes, the promotion of innovative strategies by educational authorities is not always mandatory; it may also be optional. It becomes compulsory when it is imposed, for example, through legislation enacted by the Ministry of Education and aims at the broader transformation of specific aspects of teaching practice.

2.2 Characteristics, culture, and practices of the innovation leader

The examination of the leadership profile and style of a principal who adopts a positive stance toward innovation and simultaneously lays the foundations for its sustainable and long-term diffusion in contemporary schools begins with an exploration of the leader's distinctive personal characteristics, behavioral patterns, attitudes, and culture, as well as the methods employed in relation to teachers and students, who constitute integral members of innovation implementation. Furthermore, a principal who promotes innovation demonstrates willingness, enthusiasm, and optimism regarding the success of their efforts and channels their energy toward achieving their goals with determination and confidence, while displaying a high level of self-efficacy. Such a leader firmly believes that every problem has a solution and shows a strong sense of sensitivity and care for all members of the educational community—teachers, students, parents or guardians, and the local community. They are progressive and open to new perceptions, ideas, practices, and mindsets, consistently supporting dialogue and collaboration with colleagues. By approaching challenges with a sense of humor, they foster motivation, exploration, a spirit of adventure, and passion for everything new and innovative. (Ngema & Lekhetho, 2019).

2.3 Ways of thinking and data analysis of the innovation leader

The school leader is characterized by creative data analysis and deep situational insight, focusing more on processes than on the outcomes of actions. Their thinking is further enriched by the exploration of the underlying truth of issues and by multidimensional approaches to problem solving. The leader readily assumes responsibility for potential shortcomings, failures, and mistakes, while simultaneously analyzing data in order to identify the most effective solutions. They demonstrate a heightened sense of responsibility and awareness regarding appropriate preparation, both at the personal and organizational level, prior to the initiation of any innovative endeavor. The leader engages in continuous evaluation and the generation of new ideas and alternative methods aimed at achieving successful outcomes. Moreover, they consistently adopt a critical perspective on all processes through a culture of dialogue, communication, and collaboration.

2.4 Key characteristics of the exercise of leadership by the school leader

The exercise of authority by a school leader who embodies the aforementioned characteristics is grounded in five fundamental principles:

1. a moral purpose that plays a transformative and foundational role in changes within the school system;
2. an understanding of the pathway toward change, enabling the leader to persuade all stakeholders involved in the educational process of the necessity of introducing innovative actions and strategies;

3. the establishment of a dialogical climate among diverse—and in many cases opposing—views, attitudes, individuals, or groups;
4. the creation of knowledge and structures that support the internal diffusion of lifelong learning; and
5. the development of a collaborative and harmonious climate through the creation of innovations and their alignment with the school’s vision, with creativity as both a guiding principle and a goal, and with the broader conception of the school community as a learning organization that does not remain static but is mobilized and activated for its advancement through the introduction and implementation of changes, methods, and their evaluation.

Within this organizational framework, and through appropriate administrative and leadership decisions, the prevailing climate appears to support the principal’s capacity, as a leader, to move beyond the mere management and administration of school issues and problems toward the exercise of leadership guided by innovation and its long-term implementation. This transition reflects future-oriented leadership perspectives, through which the principal communicates with and demonstrates awareness of social, economic, technological, and pedagogical contexts. Acting as an educational intellectual, and with a central focus on a culture of change, the principal transforms the school organization—individuals, groups, and collective bodies—into a dynamic organism of continuous renewal, learning, innovation, and improvement, thereby emerging as a leader of change, progress, and innovation. (Ramirez-Montoya, 2020).

2.5 Types of innovations

At this point, it is useful to provide a specialized overview of the various types of innovations that can be implemented in schools, depending on their content, purpose, methods, tools employed, and target groups. Innovation refers to any organized application of new practices aimed at restructuring the school and the educational system, as well as to unplanned or non-systematic changes within the educational system.

Innovations may be categorized according to their sources of funding (private or public organizations), the domains in which they are introduced (teaching, administration, learning processes, school culture, and school climate), as well as the nature of their implementation and execution.

Innovations are further classified into primary and secondary innovations. Primary (first-order) innovations involve superficial and incremental changes aimed at addressing problems, based on the assumption that the existing structure and organizational goals of the school are sufficient for dealing with such issues; thus, changes in practices and policies are considered adequate (Inbar, 1996).

By contrast, secondary (second-order) innovations entail deeper changes at the level of achieving organizational goals. They are driven by a central vision that can be realized only through the modification of the school organization’s goals and purposes. Moreover, they focus on transforming traditional roles, relationships, and modes of action into innovative solutions capable of addressing complex and persistent problems.

2.5.1 Process of implementing innovations

The process of change is distinguished into three phases: introduction, implementation, and “institutionalization,” that is, the manner in which innovative actions are assimilated into everyday teaching practice and into the organizational structure of the school unit and its members. In this way, their sustainability is ensured, and they gradually function as permanent institutions within the school organization. The stage preceding the institutionalization of innovative practices includes the evalua-

tion of the overall process, which provides the necessary feedback for its continuation and long-term improvement. The outcome of this process is the production of positive results across all aspects of education, with the ultimate aim of enhancing student learning. This constitutes the major challenge, whereby, through a bidirectional process, improvement is achieved in the school organization's capacity to introduce, assimilate, implement, and successfully consolidate changes and innovative actions.

(Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002) present this same process of change in a metaphorical manner, likening the process of change and innovation implementation to a sea voyage that includes beauty, exploration, but also risks and turbulence. The phases they describe are as follows: selection of destination, establishment of goals and vision for departure, introduction and initiation of innovative actions, encouragement of the crew through professional development, implementation of innovations at ports of call with evaluation and feedback, assistance at sea ("not alone at sea"), and the consolidation of supportive mechanisms.

Nevertheless, regardless of the description adopted, all models of the change process share common elements: the inspiration of a vision, the promotion and strengthening of efforts toward professional development and teacher training, and the creation of supportive mechanisms. These characteristics advance the process of change, reduce concerns, threats, uncertainty, and negative attitudes among educational stakeholders, while simultaneously fostering commitment to both the goals and the process itself.

2.5.2 Factors influencing the introduction, diffusion, and institutionalization of innovative actions

Initially, influential factors include the mode and field of application, the source of funding, and the origin of innovations, as well as the method by which they are introduced into school organizations. These factors interact with the speed of implementation, the scale of the innovative action, and its distance from traditional practice. Such interaction often encounters obstacles and resistance from members of the school organization, affecting both effectiveness and the degree of diffusion.

Moreover, numerous studies agree that additional significant factors—interacting with those mentioned above and influencing effectiveness and diffusion—relate to school climate and culture. These emerge from communication and relationships among educational staff, as well as from shared values, perceptions, and beliefs regarding the goals and vision of the school unit. This factor may either facilitate or hinder efforts to implement change and innovation. Another influential factor concerns opportunities for professional development and training provided to teachers, as well as the structural organization of the school unit, since limited or nonexistent structural flexibility may lead to rejection and the complete failure of innovative practices.

Teachers' readiness, receptiveness, and activation regarding the adoption of new methods and practices also play a critical role. Such readiness is closely linked to their professional development, familiarity with change processes, and attitudes and culture toward change and innovation. Furthermore, the professional climate and the shared history of teachers and the school principal as a team are significant, as are their perceptions and self-perceptions as professionals, their professional values and principles, professional identity, levels of professionalism, and their sense of efficacy in promoting student engagement and achieving positive learning outcomes. Staff experience and stability within the school unit are also influential.

Additionally, factors related to the nature of the school itself and to its internal and external environments must be considered. These include broader characteristics of the external environment, such as demographic factors, the social and economic characteristics of the local community, the degree to

which innovative applications align with the needs, demands, and challenges of the school's external context, and the level of support provided by the external environment and the local community for such initiatives.

Significant influence is also exerted by the internal characteristics of the school unit, including its size. Finally, the characteristics of the innovation itself are crucial: its complexity, scope, degree of compatibility with the school context, capacity for diffusion, clarity, relative advantage compared to traditional practices, effectiveness in addressing specific problems, the benefits it offers, and the extent to which it aligns with the organization's vision. Nevertheless, the diffusion of innovative practices and the continuous, organized focus of educational stakeholders on promoting and sustaining these processes over time—so that innovative institutions become firmly embedded in school practice—remain an ongoing challenge for the school community.

Above all, the sustainability and institutionalization of innovative actions presuppose support and positive reinforcement from all stakeholders of the school unit, both internal (such as the principal and teachers) and external (such as parents, the state, financial mechanisms, and social agencies). This support must be consistent across all phases of the change and innovation process, through the promotion of secure mechanisms that maintain changes even after the individuals who initiated and implemented them move on. This condition is closely linked to the creation of a climate of acceptance and awareness of the urgent need for innovation, the development of shared progressive beliefs and values, and the cultivation of a culture supportive of change—outcomes that stem from the administrative and leadership practices of the school principal. It is directly connected to leadership centered on the sustainable promotion of innovation, as well as to the principal's characteristics and practices, which are analyzed in subsequent sections. (Ngema, & Lekhetho, 2019).

2.5.3 Barriers to the introduction and implementation of innovations

All the characteristics and components mentioned above, depending on how they exert their influence, may function either as supportive mechanisms for introducing and implementing innovations in schools or as challenges that give rise to problems and barriers, thereby delaying or effectively undermining innovative perspectives and their educational and administrative outcomes. Specifically, a hostile educational climate, the absence of opportunities for professional advancement and training, rigid and traditional school structures, teachers' negative attitudes toward change, lack of communication, teamwork, and collegiality as a result of an unhealthy professional atmosphere, as well as instability of teaching staff, constitute major obstacles to the introduction and implementation of innovations.

Furthermore, several inhibiting factors are identified and summarized below. First, differing views regarding what constitutes innovation and what can transform the school environment—despite theoretical agreement on the need for innovative practices—often hinder the introduction and implementation of a wide range of innovations. When combined with insufficient information and lack of training for teachers and school principals, such initiatives frequently fail. In many cases, their fragmented implementation—both in relation to one another and to the real needs and everyday realities of the school—leads to the suspension of their application and diffusion. (Verawati & Hartono, 2020).

Additionally, competitive tendencies among innovations regarding funding sources may arise, ultimately resulting in none receiving the resources or attention required for proper implementation. Poor planning and hasty organization constitute another barrier; rather than effectively addressing specific areas and systemic weaknesses of the school unit, innovations may impose additional—and often meaningless—workloads on teachers. Finally, and most importantly, negative attitudes and per-

ceptions among teachers toward innovations frequently stem from psychological factors, including spontaneous resistance to any novelty or change that disrupts established roles, as well as the belief that “changes are made for the sake of change,” without planning or realism. Such changes are often perceived as an additional burden rather than as solutions or responses to contemporary challenges and persistent problems in education. This factor is highlighted as particularly inhibiting to innovation and change.

3. THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN THE INTRODUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIONS

3.1 Central Role and Responsibilities

The principal functions as the central connecting link among all components of the educational context, both internal and external, serving as the cornerstone and primary driver of efforts to introduce, implement, and disseminate innovative practices and strategies. As the head of the school unit, it is essential that the principal possesses the capacity and specialized knowledge necessary to adopt innovative programs and select the most effective and realistic strategies for their efficient and sustainable implementation and diffusion. This is achieved through the promotion and support of a structured organizational framework shaped by the principal’s interventions, decisions, actions, and initiatives.

The principal is responsible for identifying, anticipating, and demonstrating foresight regarding potential obstacles that may arise during the implementation of innovations, either by providing practical solutions or preventing emerging problems. Research indicates that the principal’s role is pivotal in cultivating a productive and creative educational and psychological climate, as well as a shared sense of purpose, vision, and culture within the school unit. This is accomplished through active engagement in ensuring a positive atmosphere characterized by:

- Professional growth and success
- Communication and participation
- Decision-making and initiative
- Teamwork, mutual support, and collegiality
- Constructive criticism and openness to change (Wahlstrom & Seashore, 2008).

3.2 Creating a Culture of Innovation

The principal’s attitudes, culture, and beliefs create fertile ground in which shared values and convictions are cultivated, preparing an innovative climate and consolidating a “culture of change.” Within this framework, the principal, in collaboration with teachers, may initiate innovative practices and strategies. A fundamental prerequisite is the principal’s ability to perceive both the broader needs and the specific characteristics of the school’s internal and external environment, as well as the individualized needs and challenges the school may face throughout its trajectory.

The process can yield significant outcomes through promotion of specific goals and well-organized activities. Through adequate preparation, such as gathering resources, analyzing information, and leveraging a wide range of creative ideas, the principal can facilitate unprecedented results. (Everard, Morris & Wilson, 2004).

3.3 Implementation Strategies

The initiation of innovative practices may occur through:

1. Direct commitment of the principal
2. Provision of incentives to teachers to facilitate gradual adoption
3. Collaborative exploration with teaching staff, leading to experimental or pilot implementations

During the implementation phase, the principal should:

- Recognize, value, and reward teachers' efforts
- Provide clear communication strategies and guidelines
- Maintain approachability, openness, and availability for consultation
- Respond promptly and proactively to emerging challenges
- Foster a climate of mutual respect among all stakeholders

The principal also promotes opportunities for interaction and feedback among teachers, supports participation in wider educational networks, and aligns long-term goals with short-term objectives. This establishes a culture and mechanisms that ensure the effective consolidation and assimilation of innovations, transforming them into permanent institutions within the school unit. (Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002).

3.4 Factors Influencing Principals' Motivation

Familiarity with ICT, age, educational level, and gender are associated with principals' motivation to adopt innovative actions. Younger principals and those with higher academic qualifications tend to exhibit more positive attitudes toward innovation than older principals with only a single degree.

Principals' practices significantly influence teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward administration, leadership, and innovation. Principals who understand the multidimensional nature of their role tend to adopt a positive stance toward innovation through both practices and values.

The principal's contributions in areas such as goal-setting, infrastructure, and organizational development through innovative strategies are characteristic of those who actively advocate for innovation. Conversely, the bureaucracy of the Greek educational system is often perceived as inhibiting innovation and converting principals into administrative executors rather than educational leaders. (Ramirez-Montoya, 2020).

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Role of Principals in Promoting Innovation

The implementation of innovative strategies and practices by school principals constitutes a crucial and supportive factor in fostering innovation within educational settings. The establishment of a central core of innovative teachers by the principal, alongside the ability to secure the support and collaboration of the school's teaching staff, provides a solid foundation upon which sustainable innovation can be built.

Equally important is the cultivation of a school climate oriented toward innovation, which continuously engages and motivates all members of the school community over time. (Braukman & Pashiardis, 2011).

4.2 Inhibitory Factors

Research identifies **fear of the unknown**, particularly among more experienced teachers, as a significant inhibitory factor that often leads to reluctance in adopting and assimilating innovations. Practices such as:

- Providing incentives
- Offering moral recognition
- Implementing targeted professional development programs

are positively associated with higher levels of innovation, as they establish the psychological climate necessary to encourage teacher engagement. Conversely, the lack of strategies to motivate teachers' participation in professional development, coupled with insufficient active support from the principal, frequently results in the failure of innovation implementation.

4.3 Leadership Barriers

Key leadership barriers to innovation include:

1. Absence of a clear vision and defined school mission
2. Lack of strategic planning and structured feedback mechanisms
3. Difficulty in earning the trust and cooperation of teachers

Failure to establish a positive and collaborative climate, both internally and externally, acts as a restraining factor that gradually undermines innovation.

4.4 Contextual and Environmental Constraints

Additional factors influencing the successful implementation of innovations encompass:

- Socioeconomic challenges among students, negatively affecting school climate and learning outcomes
- Teachers' reluctance to engage in dialogue, collaboration, and constructive conflict resolution
- High mobility of Greek teachers and opaque procedures for principal selection
- Adoption of innovations merely to fulfill required teaching hours
- Limited infrastructure and resources

In contrast, principals with long-term tenure in stable schools are able to foster enduring relationships that support the development of an innovation-oriented culture. (Wahlstrom & Seashore, 2008).

4.5 Leadership Styles and Innovation

A passive, purely managerial leadership style, often associated with "laissez-faire" principals, negatively impacts innovation, creating insecurity and discouraging initiative among teachers. In contrast, **distributive** and **transformational** leadership styles facilitate innovation by providing the necessary conditions for the effective development and implementation of innovative practices.

Ultimately, the **appropriate combination of leadership practices** constitutes an optimal leadership style that ensures a sustained positive attitude toward innovation.

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6. Leadership and Administrative Frameworks for EvidenceBased Practice in Greek Special Education: A Critical Analysis of the Transition to Single Education

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Abstract: This chapter presents a critical examination of the institutional frameworks and practices governing Special Educational Units (SEUs) in Greece, focusing on the transition toward a unified “Single Education” system. It argues that success depends not merely on legislation but fundamentally on transformational leadership, systemic capacity, and sustained implementation of evidencebased practices. While Greece has developed a legislative architecture aligned with international conventions—notably the UNCRPD—a significant implementation gap persists. Through a deskbased review of national laws, policies, and research, this study offers a diagnostic evaluation, mapping the centralized administrative structure and assessing the roles of KEDASYs and EDYs through implementation science and organizational change theory. It reveals reliance on a medicaldiagnostic paradigm, resource constraints, and inadequate teacher training. The study outlines prerequisites for inclusive practices: transformative leadership, infrastructure for professional learning, and inclusive cultures. Drawing from EU initiatives and international models (e.g., Finland, Portugal, Canada), it recommends investing in leadership development, formalizing coteaching, applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and shifting KEDASYs from gatekeeping to capacitybuilding. The chapter concludes that Greece’s transition requires a sustained commitment to building leadership and capacity at all levels, transforming schools into professional learning communities where inclusion is a right and the cornerstone of excellence.

Keywords: inclusive education, special educational needs, Greece, educational leadership, transformational leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

The global movement toward inclusive education constitutes one of the most profound ethical, pedagogical, and political transformations in modern educational history. It demands not merely additive reforms but a fundamental reimaging of the very purposes, structures, cultures, and practices of schooling. In Greece, this transformative journey—conceptualized and legislatively enshrined as the pathway toward “Single Education”—represents a particularly complex and deeply consequential reform process. It directly challenges decades of institutionalized norms, pedagogical traditions, and administrative practices that have systematically separated students with disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs (SEN) from their peers, often under paradigms of care, charity, or clinical remediation rather than rights and participation (ZoniouSideri & Vlachou, 2006; Giavrimis, 2023).

This chapter provides a critical, indepth, and empirically grounded examination of the administration, leadership, and daily educational practices within Greece’s extensive network of Special Educational Units (SEUs) and support mechanisms. Its central purpose is to interrogate the oftentenuous alignment between an increasingly ambitious and rightsbased legislative framework and its tangible, uneven, and frequently problematic implementation within the nation’s schools. The analysis is

framed by a core thesis: the observable and well-documented gap between progressive policy rhetoric and educational reality is not reducible to a simple matter of inadequate resourcing, though that is a significant factor. Rather, it is fundamentally a crisis of *implementation capacity*—a deficit rooted in systemic weaknesses in strategic and instructional leadership, a lack of collaborative professional infrastructure, the absence of a coherent, shared theory of change, and a cultural inertia that upholds traditional beliefs about ability and disability (Fullan, 2016; Fixsen et al., 2005).

For over four decades, the Greek educational landscape for students with SEN has undergone a gradual, legally driven evolution from outright segregation toward various forms of physical and social integration. The initial model of separate special schools gave way, through legislative action in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, to integration practices that placed students within mainstream school buildings. However, this placement often occurred within distinct “integration classes” (τάξεις ένταξης). While this shift represented undeniable progress away from total exclusion, such integration models have been extensively critiqued both domestically and internationally for fostering what scholars’ term “internal segregation” or “integration without inclusion” (Barton, 1997). In this model, students are physically present within the school but are not meaningfully included in the academic, social, or cultural life of their peer group, leading to marginalization and stigmatization.

The current, aspirational phase of reform seeks to transcend integration and achieve full, meaningful inclusion—a truly “Single Education” system. This ambition is powerfully driven by Greece’s ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2012 and its alignment with broader European Union social cohesion and equity policies. This change in thinking demands far more than the geographical relocation of support services; it necessitates a metamorphosis in the very DNA of schools. This includes their leadership models, pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, organizational cultures, resource allocation mechanisms, and, most fundamentally, the underlying beliefs held by educators, administrators, parents, and society about human diversity, ability, and the purpose of education (Ainscow, 2020).

Accordingly, this chapter is structured to achieve four specific and interlinked objectives: (1) to provide a detailed genealogical account of the key legislative and policy milestones that have shaped the existing administrative framework, tracing the evolution from the foundational Law 1566/1985 through to the contemporary, inclusion-oriented Laws 4368/2016, 4547/2018, and 4823/2021, analyzing both their progressive intent and their inherent limitations; (2) to map the intricate, centralized administrative architecture—the operational “engine room” of the system—responsible for assessing, placing, and supporting students with SEN. This involves a critical examination of the design, intended functions, and on-the-ground realities of structures such as the KEDASYs and EDYs, highlighting the tensions between bureaucratic standardization and responsive, pedagogical support; (3) to apply analytical lenses from implementation science and educational leadership research in critically evaluating how these administrative structures and prevailing leadership practices either facilitate or hinder the consistent application of evidence-based inclusive education practices across diverse school contexts; and (4) to synthesize findings from national policy evaluations, academic research, and European monitoring reports to diagnose the root causes of the persistent gap between progressive legislation and school-level reality. This diagnosis will identify interconnected systemic barriers including chronic resource scarcity, the enduring dominance of the medical-diagnostic model, significant variability in teacher competence and confidence, and deep-seated cultural ambivalence toward inclusion.

Drawing upon this multisource evidence base, the chapter advances the argument that Greece has,

with considerable effort, succeeded in constructing a commendable legislative *edifice* for inclusive education—a paper framework that aligns with international best practice. However, the nation has yet to construct an equally robust, resilient, and pervasive *implementation culture*. A truly inclusive Single Education system cannot be realized through incremental adjustments or compliance-driven mandates alone. It requires a coherent, well-resourced, and strategically executed theory of action—one that simultaneously addresses structural weaknesses, builds collective capacity across all levels of the system, and fosters the profound attitudes essential for realizing the democratic ideal of an authentic “school for all.”

2. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATIVE EVOLUTION

The evolution of special education policy in Greece is a compelling narrative of gradual, legally-driven progression—a journey from segregation and charity-based models toward a rights-based framework of inclusion and participation. This trajectory reflects a dual dynamic: Greece’s reactive alignment with evolving international human rights standards, and an internal, often contested, sociopolitical renegotiation of the meaning of educational equity, citizenship, and the State’s obligation to ensure it for *all* learners, without exception.

Constitutional Foundations and the Philosophical Seeds of Change (1975-1985)

The inviolable bedrock of the Greek educational system is **Article 16** of the Hellenic Constitution of 1975 (revised in 1986), which mandates free education for all citizens at all levels and enshrines education as a fundamental public good and a core duty of the state. While not explicitly mentioning disability or SEN, this constitutional principle provided the foundational ethical and legal justification for later inclusive reforms. The first major legislative act to shape the modern structure of Greek education was **Law 1566/1985** “on the structure and operation of primary and secondary education.” This law was seminal not for its concrete, operational provisions concerning special education, which were minimal, but for its **philosophical vision**. It articulated the overarching goal of “the harmonious and balanced development of the mental and psychosomatic faculties” for *all* learners, thereby implicitly rejecting outright exclusionary practices. More importantly, it initiated a critical discursive and linguistic shift within official documents. It deliberately replaced pathologizing and stigmatizing terms such as “abnormal” (ανώμαλοι) or “deviant” with the more neutral and respectful phrase “persons with disabilities” (άτομα με αναπηρία), thereby laying the essential discursive foundations for future rights-based reform (Greek Parliament, 1985).

The Paradigm Shift: Law 3699/2008 and the Institutionalization of Support

A true watershed moment in Greek special education policy occurred with the passage of **Law 3699/2008** on “Special Education and Training of Persons with Disabilities or with Special Educational Needs.” This legislation represented a change in thinking in several key respects. First, it provided the first **formal, statutory definition of SEN** within an explicit social-model framework. It recognized disability not as a purely individual, medical deficit, but as a phenomenon arising from the interaction between individuals with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Second, it firmly established the State’s duty to ensure equal access and opportunity through initiative-taking systemic interventions. The most notable of these was the formal institutionalization of the **parallel support** model (Παράλληλη Στήριξη), wherein a state-appointed special education teacher is as-

signed to work alongside the mainstream classroom teacher in the same general education setting. This reform marked a decisive shift in legal principle: integration and support became a legally enforceable right for eligible students, rather than a discretionary exception or a privilege granted by local authorities (Greek Parliament, 2008). Furthermore, Law 3699/2008 established the cornerstone administrative structure for assessment: the **Centres for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counseling and Support (KEDASYs)**, which were tasked with conducting formal evaluations and issuing placement decisions.

International Law as a Potent Catalyst: UNCRPD Ratification and Subsequent Legislative Refinement

Greece's ratification of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** via **Law 4074/2012** was a pivotal act that bound the nation to the Convention's robust obligations, particularly those under **Article 24**, which mandates an inclusive education system at all levels and obliges states parties to ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system. This provided a powerful external accountability framework and a potent catalyst for further domestic legislative refinement, pushing Greek law beyond integration toward genuine inclusion.

The subsequent **Law 4368/2016** significantly strengthened inclusion policies by redefining the purpose and operation of **integration classes**. It aimed to shift these classes from their previous role as quasisegregated placements toward functioning as flexible, supportive bases for "*full inclusion*" within mainstream academic and social activities. The law emphasized that instructional differentiation, curriculum adaptation, and shared classroom practices, not physical separation—should constitute the core of educational support.

Building directly on this, **Law 4547/2018** introduced the first-ever **statutory definition of inclusive education** in Greek law. It described inclusive education as a process that addresses the diversity of all learners' needs through increased participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and the reduction of exclusion within and from education. This was a crucial conceptual expansion, broadening the scope of inclusion beyond a focus solely on disability to encompass linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, and other forms of diversity. The law also reorganized support structures, reinforcing the role of schoolbased EDY committees.

Most recently, **Law 4823/2021** focused on refining operational aspects of the system, particularly the workflows of **KEDASYs** and **EDYs**, with an emphasis on promoting early intervention, streamlining bureaucratic procedures, and ensuring more timely access to support services for students and families (Greek Parliament, 2021).

This legislative trajectory, spanning from 1985 to the present, exhibits a clear cumulative intent and an accelerating alignment with international human rights standards. However, as extensive research and official reports indicate, its **translation into consistent, equitable, and effective practice across Greece's diverse and geographically dispersed school system remains profoundly problematic** (Eurydice, 2025; Kougia, 2025; European Commission, 2022). The laws have created new structures and proclaimed new principles, but they have not automatically dissolved deepest institutional habits, overcome resource limitations, or transformed professional identities. The following sections delve into the operational realities of these administrative structures and the complex challenges that characterize the daily work of inclusion in Greek schools.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE ARCHITECTURE AND OPERATIONAL REALITIES: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

The administration of special education in Greece is characterized by a highly centralized, multilayered, and procedurally complex system. Designed with the legitimate aims of securing national standardization, guaranteeing (at least theoretically) equity of access, and ensuring professional oversight, this architecture aims to provide a clear, legally defined pathway from student identification to educational intervention. Yet, in practice, its very complexity and centralization often become sources of significant delay, procedural rigidity, and a troubling disconnection between diagnostic assessment and daily pedagogical practice. This places immense strain on the professionals working within the system—psychologists, special educators, mainstream teachers, and principals—and, most importantly, on the students and families it is intended to serve (Mitroulaki et al., 2023; Zafeiropoulos et al., 2025).

Centralized Assessment and Support Structures: The Pivotal yet Problematic Role of KEDASYs

At the epicenter of the identification and placement process stand the **Centres for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counseling and Support (KEDASYs)**, established nationwide under Law 3699/2008. Operating as the decentralized regional arms of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, these centers hold monopoly authority for the official diagnosis and formal educational placement of students aged 4 to 22 who are suspected of having SEN. Their operational mandate is comprehensive and includes several key functions. First, they conduct **Interdisciplinary Evaluations** through teams composed of psychologists, special educators, social workers, speech therapists, and other allied professionals, who undertake a holistic assessment of the child. Second, the outcome of this process is a **formal Diagnostic Report**. This report identifies the student's learning profile, applies diagnostic classifications (often drawing from ICD or DSM criteria), and issues a legally binding recommendation for educational placement. The placement options range from fulltime mainstream class participation (with or without parallel support hours) to parttime placement in an integration class within a mainstream school, or, in more severe cases, placement in a special school or SEPAL unit. Third, KEDASYs hold a **gatekeeping and planning function**. They oversee, or at least formally sanction, the development of the **Personalized Education Programme (PEP)**, which is meant to outline specific learning goals, necessary adaptations, teaching strategies, and support measures, ideally formulated in close collaboration with the student's family and future teachers.

The interdisciplinary model underpinning KEDASYs is, in theory, a strength, promoting a holistic understanding of the child beyond a purely medical lens. However, significant tensions and implementation failures are widely reported in the literature and practitioner accounts. Chronic understaffing, excessive bureaucratic procedures, and overwhelming caseloads often transform the KEDASY from a supportive service into a bottlenecked **gatekeeping mechanism**. Assessment delays of several months are frequent, meaning children can spend critical periods without appropriate support (Leahy, 2023). Furthermore, despite the legal embrace of a social model of disability, everyday practice within many KEDASYs continues to lean heavily toward a deficitbased, medicaldiagnostic classification system. The focus can remain on labeling the child's impairments rather than identifying and removing environmental and pedagogical barriers within the school. Consequently, teachers often perceive the PEP documents delivered by KEDASYs as topdown, bureaucratic impositions—complex paperwork to be filed—rather than as collaboratively owned, living pedagogical plans. This perception severely undermines implementation fidelity and teacher ownership from the outset.

SchoolLevel Administration and Support: The Unfulfilled Potential of EDYs

Once a student enters the school system with a KEDASY diagnostic report and placement decision, the primary responsibility for coordinating support theoretically shifts to the schoolbased **Committee for Interdisciplinary Support (EDY)**. Established in each mainstream school, an EDY is formally composed of the school principal (who acts as chair), at least one special education teacher, and depending on availability, a psychologist, and a social worker. Its formal responsibilities are ambitiously broad: (a) to proactively identify and address learning and behavioral challenges for all students, not just those with a formal diagnosis; (b) to support classroom teachers in implementing differentiated instruction and achieving PEP goals; (c) to address schoolwide social and inclusion issues; and (d) to coordinate support from families and community agencies.

In practice, however, the functionality and impact of the EDY are highly uneven and almost entirely dependent on the individual commitment, vision, and skills of the school principal and the available specialist staff. A critical structural weakness is the severe limitation in **professional staffing**. Psychologists and social workers are typically shared across multiple schools (sometimes a dozen or more), making their presence in any single EDY meeting rare and their ongoing involvement minimal. Principals, overwhelmed by administrative duties, budgetary constraints, and accountability pressures, often lack the time, specific training, or incentive to provide strong pedagogical leadership for inclusion. Without a clear, driving vision and dedicated, protected time for its members, the EDY risks degenerating into a passive, reactive committee focused on procedural compliance and paperwork—"a talking shop that meets because the law requires it"—rather than evolving into a dynamic, proactive engine for cultivating inclusive practice, professional learning, and collaborative problem-solving within the school (Ministry of Education, 2023; author's analysis of field reports).

The Continuum of Educational Provision: Models Reflecting a System in Ambivalent Transition

The placement decisions generated by KEDASYs feed into a hierarchical continuum of educational settings that vividly illustrates Greece's ambiguous, transitional state between old models of integration and the aspirational goal of true inclusion. This continuum comprises four primary models, each with a significant gap between its legislative ideal and its operational reality.

The first model is placement in a **Mainstream Class with Teacher Differentiation Only**. This is intended for students with mild or emerging needs who do not qualify for dedicated support personnel. The onus for success falls entirely on the mainstream classroom teacher's ability to differentiate instruction effectively. However, as numerous studies confirm, many Greek mainstream teachers report limited confidence and possess minimal practical training in differentiation strategies, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), or adaptive assessment. They also lack the planning time and instructional resources to implement such approaches consistently, often receiving little guidance or support from school leadership in this endeavor (Eurydice, 2025).

The second model is the **Parallel Support Model**, a coteaching framework where a special education teacher is assigned to work alongside the general education teacher in the inclusive classroom. In its ideal form, this model promises shared expertise, reduced studenttoteacher ratio, and richer, more adaptable instruction. However, the Greek reality often deviates sharply. The absence of mandated, protected **coplanning time** in teachers' schedules is a fundamental flaw. Without time to collaboratively plan lessons, define roles, and align instructional strategies, the special educator is frequently reduced to the role of a glorified teaching assistant, providing oneonone support to a single student

at the back of the room, or passively observing. Vague role definitions, hierarchical relationships between the “subject teacher” and the “support teacher,” and a lack of principal facilitation further undermine this model’s potential, perpetuating a sense that inclusion is the sole responsibility of the special education specialist.

The third model is the **Integration Class**. Legislatively redefined in 2016, these are small classes of typically 48 students with SEN located within a mainstream school. The ideal is for them to function as a flexible “home base,” with students splitting their time between specialized instruction in the integration class and graded participation in mainstream academic subjects, arts, and social activities with their peers. In reality, research indicates that these classes often operate as functionally **isolated units** within the school. Collaboration with mainstream teachers is rare, movement into general education classes is limited and often based on social rather than academic integration, and stigmatization persists. Students may eat lunch separately and have limited interaction during breaks, leading to what has been termed “social apartheid” within an integrated building. Weak leadership coordination and a lack of wholeschool planning for inclusion are key factors in this failure.

The fourth and most segregated model comprises **Special Schools and SEPALs** (Special Vocational Education and Training Units). These are dedicated settings designed for students with profound, multiple, or severe intellectual disabilities. While they provide essential specialized care, therapy, and lifeskills or vocational training in a protected environment, they inherently restrict opportunities for sustained social interaction and academic learning with nondisabled peers, contradicting the UN-CRPD’s core goals of inclusive socialization and participation in the community.

Teacher Competency and Professional Learning: The Overlooked Keystone

A critical and often underanalyzed dimension of Greece’s transition to a single, inclusive system is the state of **professional preparedness within the teaching workforce**. While legislative frameworks eloquently articulate rights and outline structures, the pedagogical capacity of both mainstream and special education teachers to implement inclusive practices remains inconsistent, fragile, and heavily dependent on individual motivation, personal resourcefulness, and informal peer networks rather than on systematic, institutional support.

Empirical studies consistently reveal that many **mainstream teachers** in Greece report feeling underprepared and lacking in confidence when faced with the diverse learning needs of students with SEN in their classrooms (ZoniouSideri & Vlachou, 2006; Zafeiropoulos et al., 2025). The root cause lies in **preservice teacher education**. University programs for prospective primary and secondary teachers have traditionally emphasized theoretical psychology, subjectspecific didactics, and general curriculum studies. However, they have offered minimal, if any, compulsory, practical training in foundational inclusive pedagogies such as differentiated instruction, coteaching models, the use of assistive technologies, behavior support strategies, or curriculum adaptation frameworks like UDL. Inclusive education is often relegated to an elective module or a single lecture, rather than being a pervasive, crosscutting theme throughout the entire preparation program.

The situation for **inservice professional development** is similarly problematic. The opportunities that do exist are frequently characterized as shortterm, oneoff, lecturebased seminars organized by the state or universities. These “spray and pray” sessions are typically disconnected from teachers’ specific classroom contexts, lack followup coaching, and do not provide opportunities for collaborative practice, reflection, or adaptation. Research highlights that while Greek teachers frequently express a strong moral commitment and willingness to embrace inclusive approaches, they lack the specialized knowledge, practical tools, and structured, ongoing support to translate policy ideals into effective,

daily practice (Mitroulaki et al., 2023). The absence of formal mentoring systems for new teachers facing inclusion challenges and the scarcity of structured, schoolbased **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** further isolate practitioners, leaving them to “reinvent the wheel” alone within the confines of their own classrooms.

Consequently, the success or failure of inclusive reforms at the classroom level depends disproportionately on the personal agency of individual teachers and the extent to which a school’s leadership can transform the school itself into a site of continuous, jobembedded professional learning. Strengthening teacher competency for inclusion requires a sustained, twotiered strategic approach. At the **systemic level**, teacher education institutions (universities and pedagogical departments) must undergo significant curriculum reform to integrate inclusive pedagogy as a core, mandatory component for *all* future teachers. Concepts like UDL, socialemotional learning, collaborative consultation, and multitiered systems of support (MTSS) must become nonnegotiable foundations, not peripheral electives. At the **school level**, principals and district leaders must actively create and protect structured time for joint lesson planning, peer observation cycles, collaborative analysis of student work, and reflective practice sessions focused on real cases of students with diverse needs. It is only through empowering teachers as adaptive experts and colearners within a supportive professional culture that the promise of inclusive legislation can be realized in the complex, unpredictable reality of everyday classroom life. Developing collective teacher efficacy and fostering a culture of collaborative inquiry represent the most powerful mechanisms for bridging the persistent and damaging policypractice divide.

4. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES: TOWARDS A THEORY OF ACTION

The transition toward an effective, equitable, and sustainable inclusive educational system in Greece is, in its essence, a profound **implementation challenge**. Achieving the ambitious goals expressed in its legislative corpus requires that evidencebased practices (EBPs)—such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), authentic collaborative teaching models, and formative assessment—move from theoretical policy prescriptions to consistent, highfidelity classroom practice. Decades of research in implementation science provide a clear lesson: the success of any complex educational reform depends less on the intrinsic quality of the innovation itself and more on the **leadership and organizational conditions** within which it is introduced, supported, and sustained (Fixsen et al., 2005; Fullan, 2016). Consequently, leadership—at the ministerial, regional, district, and, most critically, school level—plays a decisive, perhaps *the* decisive, role in determining the outcomes of Greece’s Single Education journey.

Learning from International Best Practice Models

Crossnational evidence from countries that have made significant, sustained progress toward inclusion offers valuable, transferable lessons for the Greek context. These models illustrate that sustainable inclusion is achieved not through isolated pilot projects or topdown mandates alone, but through systemically developed leadership capacity and collaborative professional networks.

Finland, consistently a highperformer in international educational rankings, has institutionalized inclusion by embedding special education expertise *within* every mainstream school. Instead of relying on external diagnostic centers like KEDASYs, each Finnish school has a “**student welfare**

team” comprising the principal, special education teacher, classroom teachers, school psychologist, nurse, and social worker. This team meets regularly to discuss all students needing support, focusing on early intervention and classroom-based strategies. Leadership for inclusion is **distributed** and deeply supported. Principals undergo rigorous, nationally funded training programs focused on pedagogical leadership, data-informed decisionmaking, and fostering collaborative cultures. Crucially, the primary responsibility for assessment and support planning lies with the school itself, fostering professional ownership, capacitybuilding, and responsive problemsolving, rather than external bureaucratic control.

Portugal’s reform, guided by DecreeLaw 54/2018, offers another powerful model. It legally shifts the system’s focus away from categorizing students by disability label toward a process of identifying **barriers to learning and participation** in each school’s environment, curriculum, and teaching methods. To support this shift, Portugal has developed “**Resource Centres for Inclusion**” at the municipal or cluster level. Unlike Greece’s KEDASYs, these centres are not primarily diagnostic gatekeepers. Instead, they function as hubs for professional learning, lending libraries of assistive technology, and sources of itinerant specialist coaches who work directly with school teams. This model presents a compelling intermediate vision for Greece, suggesting how KEDASYs could evolve from being assessment-focused bodies into becoming active, capacitybuilding partners for school-based coaching and collaborative inquiry.

Canada’s Atlantic Provinces (e.g., New Brunswick) provide a practical illustration of how systemic structures can enable teacher collaboration. Through collective bargaining agreements or provincial policy, teachers in these jurisdictions are **guaranteed annual, protected time** for collaborative planning with colleagues, including special educators and resource teachers. Furthermore, they have access to funded, structured professional learning communities focused specifically on inclusive instruction. Research from these contexts reports a strong correlation between such structural support and higher levels of teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and implementation quality in inclusive classrooms (Hutchinson et al., 2022).

These international examples converge on a central insight: successful inclusive reform is a **longterm, capacitybuilding process**, not a short-term compliance project. Systems that strategically invest in leadership development, build trust-based professional collaboration into the fabric of school life, and distribute support resources closer to the classroom produce more sustainable, deep-seated change than those relying on bureaucratic compliance or the episodic goodwill of individuals.

Transformational and Distributed Leadership as Catalysts for Systemic Change

For Greece, moving from a compliance-driven, administrative management culture toward a model of **transformational leadership** is not an optional luxury but an existential necessity. Leaders at all levels—from ministry officials and regional directors to school principals—must move beyond managing regulations to articulating a compelling, shared, and inspirational vision for inclusion that connects with educators’ moral purpose and professional identity.

Key leadership behaviors essential for this shift include: **Building Psychological Safety**, where teachers feel secure to experiment with new practices, admit challenges, and ask for help without fear of blame or judgment—principals model this by engaging in their own reflective practice. **Intelligently Managing Resistance**, by anticipating concerns, listening authentically to fears, and constructively addressing them through dialogue and support, rather than through edict, thus sustaining buy-in during the inevitable discomfort of change. And **Practicing Distributed Leadership**, recognizing that inclusive education is too complex a mission to be led by the principal

alone. Empowering special education coordinators, lead teachers, parent representatives, and even student voices creates shared ownership, taps into wider expertise, and builds collective accountability for outcomes.

Building the Organizational Infrastructure for Capacity Development

A visionary leader without the organizational infrastructure to enable change is merely a charismatic figure presiding over frustration. Educational leaders must be systemsbuilders. Key structural actions include: **Strategic Allocation of the Most Precious Resource: Time.** Beyond funding, the deliberate scheduling of protected, nonnegotiable time for coplanning, peer observation, and PLC meetings is indispensable. This must be recognized as core instructional work, not an optional add-on. **Investing in Job-Embedded Professional Learning,** moving decisively away from the ineffective seminar model toward continuous, practice-based learning cycles involving instructional coaching, mentoring, and lesson study. Leaders must not only authorize but actively participate in these processes to signal their value. **Developing Data Systems for Continuous Improvement,** where inclusive schools use formative data on student progress, school climate surveys, and self-assessments of implementation fidelity not for punitive accountability, but for reflective practice, targeted support, and celebrating incremental progress.

Cultivating Collaborative and Inclusive School Cultures

Finally, shared values and a sense of collective responsibility form the cultural bedrock of inclusive schools. Leaders must consciously cultivate this by: establishing vibrant **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** that use structured protocols to examine student work and teaching practices; consistently using **language framed by the social model of disability**—speaking of “barriers in our teaching” or “challenges in the environment” rather than “a child’s low ability”; and actively engaging **families and the local community** as genuine partners in PEP design, school activities, and governance, recognizing them as holders of crucial knowledge and agents of support.

Diagnosing the Greek Context Through Leadership and Implementation Lenses

Applying these leadership and implementation frameworks to the Greek context reveals with clarity why the policy-practice gap is so persistent and resistant to simple fixes.

A Leadership Vacuum Amidst Centralization. Greece’s highly centralized system has historically fostered a culture of **administrative leadership** focused on regulation, resource allocation, and reporting upward, rather than **instructional leadership** focused on teaching quality, professional growth, and student learning. Principals are often selected and rewarded for managerial efficiency, not for pedagogical innovation or communitybuilding. As a result, school-level coordination mechanisms like the EDY committee remain chronically underutilized, lacking the driving force of a leader skilled in facilitation, shared visionsetting, and instructional coaching.

Structural Misalignment Between Diagnosis and Support. The KEDASYs, in their current form, operate primarily as **diagnostic and placement pipelines.** Their relationship with schools often ends with the delivery of the report and PEP. There is typically no structured mechanism for KEDASY staff to provide ongoing coaching, follow-up support, or collaborative problem-solving with the teachers who must implement the plans. This leads to what critics describe as a “**diagnose-and-dump**”

phenomenon: a student is assessed, labeled, and placed, but the school is left with a complex document and insufficient ongoing expertise to translate it into effective practice, creating frustration for all parties.

Chronic and Crippling Resource Constraints. Beyond the welldocumented issues of general underfunding, specific resource deficits trap the system. **High teacher turnover**, especially in remote areas, disrupts continuity. The **complete lack of contractual or scheduled coplanning time** makes collaborative teaching models unworkable. **Insufficient numbers of psychologists, speech therapists, and other specialists** means that EDY committees cannot function as intended. These constraints force principals into a perpetual mode of crisis management and rationing, leaving little space for the proactive, strategic leadership required for systemic change.

DeepSeated Cultural Inertia. Decades of segregated special education practice have embedded powerful assumptions within the educational psyche: that students with significant needs are the responsibility of *specialists*; that the “normal” classroom is for “typical” learners; and that academic standards might be compromised by inclusion. A sustained, powerful **counternarrative**—that “all teachers teach all students,” that diversity enriches learning for everyone, and that equity and excellence are synergistic—must be championed relentlessly by leaders at every level, from the ministry down to the school hallway.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The administration and education of students through Special Educational Units (SEUs) and support mechanisms in Greece stand at a critical and defining crossroads. The nation has, through considerable political and legislative effort, established a comprehensive, rightsbased legal framework that boldly charts a principled path toward *Single Education*. The necessary administrative structures—KEDASYs for assessment, EDYs for schoolbased coordination, and parallel support for classroom delivery—are firmly embedded in law and regulation. Yet, the arduous journey from legislative design and structural blueprint to genuine, vibrant, and equitable inclusive educational reality remains obstructed by a persistent and multifaceted **implementation gap**.

This gap is neither accidental nor incidental; it is the direct result of identifiable, interdependent systemic deficits: a scarcity of transformative, instructional leadership at all levels; an administrative infrastructure that prioritizes bureaucratic control over professional capacity development; and a culturalprofessional milieu still influenced by legacy beliefs about segregation, ability, and the very purposes of schooling. Greece’s inclusion system, in its current state of implementation, risks being defined not by a lack of goodwill or progressive intent, but by a profound **failure of systemic coherence and execution**.

Ongoing EUsupported initiatives, such as the “Promoting Inclusive Education in Greece” project (European Commission, 2022) and various Erasmus+ partnerships, provide invaluable platforms for experimentation, professional networking, and piloting innovative practices. However, their longterm impact and scalability will remain negligible unless their lessons are systematically harvested, evaluated, and integrated into a coherent, nationallyowned, and politically sustained strategy for capacity building. The success of Greece’s transition, therefore, hinges on a fundamental reconceptualization. Inclusive education reform must not be seen as yet another administrative policy to be implemented through circulars and compliance checks. It must be understood and

embraced as a deep **cultural, professional, and pedagogical** transformation that requires nurturing leadership density, fostering collective ownership, and building adaptive learning structures throughout the entire educational ecosystem.

This transformative endeavor demands sustained, strategic investment in both **people and structures**. It requires developing leaders at every tier who are capable of inspiring, managing, and sustaining complex change. It necessitates supporting teachers as reflective, collaborative professionals, not as isolated technicians. And it calls for redesigning systems—from teacher education to resource allocation to accountability metrics—for learning, adaptation, and capacitybuilding, rather than for mere control, categorization, and compliance.

Future research directions must focus on generating the evidence needed to guide this transformation. Priorities include: (1) **Leadership Capacity Building**, through longitudinal studies on the impact of targeted leadership development programs; (2) **Systemic Infrastructure**, evaluating models for providing protected collaborative time and repurposing KEDASYs as support hubs; (3) **Implementation Science Applications**, using frameworks to track the fidelity and sustainability of EBPs in pilot schools; and (4) **Cultural Transformation**, employing qualitative methods to understand and influence the evolution of educator and community beliefs about disability and diversity. The establishment of a **National Observatory for Inclusive Education** could play a pivotal role in coordinating this research, disseminating findings, and informing policy and practice in a continuous feedback loop.

Only by uniting visionary, courageous **leadership** with robust, enabling **support structures**, and by marrying evidencebased **practice** with a collaborative, inclusive **professional culture**, can Greece truly realize the democratic ideal of a “**school for all.**” The path ahead is undoubtedly steep and fraught with challenge, but it is also clear. It requires nothing less than a strategic, unwavering, and politically supported commitment to building capacity, nurturing collaboration, and fostering belief at every level—from the ministry office to the individual classroom. In doing so, Greece can transform its schools from traditional, often rigid institutions into dynamic, inclusive professional learning communities where every learner is valued, every teacher is empowered, and inclusion is finally recognized as both an inalienable human right and the indispensable foundation of true educational excellence for all.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

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Part II
Teaching, Inclusion and Educational
Practice

7. Humanities, Knowledge, Inclusion, and Inclusive Literacy: A Human-Centered Framework for Teaching Reading Comprehension in Greek ELF Classrooms

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Abstract: This chapter outlines a human-centered, inclusive model aimed at reconceptualizing the teaching of reading comprehension for Greek adolescent EFL learners. Its theoretical basis draws on the humanities, a social constructivist conception of knowledge, inclusion, and inclusive literacy. Reading is reframed from a narrowly skills-oriented instructional framework toward a transformative, dialogic engagement with textual interpretation and ethical exploration. The humanities establish a moral foundation by promoting perspective-taking and moral awareness, positioning reading as a cognitive and affective practice. Within this framework, inclusion and dialogic pedagogy acknowledge learners as co-creators of meaning who collaboratively develop understanding through equitable and inclusive participation. The chapter aims to clarify these theoretical interconnections, illustrate their pedagogical potential to fundamentally reshape the learners' approaches to English reading comprehension, and offer pedagogical guidance for cultivating critical, empathetic, and culturally responsive learners. From a human-centered point of view, the chapter builds on a theoretical reflection on inclusive literacy and dialogic pedagogy. It suggests a conceptual framework that will guide future research in Greek EFL reading education.

Keywords: humanities, inclusive literacy, reading comprehension, dialogic pedagogy, empathy, Greek EFL classrooms

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's changing educational environment, teaching the concept of reading comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting requires a lot more than merely highlighting decoding and expanding one's vocabulary. Instead, this approach requires a human-centered, inclusive perspective which combines language acquisition with moral, cultural and cognitive effects. This chapter introduces a theoretical framework drawn from the fields of humanities, knowledge, inclusion, and inclusive literacy, in order to rethink how reading comprehension is taught to Greek adolescent EFL students. Central to this theory is the conviction that reading may serve as a transformative interpretive practice, wherein linguistic development is inextricably integrated with the cultivation of empathy, interpersonal understanding, and ethical awareness.

The proposed vision derives its ethical and interpretive foundation directly from the humanities. As learners interact with literature, philosophy, and the arts, they are afforded the opportunity to transcend basic literacy, enabling them to cultivate interpretive skills that allow them to contemplate other perspectives, grapple with moral dilemmas along with engaging in deeper reflection on the nature of being human. Viewed in this way, reading transcends the mechanistic process of linguistic decoding and becomes an integrated, cognitive and emotional act (Nussbaum, 2010).

Meanwhile, the process of knowledge construction in inclusive classrooms prioritizes shared inquiry and collaboration, in an environment where instructors and learners work together to develop

communal knowledge through dialogue and questioning (Alexander, 2022). Inclusion constitutes both an ethical imperative and a pedagogical orientation, viewing learner diversity as a valuable educational asset rather than a potential impediment. It acknowledges each student as a meaning-maker and guarantees parity of access to the necessary materials, methodologies, and opportunities for critical interpretation (UNESCO, 2017).

For Greek EFL environments, this translates into fostering reading experiences that respect students' heterogeneity, meaning prior knowledge, linguistic backgrounds, identities, and communicative methods, enabling interaction with authentic and multimodal texts, and promoting collaborative interpretation, wherein reading serves as an act of inclusion and empathy (Gay, 2018). Due to the concurrent pressures of rapid technological advancements and increasing social fragmentation, this proposed humanities-based, inclusive orientation for reading comprehension is considered highly relevant and particularly opportune. It furnishes students with both the ability to multilingual literacy and the necessary critical, moral and intercultural sensibilities required for global citizenship. By adopting this perspective, the framework underscores the humanistic objective of education: cultivating reflective, empathetic individuals, adept at engaging with difference, diversity, complexity and textual meaning.

Consequently, this chapter intends to achieve three primary goals: first, to map the theoretical convergence of the humanities, knowledge, inclusion and inclusive literacy; second, to showcase the efficacy of a humanistic and inclusive inquiry in transforming the English reading acquisition for Greek adolescents; and thirdly, to propose practical pedagogical recommendations for implementing equitable, human-centered literacy practices in Greek EFL settings. Ultimately, conceptualizing reading comprehension as an ethical and dialogic conceptual process, classrooms become contexts for genuine personal inquiry, empathy development and growth.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: HUMANITIES AS A MORAL AND INTERPRETATIVE FOUNDATION

To position reading comprehension within a human-centered, inclusive framework, the humanities, encompassing literature, philosophy, the arts and their associated ethical discourses, become a cornerstone of the approach. The humanities encourage learners to interpret human language and engage with profound aspects of human experience, specifically otherness, moral complexity, and aesthetic form. In this section it is asserted that integrating humanities-inspired inquiry into EFL classroom redefines reading as a reflective, empathetic, and interpretive act, moving beyond its conventional definition as a rote mechanical skill.

Primarily, the humanities prioritize the importance of perspective-taking. By engaging with narratives, poetry, or multimodal texts originating from diverse cultural and historical backgrounds, learners are prompted to imaginatively inhabit the vantage points of characters, unfamiliar individuals, or even abstract ideas. Consequently, this engagement fosters an appreciation for the human condition and reinforces the moral consciousness of the learners (Nussbaum, 2010). Greek adolescents in EFL classrooms who encounter texts foregrounding cultural differences or ethical dilemmas are thereby equipped to transcend basic linguistic operations, such as mere lexical decoding, and instead engage in profound cognitive and emotional involvement. Thus, reading serves as a vehicle for fostering moral awareness and international empathy, rather than merely achieving linguistic competence.

The humanities, at a second point, anchor reading comprehension in the construction of meaning, shifting the emphasis away from the mere acquisition of skills. They underscore that texts are imbued with specific values, distinct worldviews, and symbolic content. Engaging with texts, such as poetry

or stories, prompts readers to ask questions that go beyond the lexical (“What does this word mean?”) toward metatextual inquiry (“What does this text ask of me as a reader?”) and existential exploration (“What human question lies behind its passage?”). The pedagogical approach within a humanistic reading classroom involves the teacher stimulating students to pose critical interpretive questions, focusing on the viewpoint presented, identifying absent voices, and analyzing the text’s underlying moral tension. This perspective is consistent with research in inclusive reading pedagogy that stresses dialogic, in-depth comprehension as superior to reductive skill-based models (Alexander, 2022).

At a third point, the use of humanities converts reading instruction into a moral endeavor. A humanistic class acknowledges that written materials are essential not solely for the development of linguistic ability but additionally for shaping the personalities of individuals, by nurturing their capacity to empathize, evaluate, reflect and develop a sense of belonging. Thus, reading becomes a fundamental part of the overarching purpose of education: the development of reflective and morally conscious individuals (Alexander, 2022). For Greek EFL adolescents, the reading of English texts is intertwined with issues of identity, community and responsibility. It cultivates a non-neutral but value-laden understanding of literacy, thereby contradicting the reduction of comprehension to a decontextualized cognitive task.

The humanities, additionally, foster metacognitive and dialogic approaches to reading. Learners are urged to reflect on the way they respond to reading material, interact with their peers in debates, and investigate diverse interpretive possibilities. This dialogic approach encourages learners to generate meaning in lieu of considering them as passive agents in the learning process. A research investigation on inclusive reading in multilingual settings reveals that when students participate in collaborative inquiry around texts, there is a resultant increase of motivation, understanding, and participation (Alexander, 2020). Within an inclusive EFL classroom, this involves creating tasks that stimulate peer discussion, facilitate the sharing of diverse viewpoints, and encourage the critical examination of both the meaning of the text and its relevant context.

The final point is that incorporating the humanities into EFL reading pedagogy acknowledges the holistic relationship existing among language, cognition and human experience. Language is not merely a technical code to be mastered but rather functions as a medium by which people are able to express, communicate and transform their experiences. The humanities serve to remind us that reading involves participating into an interpretive community, and confronting ambiguity, appreciating diverse voices, and addressing ethical complexity. This expansive conception of reading directly corresponds to inclusive literacy models that emphasize the significance of cultural, linguistic and modal heterogeneity among student population (UNESCO, 2017).

In essence, adopting a humanity-based orientation into reading comprehension instruction, the classroom transcends its role as a location devoted solely to mechanical language practice. It is thereby transformed into a place where learners engage with texts as co-participants in human meaning-making; in this context, comprehension requires empathy, critical analysis, and reflection, and where reading itself is defined as fundamentally moral and interpretive.

3. TOWARDS A HUMAN-CENTERED PARADIGM: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE AND DIALOGIC PEDAGOGY

3.1 Knowledge and dialogue in inclusive classrooms

Knowledge is acquired via interactive discourse, active participation, and critical reflection. Dialogic pedagogy and social constructivism shift the process of reading comprehension from an isolated act of decoding into a collaborative process of meaning-making.

3.1.1 Knowledge as a social construct

Comprehension is socially constructed via communicative interactions whereby students collaboratively interpret texts by engaging in meaning negotiation through inquiries, remarks, and shared interpretations. Dialogue is a cultural activity through which both knowledge and comprehension are actively developed (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Reading comprehension is interpreted as a dialogic process, dependent upon the interplay between the readers, the texts, and the social milieu. Instructors assist students in exploring texts through the lens of multiple perspectives (Alexander, 2020).

3.1.2 Dialogue as a pedagogical medium

The dialogic classroom validates the role of every student as an integral component of collective building of comprehension. It enables students with heterogeneous English proficiency levels to have a meaningful participation in interpretative discussions by drawing on their personal experiences and prior linguistic assets (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Dialogic teaching methods, including think pair-sharing, reciprocal instruction and literature groups, enable students to share their thoughts and scaffold each other's comprehension (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). When Greek adolescents recount a brief narrative in English, they acquire not merely new vocabulary but also social reasoning and affective empathy.

3.1.3 Inclusion and the ethics of knowledge

Inclusive knowledge recognizes every student as meaning-creator, regardless of their abilities (UNESCO, 2017). This approach dismisses deficit models, choosing instead to highlight diversity as an integral component of the shared creation of understanding. Incorporating dialogue promotes philosophical justice, characterized as equal participation in the acquisition and endorsement of knowledge (Fricker, 2007). Students are considered as engaged participants in interpretation.

3.1.4 Dialogic reading and critical consciousness

Conversational reading methodology permits students to reflect on the way literary works evoke or clash with social conditions. While students disagree about text's intentions or ethical implications, they engage in concurrent linguistic and moral reflection. Reading comprehension becomes an investigative act, an instrument for gaining knowledge regarding the world, rather than rote linguistic practice (Freire, 2000). The dialogic methodology is consistent with the humanistic aim of cultivating thoughtful, empathetic individuals prepared for critical thinking and ethical judgment.

3.1.5 Implications for Greek EFL classrooms

Implementing dialogic teaching practices calls for the reorganization of interactive patterns within the educational setting. Instructors utilize open-ended questions, discussions between learners, along with reflective writing portfolios (Alexander, 2020; Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Reading tasks for all levels of students can be created with the use of authentic texts and multiple resources, such as visual and digital platforms. When knowledge is regarded as a co-constructed product of social interaction, reading comprehension is redefined as a shared interpretive process.

3.2 Inclusion as an ethical and pedagogical imperative

Inclusion encompasses a holistic ethical and educational mandate to fairness, heterogeneity and social equity. In Greek EFL educational settings, inclusion additionally involves cultivating an environment where all students, irrespective of their abilities, are affirmed as engaged contributors to the process of meaning making.

3.2.1 The moral foundations of inclusion

Inclusion is based on the conviction in the inherent dignity of all students and their entitlement to participate fully in the educational process. According to the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) inclusion was established as an ethical mandate for every educational institution, emphasizing the necessity for schools to adapt their structures to meet the diverse needs of each student (UNESCO, 2017). From a humanistic perspective, the learning environment functions as a microcosm of democracy, whereby active involvement, respect for others, and individual voice are non-negotiable elements. Education aimed at democratic citizenship must nurture essential capabilities, specifically empathy, imagination and rational thought (Nussbaum, 2010). Inclusion is a continual effort to identify and dismantle barriers to participation, while affirming that diversity serves as an asset (Ainscow, 2020).

3.2.2 Pedagogical dimensions of inclusion

Inclusion can be accomplished via methods of instruction which guarantee equitable access to the curriculum, educational materials, and classroom participation. The inclusive pedagogical framework promotes a strength-based orientation that recognizes each students' potential for meaningful contribution (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Instructional practices are manifested through differentiated instruction and structural scaffolding, coupled with the deployment of a wide range of engagement modalities. Educators might design tasks which incorporate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes (Tomlinson, 2014). The integration of authentic, multimodal texts including graphic novels, digital stories and song lyrics, enables learners with varied needs to engage with the material meaningfully (Jewitt, 2008). Inclusion performs better when the learning environment recognizes and values students' cultural and personal identities ensuring that their voices are actively solicited (Ainscow, 2020).

3.2.3 Inclusion as social justice in practice

Inclusive education functions to counteract against structures that promote marginalization by creating equitable opportunities for all students to engage in meaningful knowledge creation. In the context of reading comprehension, this involves the equitable distribution of both language access and interpretive power. Freire (2000) suggests that learners ought to prioritize "reading the world" over "reading the word," which underscores the necessity for critical engagement with texts and reveals how language mirrors power relations. By taking this approach, reading comprehension becomes an instrument for cultivating critical awareness. In Greek settings, such practice could involve exploring culturally varied English texts that reflect themes including migration, identity, and the sense of belonging. Adolescents simultaneously acquire both linguistic competency and civic empathy.

3.2.4 The teacher's role in sustaining inclusive ethos

The role of the teacher is inherently ethical and relational rather than merely technical. Teachers serve as mediators who cultivate a climate of equality (Ainscow, 2020). Educators need to develop an acute awareness concerning their own biases, acknowledging how these elements impact interactions. Teaching is reconfigured as an ethical practice fundamentally grounded on the principle of relational attention and care (Noddings, 2013). Professional development should place emphasis on cultivating inclusive dispositions, such as empathy and cultural responsiveness. When teachers model principles of inclusion via dialogic learning, learners tend to internalize these values (Ainscow, 2020; Gay, 2018).

3.2.5 Inclusion as continuous renewal

Inclusion should be understood as a continuous process of renewal critical reflection (Ainscow, 2020). Educational settings evolve as dynamic communities where the ongoing presence of diverse students

reconfigures the pedagogical terrain. Educators must constantly scrutinize whether their methods foster genuine learner empowerment or risk inadvertently reproducing exclusion. By anchoring pedagogy in humanistic ideals, teachers are able to guarantee that inclusion is a transformative educational philosophy.

3.3 Inclusive literacy: integration, language identity, and empathy

Inclusive literacy embodies the incorporation of three basic tenets: linguistic proficiency, human-oriented comprehension, and social integration (UNESCO, 2017). It broadens the concept of literacy toward a morally grounded practice that acknowledges readers as cultural entities whose identities shape their interpretation of meaning (Gay, 2018; Noddings, 2013). Inclusive literacy provides a mechanism to synthesize the acquisition of language with the formation of student identity and empathy development (Nussbaum, 2010; Norton, 2013).

3.3.1 From functional literacy to inclusive literacy

Historically, conventional literacy models frequently characterized reading as the ability to decipher and process information (Freire, 2000). Inclusive literacy views literacy as a contextualized, evolving practice that actively connects language to personal experience and identity (Kramersch, 2009). The framework recognizes the diverse range of literacies that students possess, incorporating communicative, digital, and intercultural competences. In Greek environments, this involves acknowledging that students' linguistic repertoires function as assets that facilitate comprehension (García & Wei, 2014). The use of translanguaging practices allow students to interpret English texts through the lens of their lived realities.

3.3.2 Language and identity in inclusive literacy

Language and identity are inextricably connected. Inclusive literacy pedagogy explicitly acknowledges this interplay, encouraging learners to find representation and respect for their identities within educational resources. For Greek adolescents, reading varied English texts that explore themes such as migration or belonging is highly likely to correspond to their sociocultural contexts. When students engage with characters whose challenges reflect their own, they develop empathy and intercultural awareness (Kramersch, 2009). Educators curate reading materials that possess cultural pertinence and emotional relevance. Texts can serve both as mirrors that reveal learners' identities and windows which provide insight into others' experiences.

3.3.3 Empathy as a literacy competence

Empathy could also be developed as a literacy mastery. Reading comprehension means immersing oneself in other's perspectives and decoding emotions implicit in narrative discourse. Research confirms that engaging with narratives improves not only empathetic reasoning but broader social comprehension (Nussbaum., 2009). Dialogical reading promotes meaning-making by fostering students' analytical reasoning and emotional responses. This increases comprehension while developing interpersonal awareness (Alexander, 2022). The use of empathy-driven texts facilitates the integration of textual understanding with ethical development.

3.3.4 Multimodality and culturally responsive practice

Inclusive literacy acknowledges that learners acquire meaning via multiple channels, including text, visual and auditory input. Integrating multimodal resources, such as videos and graphic novels, accommodates diverse learning styles (Jewitt, 2008). Culturally responsive pedagogy embeds literacy within the social contexts of learners. Teachers may develop projects that enable students to be

responsive through artwork, role-play, or digital storytelling (Gay, 2018). Reading comprehension activities integrating collaborative tasks encourage learner-centered meaning-making.

3.3.5 Inclusive literacy as human flourishing

Inclusive literacy positions reading as a pathway to human flourishing, aligning with the Aristotelian principle that education should foster both reason (logos) and moral character (ethos) (Nussbaum, 2010). Literacy is redefined to the understanding of life. This approach provides Greek EFL adolescents with the tools to acquire literacy as citizens of a diverse world, developing linguistic flexibility and moral awareness.

4. SOLUTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To develop reading comprehension pedagogy that bases itself on the humanistic and inclusive principles, educators must abandon conventional language-teaching models and redefine the classroom as a dialogic, ethical, and participatory space. Greek EFL classrooms, shaped by diverse linguistic backgrounds and heterogeneous academic profiles, are well suited for adopting transformative literacy methods.

The following section outlines a pedagogical model based on humanistic principles that seeks to integrate moral imagination, critical thinking, and inclusive literacy into reading comprehension instruction.

4.1 Dialogic reading as a humanistic practice

Dialogic reading posits that meaning construction is a product of social interaction and collective inquiry, in contrast to its traditional conceptualization as an act of individualized cognitive processing or isolated decoding (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). In these contexts, comprehension transforms into a collaborative process wherein students engage in the co-construction of understanding via conversation and questioning. This approach is congruent with the objectives of Greek inclusive education, which emphasize equality and accessibility (Ainscow, 2020). Implementing dialogic reading enables teachers to facilitate interpretive classroom discourse that surpasses surface-level meaning. Open-ended questions such as “Why do you think the character acted this way?” or “What is the moral lesson that this story teaches?” stimulate learners to integrate language comprehension with ethical judgment and emotional insight. Studies indicate that dialogic engagement reinforces empathic awareness, critical analytical skills, and a sense of social belonging (Alexander, 2020).

4.2 Integrating literature and the humanities

The humanities constitute the ethical and interpretative framework of this instructional model. Literature, philosophy, and the arts facilitate the exploration of moral issues and human emotions, repositioning reading as an ethically engaged practice rather than mechanical decoding (Nussbaum, 2010). Engagement with humanistic texts cultivates learners’ ability to interpret narratives as expressions of fundamental human experience, integrating language acquisition with cultural awareness. In Greek EFL classrooms, the inclusion of literary genres such as short stories, poetry, and philosophical excerpts facilitates engagement with universal themes while consolidating linguistic skills. Lessons structured around ethical reflection and intercultural dialogue prompt students to analyze how values, decisions, and social identities are represented through language, aligning with Dewey’s (1938) notion of “reflective experience.”

4.3 Differentiated instruction and universal design for learning

Inclusive literacy requires instructional methods that address heterogeneous cognitive and linguistic profiles. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework promotes adaptable learning designs that integrate multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression (CAST, 2018). The application of these principles in Greek EFL classrooms ensures equitable textual access for learners, including those with learning difficulties, disabilities, or multilingual profiles. Learners may articulate understanding through modalities such as oral presentations, graphic organizers, or digital storytelling (Tomlinson, 2014).

4.4 Translanguaging as an inclusive strategy

The multilingual composition of Greek EFL contexts offers opportunities to implement translanguaging as an inclusive pedagogical tool. Translanguaging enables learners to employ their linguistic repertoires, including Greek and English, in order to engage in collaborative text interpretation (García & Lin, 2017). This approach treats the first language as a cognitive and cultural resource that enhances comprehension and critical thinking. Learners may use L1 for annotating texts, interpreting metaphors, or exploring moral implications prior to articulating interpretations in the target language. These processes enhance conceptual depth and metalinguistic awareness (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020), while acknowledging learners' linguistic identities.

4.5 Critical and empathetic assessment

Within a human-centered framework, assessment shifts from standardized performance toward reflective, interpretative, and empathetic dimensions of learning. Inclusive assessment conceptualizes literacy as a process of meaning-making (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Instruments such as reading journals, portfolios, and group projects enable learners to demonstrate understanding through interpretative engagement. Such assessment transcends linguistic performance and supports ethical sensitivity and cross-cultural competence.

4.6 Teacher as facilitator of humanistic inquiry

In a humanistic and inclusive reading framework, the instructor's role evolves from knowledge transmitter to facilitator of inquiry-based learning. The teacher fosters discussions that connect textual understanding with ethical reasoning, promoting students' meaning-making through reflection and dialogue (Biesta, 2015). Curiosity, empathy, and critical openness are modeled, while professional growth in inclusive instruction and socio-emotional learning remains fundamental.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR FUTURE INQUIRY

The recommended approach unveils diverse research frontiers. Research agendas need to evolve toward a holistic analysis addressing ethical reasoning and communicative flexibility.

5.1 Empirical investigation of the framework effectiveness

Future lines of inquiry ought to be structured to evaluate the educational impact on critical non-empirically measurable capacities that involve empathy and ethical reasoning (Nussbaum, 2010). It is essential to adopt a mixed-methods research design (Ainscow, 2020; Alexander, 2020). Further scholarly work should examine the correlation between engagement with cultural texts and the

expansion of narrative interpretative imagination (Nussbaum, 2010). Longitudinal research could track the impact of exposure to literary moral complexities on shaping pro-social dispositions. Comparative empirical research between conventional and learner-centered classrooms would yield evidence for pedagogical shift at a national scale (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

5.2 Development and evaluation of teacher professional development

The teacher's identity evolves to an ethical mediator (Biesta, 2015). Research ought to concentrate on holistic teacher-training initiatives prioritizing inclusive competencies, specifically empathic engagement and socio-cultural attunement (Gay, 2018; Noddings, 2013). Research could investigate training techniques such as communities of practice (Ainscow, 2020). Analyzing "relational Care" would provide insight into preserving an inclusive setting (Noddings, 2013).

5.3 Investigation of multimodal and digital texts

Studies should explore the use of genuine digital narratives and graphic novels for differentiated learning (Jewitt, 2008). Research can employ diverse approaches to engagement contextualized for the Greek EFL environment (CAST, 2018). Researchers need to explore collaborative projects as authentic assessment instruments (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Scholars should further investigate "digital empathy."

5.4 Studying translanguaging practices and epistemic justice

Further research is required to identify the optimal parameters for implementing translanguaging strategies (García & Wei, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Precise effects on the decoding of English figurative language merit scholarly investigation (García & Lin, 2017). Pedagogical adaptations are imperative to uphold epistemic justice (Fricker, 2007).

5.5 Exploring policy implementation and civic outcomes

Studies have to examine aspects that encourage or hinder implementation in light of standardized testing. Research needs to investigate how empathy extends to active engagement in Greece's multicultural society (Nussbaum, 2010). Scholars ought to investigate whether humanistic EFL pedagogy contributes to enhanced civic involvement (Biesta, 2015).

5.6 Long-term socio-emotional impact and resilience

Research could examine how humanistic pedagogy functions as a protective psychological environment for marginalized students (Ainscow, 2020). Scholars can explore the extent to which students cultivate stronger self-identities (Norton, 2013).

5.7 Comparative global frameworks

Research ought to investigate the ways in which other Mediterranean countries incorporate humanities-oriented approaches. "Literacy as a practice of justice" may offer an expanded repertoire of strategies. This may uncover universal challenges for cultivating empathy (Alexander, 2022). Future research should redirect emphasis toward promoting the development of each learner as an empathetic agent.

6. CONCLUSION

The incorporation of humanities redefines reading comprehension as a profoundly moral and transformative endeavor. When taught as a procedure that incorporates interpretation and dialogue, it contributes to the cultivation of empathy. This positions literacy as a vehicle for civic engagement. In the digital landscape, literacy is often interpreted through measurable competencies. Nonetheless, being literate entails the practical deployment of language to grasp the essence of human experience (Nussbaum, 2010). Humanistic reading pedagogy conceptualizes education as a pathway toward humanization, consistent with the cultivation of intellect and virtue. Educators restore the moral purpose of literacy by connecting intellectual insight to moral compassion.

Inclusiveness signifies valuing diversity as an asset. It entails creating spaces that enable all learners to engage collectively in meaning-making (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Inclusive literacy prompts teachers to view each student as a co-creator of meaning. Such activities reflect democratic ideals (Biesta, 2015). Empathy constitutes the central component of humanistic literacy. Reading promotes the ability to adopt the perspectives of others, which Nussbaum (2010) conceptualizes as the “narrative imagination.” In Greek EFL education, empathy-driven reading allows learners to perceive cultural differences as avenues for understanding. Engagement with international literary texts enhances awareness of interconnected global challenges (Kramersch, 2009).

Knowledge is actively constructed through debate and reflective inquiry. The classroom evolves into a democratic environment. Literacy presents a social and ethical practice that fosters learning with and through others. A humanity-oriented methodology counters the tendency to frame EFL reading in purely utilitarian objectives. It advances a conception of literacy as an ethically grounded obligation. Within the Greek context, the EFL classroom operates as a microcosm of intellectual interaction. By conceptualizing language acquisition as intrinsically connected to moral imagination, teachers foster the development of responsible and empathetic citizens.

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8. Innovation, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Adult Education for People with Disabilities: Principles, Practices, and Evaluation of Education Programs

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Abstract: Adult education, especially when it comes to people with disabilities, acts as a means of social cohesion, personal development, and integration. This study highlights the importance of transitioning from traditional learning models to self-directed and transformative environments, where experience, reflection, and self-motivation reinforce empowerment and self-determination. Inclusion is approached as a political and value-based choice, with the aim of removing social and systemic barriers and securing the right of access. Universal design for learning plays a central role, broadening opportunities for participation through diverse forms of expression and technological innovation. At the same time, European digital accessibility strategies and standards ensure that tools and environments are inclusive. Teaching is organized with differentiated objectives (knowledge, skills, attitudes), using a variety of media such as Braille, subtitled videos, audio materials, and alternative communication systems. The social dimension is reinforced through collaborative teams and supportive roles without loss of autonomy. Staff are continuously trained in accessible technologies and empowering practices, while assessment using the CIPP model ensures multi-level quality and participation. In this way, adult education becomes a lever for social change and democratic development. The study is based on a narrative bibliographic investigation of international and Greek scientific sources, policy documents, and institutional frameworks, with the aim of synthesizing principles, practices, and models related to inclusion and accessibility in adult education for people with disabilities.

Keywords: adult education, inclusion, digital accessibility, CIPP evaluation, educational innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern adult education is a key tool for social empowerment, solidarity, and the promotion of lifelong learning for all citizens. Growing social inequalities and demographic changes make it imperative to systematically promote inclusion and universal accessibility for people with disabilities, in order to ensure their equal participation in the learning process and, by extension, in social and professional life. This choice reinforces social justice, reduces exclusion, and contributes to the formation of resilient communities that offer opportunities for development to all, regardless of individual or social characteristics.

In this context, Lifelong Learning Centers (LLCs) are emerging as key institutions for the implementation of equality and inclusion policies. Through the design and implementation of programs specifically tailored to adults with disabilities, LLCs function not only as providers of knowledge, but also as laboratories for social experimentation, innovation, and cultural transformation. The development of programs based on principles such as Universal Design for Learning, the social model of disability (Michael Oliver), and transformative learning (Jack Mezirow) contributes significantly to enhancing the autonomy, active participation, and social integration of learners, while also influencing the way in which educators and institutions perceive the concept of equality in practice.

Promoting inclusion in adult education involves removing physical and technological barriers and requires the adoption of a broader value-based and pedagogical approach that places the individual at

the center of the learning process (Dumitru et al., 2024). The organization of programs needs to take into account different learning profiles, psychosocial parameters, and cultural and linguistic characteristics of participants, while strengthening the role of the educator as an agent of social change and democratic transformation.

Within this context, this study seeks to explore how the principles of innovation, inclusion, and universal accessibility can be integrated into the design, implementation, administration, and evaluation of adult education programs for people with disabilities, highlighting examples of practices that enhance the active participation, self-determination, and social empowerment of learners.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper is based on a narrative review of the literature, with the aim of synthesizing and critically reading contemporary scientific knowledge on the education of adults with disabilities. This approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for the combined analysis of theoretical frameworks, research findings, policy documents, and good practices, without the limitations of a systematic review.

The literature review included scientific articles, collective volumes, institutional documents, and European strategies published mainly in the last two decades, with an emphasis on issues of inclusion, universal learning design, adult education organization management, and program evaluation. The sources were drawn from international databases (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar), as well as from the official websites of European and national organizations.

The analysis of sources was organized thematically, leading to the formulation of the study's main axes, such as the identification of educational needs, the design of inclusive programs, administration, and evaluation with an emphasis on accessibility. This approach allows for the interconnection of theory and practice and the identification of coherent policy and implementation proposals.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ADULT EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The theoretical framework of adult education and social inclusion combines learning theories, sociological and pedagogical approaches, and rights policies. The individual is recognized as an active participant in shaping their life and not as a passive recipient of knowledge. Historically, adult education has distanced itself from the linear and formal school model, which focuses on the transmission of information from the instructor to the learner, introducing transformative learning as a means of self-awareness and social reconstruction. Based on Mezirow's theory (2000), transformative learning focuses on critical reflection, the continuous re-evaluation of personal experiences and beliefs, and the cultivation of conscious decision-making, while the self-directed learning analyzed by Merriam and Bierema (2014) recognizes the right and ability of adults to define their own learning journey through the dynamics of social interactions.

Social inclusion in education is a process of technical interventions in the curriculum and a complex ethical and political program. This approach, as described by Banks (2020), links knowledge, work, and active participation with the defense of the rights of marginalized and socially excluded groups, seeking to reject all forms of discrimination and restore equality of participation. Inclusion thus takes on a distinct character, recognizing the particular experiences, needs, and desires of each individual.

In recent decades, scientific literature on persons with disabilities has evolved significantly, focusing on the social model of disability. This model, formulated by Oliver (1996), is now a key reference framework for educational research and support policies. According to this model, disability is not an

individual biological deficiency, but a social construct, intensified by the organization and functioning of social structures, material infrastructure and prevailing perceptions. At the heart of this approach is the need to demand accessibility, self-determination, and the removal of barriers that limit participation in all areas of social life (Mastrothanasis et al., 2025a, 2025b). The literature points out that educational exclusion is exacerbated when disability coexists with other forms of social diversity, such as migrant origin and linguistic diversity. Empirical data from Greece show that institutional practices and educational classifications can lead to the overrepresentation of immigrant populations in special education, highlighting the importance of a cross-thematic and critical approach to inclusion (Zouganeli & Mastrothanasis, 2019).

Adult education, responding to the demands of the social model, is now turning towards universal learning design, adopting the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Rose & Meyer, 2006). UDL shapes educational frameworks in which every individual, regardless of type or degree of disability, can participate equally and effectively, without the need for subsequent personal modifications. UDL applies alternative ways of presenting knowledge, flexible teaching methods, various forms of expression, and diverse motivations, responding to multiple learning styles. These principles are documented as international standards, actively utilizing technology and pedagogical innovation. Contemporary studies, such as that of McGinty (2018), recognize UDL as pivotal in shaping learning environments where individuals with disabilities gain a voice, an active role, and increased access to opportunities.

At the European level, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in adult education is institutionalized by the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030, which focuses on establishing a framework of rights and obligations for all Member States, ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities in learning, work, and society. In addition, the WCAG 2.1 guidelines for digital accessibility, as reflected in the policies and educational practices of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2016), set technical and functional standards for educational materials, digital platforms, and electronic environments so that access is guaranteed and not negotiable (Paxou & Mastrothanasis, 2024).

The diversity of the modern educational group in adult education requires recognition of the autonomy and uniqueness of each member, so that inclusion policies and practices are not limited to the formal adoption of rules, but are applied with empathy, pedagogical competence, and constant adaptation to the dynamic needs of society. Within this logic, adult education must translate the principles of inclusiveness into specific teaching approaches, assessment procedures, forms of support and interaction, highlighting the leading role of the educator as an agent of social change and a facilitator of human development.

4. IDENTIFYING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: METHODOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS

Identifying the educational needs of adults with disabilities is a multidimensional and complex field, which requires a combination of traditional research approaches and modern accessibility practices. In the context of Lifelong Learning Centers, it is recommended that the investigation of educational needs be structured in a way that takes into account the wide range of experiences, perceptions, and systemic barriers that affect people with disabilities. The development of a coherent theoretical research framework is important, as it allows for the methodical analysis of the factors that shape their learning needs. The literature emphasizes the value of using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure the validity of conclusions and the availability of equal opportunities for participation for all learners, regardless of their particularities (JCreswell, 2011; Tsibouklis, 2008).

Among the recommended methodological tools, on-site observation in places where potential trainees are active is particularly useful. Direct contact with social and spatial environments allows for the recording of not only explicit statements but also unspoken access difficulties, social barriers, and support networks that can mitigate these obstacles (Robson, 2024). Field observation helps to identify the real dimension of inclusion, beyond formal administrative data.

Semi-structured interviews are considered equally important, which, according to the literature, are an effective means of investigating individual needs and preferences. It is recommended that questions be formulated in a way that takes into account the cognitive, sensory, and psychosocial characteristics of the participants, often with the contribution of personal assistants or members of their family and social environment (Vergidis & Karalis, 1999; Karalis, 2005). At the same time, international practice highlights the need for tools (e.g., questionnaires) to be offered in multiple formats: digital and printed versions, large print, embossed or Braille, as well as compatible with screen recognition software, in accordance with WCAG 2.1 (2021) specifications.

Furthermore, the literature suggests the use of interactive observation with minimal interference, in order to avoid altering the participants' usual behaviors and to record authentic forms of interaction with the environment and with their personal assistants (Tsibouklis, 2008). This observation allows for the mapping of not only obvious but also less visible systemic or psychological difficulties, which are often decisive factors in shaping learning needs.

Contemporary theory emphasizes that the investigation of educational needs should not be limited to technical characteristics of data collection, but should incorporate practices that ensure the self-determination and active participation of persons with disabilities. The participatory design of assessment tools (questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, determination of the place and time of data collection) is presented as a key criterion for quality and accessibility (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016), as it ensures respect for personal experiences and enhances the visibility of learners' wishes.

The relevant literature points out that learners with disabilities encounter multi-level barriers that extend beyond the institutional and family context and are linked to cultural norms, inadequate educational background, limited digital literacy, and difficult access to care services (Karalis, 2005; Tsibouklis, 2008). The lack of support structures, low familiarity with technology, and limited participation in organized learning environments exacerbate the burden of social integration (Creswell, 2011). Therefore, physical access to education and care facilities is a necessary but not sufficient condition; it is also necessary to adapt information, use technological aids, utilize intermediaries, and recognize the cultural and linguistic differences of each disability subgroup.

Studies agree that the investigation of educational needs must be supported by continuous and two-way communication between educators, the social environment, and learners. This approach broadens the range of topics under consideration, incorporating issues of autonomy, personal skills management, digital literacy, and social participation, in accordance with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2006) and the social model of disability (McGinty, 2018; Oliver, 1996).

The literature shows that a multi-method approach to identifying needs enhances learners' right to participate and their ability to express themselves effectively. Providing alternative means of expression, ensuring technological accessibility, strengthening self-determination, and providing parallel psychosocial support are the prerequisites for creating inclusive learning environments. Understanding needs with respect for each individual's uniqueness makes it possible to design programs that meet their aspirations and establish truly accessible and effective educational environments (European Agency, 2016; Karalis, 2005; McGinty, 2018).

5. DESIGNING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The design of educational programs for people with disabilities in adult education is a complex and dynamic field that requires scientific documentation, methodical approach, and a strong human-centered orientation. The central axis of the approach is the clear classification of educational objectives into levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, so that educational planning responds to the specific needs of learners and the principles of equality and inclusion (Giannakopoulou, 2003 in Karalis, 2005; Karalis, 2005). The classic three-part distinction between program objectives reflects the multi-dimensional nature of adult learning, especially for people with disabilities who have different levels of accessibility and participation.

In practice, the thematic unit “Human Relations and Communication” aimed at people with disabilities is a model example, as it is not limited to providing theoretical knowledge about communication, but also delves into the practical learning of interpersonal communication techniques, as well as conflict management and difficult behaviors. The educational philosophy, in line with Mezirow’s Transformative Learning theory (2000) and sociocultural empowerment approaches, considers learning as a field of reflection on personal experiences and changing attitudes towards diversity, acceptance, and participation (Banks, 2020).

The use of innovative teaching practices and tools is the next critical step. The integration of presentation formats that ensure accessibility, such as the use of large fonts, Braille, audio lectures, videos with subtitles and descriptive narration adapted to people with visual or hearing impairments, interactive digital applications, and portfolios, whether printed or electronic, are basic requirements according to international guidelines for universal access to education (European Agency, 2016; WCAG 2.1, 2021). The ability to manage material through technological aids promotes the autonomy of learners with disabilities, facilitating interaction with the content as well as with trainers and classmates (Mavrogianni et al., 2025).

Furthermore, diversifying the educational process through personalized learning paths is a design requirement, since each person with a disability has a different learning profile, different accessibility needs, and different motivations for participating in education. This is achieved by incorporating tasks and activities that offer a choice of communication methods, such as the use of Greek sign language for people with hearing impairments, alternative or augmentative communication (AAC) systems for people with motor or intellectual disabilities, and modern hearing aid technologies for those who need them (Karalis, 2005; McGinty, 2018). The integration of these alternative modes of communication makes the educational program truly inclusive and sensitive to diversity. Art, as a field of free and non-coercive engagement, has been documented in the literature as a space where self-motivation, creative expression, and a sense of meaning are cultivated, elements that are directly linked to the sustainability of learning participation. Although relevant studies have focused on child populations, the findings highlight broader mechanisms of engagement through art, which can be applied analogously to the education of adults with disabilities (Mastrothanasias et al., 2018; Mastrothanasias & Kladaki, 2020).

Beyond individual learning and autonomy, contemporary educational practice in programs for people with disabilities highlights the importance of working in small groups, where collaborative activity and social interaction are promoted as factors in learning and social integration (Karalis, 2005; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The participation of personal assistants, interpreters, or companions within the group has a reinforcing effect, not as a substitute for the autonomy of the learner with a disability, but as a tool for removing practical barriers to learning and empowering the individual to realize their potential at the level they desire without depending on their environment.

In the same context, the use of artistic and experiential practices, such as educational drama, storytelling, visual expression, and creative movement techniques, supports the learning process by enhancing communication, the expression of emotions, and the participation of adults with disabilities. These practices facilitate active engagement, especially in cases where verbal communication or conventional forms of teaching limit the possibility of participation, and contribute to the creation of a safe and inclusive learning environment that strengthens the self-image and social presence of learners (Mastrothanasis et al., 2018).

An important parameter in the design of educational programs is the cultivation of quality forms of contact and emotional understanding within the learning group. The literature shows that meaningful interpersonal contact and the development of emotional intelligence contribute to the formation of more positive attitudes towards people experiencing mental health difficulties and to the reduction of stereotypes and social distance, enhancing acceptance and inclusion in community learning contexts (Andreopoulou et al., 2024). In the context of adult education for people with disabilities, these factors reinforce the creation of a safe learning environment where trust, mutual respect, and active participation become possible.

The program's reference framework is therefore shaped as an active and constantly evolving field that assimilates the changes and new demands of social and digital reality. The increasing penetration of technology into the daily lives of adults, and especially people with disabilities, reinforces the need for access to digital services, information on new forms of communication, and contact with the contemporary culture of digital participation (European Education Area, 2024; OPEN University, 2025). Accessible software, advanced digital education platforms, and continuous training for educators are prerequisites for inclusion and learning success, ensuring that no disability is a barrier to acquiring knowledge and participating in social life.

According to Greek and European literature, inclusion and accessibility are not only technical characteristics of adult education programs, but fundamental rights that must be ensured through political will, organizational readiness, and constant vigilance on the part of the designer and trainer (European Agency, 2016; Karalis, 2005; WCAG 2.1, 2021). Educators who act as agents of inclusion must be familiar with and apply the principles of Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2006) and adapt their material according to the capabilities and limitations of each group.

The ongoing interaction between the educational process and developments in the digital society, such as the international promotion of adult digital literacy and the increased use of technological applications to facilitate everyday activities, requires the genuine participation of persons with disabilities in shaping the educational environment, evaluating and improving practices (EAEA, 2023). The involvement of the stakeholders themselves in the design and implementation of actions is important, as interventions must be meaningful and have an impact on their lives. Transforming disability from an obstacle into an opportunity for learning and social integration is a key indicator of the success of an adult education program and vindicates in practice the humanistic and democratic values of educational science (EAEA, 2023; Giannakopoulou, 2003; Karalis, 2005; Stufflebeam, 2003).

6. MANAGEMENT OF AN INNOVATIVE ADULT EDUCATION ORGANIZATION

The management of an innovative adult education organization, such as Lifelong Learning Centers (LLCs), is based on a rich institutional and theoretical background that promotes networks of collectivity, open participation, and inclusion. According to Knowles (2015), adult education is shaped by a democratic dynamic that respects the experiences, needs, and self-determined administrative choices of participants. The administrative model adopted by the Lifelong Learning Center is not limited to

traditional, hierarchical, and bureaucratic structures, but draws on the most innovative practices of the international literature on adult learning, where two-way communication, collective decision-making, and respect for diversity become critical pillars of any educational change (Karalis, 2005; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015).

The organizational structure of the Lifelong Learning Center, based on the principles of active participation, reflects a synthesis of deliberative governance where all staff members, regardless of position or specialty, are invited to contribute with their ideas, experience, and the advantage of interaction. The literature shows that the development of collaborative networks among educators contributes significantly to the formation of an innovative organizational climate and the enhancement of professional creativity, which is a key prerequisite for the sustainability of inclusive educational organisations (Xafakos et al., 2020). The logic of collectivity erodes traditional forms of authority, enhancing the expression of initiatives and the mobilization of human resources, to the point where the elimination of stereotypes, the recognition and acceptance of diversity become not just wishes, but institutionally enshrined practices (Karalis, 2005; Tsibouklis, 2005). The Lifelong Learning Center promotes equality in decision-making, thus establishing a developmental culture that favors adaptation and continuous renewal of educational offerings, resulting in a reduction in the risk of reproducing social exclusion, especially for people with disabilities.

The management of the organization actively promotes multidirectional communication, i.e., the open flow of information and ideas between all individual sectors of the KDB, but also with the wider social system. At the same time, the development of communities of practice and peer learning in digital environments enhances collective knowledge building and the participation of the organization's members in the learning and management process. Studies in online communities of practice show that peer interaction supports both the professional development of trainers and the empowerment of learners, especially in environments where physical presence is limited or differentiated due to accessibility needs (Geladari & Mastrothanasis, 2021). The integration of such practices in Lifelong Learning Centers enhances the sustainability, collectivity, and democratic functioning of educational structures. Collaborations with local and national bodies add a multi-level dynamic to educational administration. The administrative team, open to the demands of interconnection, develops a wide range of actions focused on strengthening inclusion, developing community alliances, and transferring know-how from other fields (EPALE, 2024; Karalis, 2005; Tsimbouklis, 2005).

The presence of a scientific supervisor is an important factor in this context, as academic supervision guarantees the implementation of scientifically documented strategies, the systematic evaluation of training programs, and the adoption of innovations that respond to contemporary teaching theories and the educational requirements of the respective population group. The scientific supervisor acts not only as a program manager or educator, but also as a link between theory, research, and practice, ensuring reflection, self-observation, and systematic improvement of the KDB's activities.

An integral part of this administrative process is the cooperation strategy, as the continuous training of staff is geared towards the ongoing improvement of universal accessibility, raising awareness of the contemporary educational needs of adults with disabilities, and enhancing the usability of the educational tools used. This network of training activities aims to build a modern professional identity for educators who are able to meet the demands of a diverse, differentiated, and fully accessible learning environment. International literature emphasizes that trainers' metacognitive awareness is directly linked to their ability to reflect on teaching practice, adapt strategies, and respond to the diverse needs of learners. Cross-cultural studies show that cultivating metacognitive skills in trainers is a key factor in the quality of inclusive education and the sustainability of innovative learning

organizations (Koulianou et al., 2025). At the same time, empirical data show that the psychological well-being of educators, their cognitive and emotional attitudes towards work, and the management of professional burnout are directly linked to innovative behaviour and the functioning of inclusive educational organizations. Recognizing and systematically supporting these parameters strengthens organizational resilience and makes continuing education a strategic pillar of management in Lifelong Learning Centre's (Gkontelos & Mastrothanasis, 2025). At the same time, research data show that trainers' beliefs about self-efficacy influence their level of engagement, their persistence in the face of difficulties, and their willingness to adopt inclusive and innovative practices, which reinforces the importance of systematic professional development in adult education (Mastrothanasis, Zervoudakis & Xafakos, 2021). Furthermore, continuous training, as described both in international literature (European Agency for Special Needs, 2016; McGinty, 2018) and in national standards (Karalis, 2005; Tsimouklis, 2005), ensures the integrity, quality, and timeliness of administrative and educational practices. International and Greek literature highlights that the professional development needs and administrative competencies of executives are directly linked to the effectiveness, innovative culture, and sustainability of educational organizations, a factor that makes systematic training necessary in the field of adult education (Raptis et al., 2025).

The integration of Universal Design principles plays a decisive role in the success of the Lifelong Learning Center's administration. The educational and administrative team adopts the established guidelines of the European Union and the Greek state, as reflected in national and European legislation on the equality of persons with disabilities in access to education (European Disability Strategy 2021-2030; Greece: National Plan for Disability). The consolidation of universal design is not limited to physical infrastructure (ramps, Braille systems, elevators), but extends to educational platforms, the accessibility of teaching materials, the possibility of participation in all phases of planning and evaluation, and the systematic upgrading of the organization's capabilities for effective action (EPA-LE, 2024; WCAG, 2021).

All processes related to accessibility and inclusion management are subject to ongoing monitoring in order to adapt to evolving scientific and social requirements, and the continuous improvement of educational and administrative structures serves as an internal quality control mechanism and an outward-looking social responsibility policy. quality standard and an outward-looking social responsibility policy. Continuous monitoring and systematic upgrades guarantee the modernization of the Lifelong Learning Center, harmonization with international accessibility certifications, and strengthening the confidence of the community, especially vulnerable groups, in lifelong learning and social participation (European Agency for Special Needs, 2016; Karalis, 2005).

In this context, innovation in adult education is not limited to the use of new technologies or alternative teaching methods, but refers primarily to institutional and organizational shifts that redefine the way in which programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated. The integration of accessibility as a fixed organizational principle rather than a supplementary intervention constitutes a form of social innovation that enhances the sustainability of educational structures and their long-term social impact.

The Lifelong Learning Center presents a living model of adult education organization management, where the principles of collectivity, inclusion, and universal accessibility are systematically integrated into every aspect of organizational and teaching practice. The organization promotes lifelong learning for adults as a right and a community good, offering a model of governance that constantly responds to the interactions between society, politics, and science, and demonstrating that innovation in adult education is feasible, sustainable, and socially beneficial for all members of the community, especially people with disabilities (Karalis, 2005; Knowles et al., 2015; Tsimbouklis, 2005).

7. EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND ACCESSIBILITY

The evaluation of educational programs at the Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL) is a key process for ensuring quality, effectiveness, and inclusion in adult education, especially when it comes to groups such as people with disabilities. Based on the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model developed by Stufflebeam (2003), the evaluation process is divided into four distinct phases: context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation. The CIPP model provides an open and holistic framework that allows not only for checking the compatibility of the initial design with the actual needs of the target population, but also for focusing on continuous improvement, monitoring, and evaluating the social impact of the program (Karalis, 2005; Stufflebeam, 2003).

The CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model forms a dynamic and cyclical evaluation framework, which is not limited to the final review of results, but supports continuous improvement and informed decision-making at all stages of an educational program. Context evaluation focuses on identifying needs, problems, and social conditions that necessitate educational intervention. Input evaluation concerns the design, available resources, human resources, and infrastructure that support the implementation of the program. Process evaluation monitors the implementation process, teaching practices, and participants' experiences during implementation. Finally, the outcome evaluation (Product) assesses the effects of the program in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and social participation, taking into account both expected and unexpected results (Stufflebeam, 2003).

At the framework assessment level, this process focuses on identifying needs, analyzing the social and organizational environment, and diagnosing the problems that the educational program aims to address. Particular emphasis is placed on exploring the educational, psychosocial, and cultural parameters that affect people with disabilities, using accessible questionnaires and tools that ensure that the voices of these individuals are heard and recorded equally (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016; Karalis, 2005). Adapting assessment tools for accessibility requires the use of technology so that each participant can adequately express their experiences, challenges, and expectations (McGinty, 2018; WCAG, 2021).

Entry assessment prioritizes ensuring that human resources, financial resources and technical infrastructure are inclusive. For example, accessibility to spaces, technological tools, software, and platforms is essential before the program is implemented, which is often a major barrier to participation for people with disabilities (European Agency, 2016; Karalis, 2005). Recording limitations and possibilities provides the basis for improvements before teaching begins, so that the program is truly open to all.

When evaluating the process, the aim is to continuously monitor the degree of implementation of the educational program in relation to its objectives. This highlights the importance of psychosocial integration, motivation, self-confidence, and social inclusion of persons with disabilities, as it is not only the provision of knowledge and skills that is evaluated, but also the way in which persons with disabilities themselves perceive their participation as members of an inclusive educational community (Ross-Gordon, 2021). The ability of learners to evaluate not only the program but also themselves as self-evaluators is particularly valuable: it enhances autonomy, self-confidence, and active participation in decision-making (Fetterman, 2001; Karalis, 2005).

The evaluation of the outcome concerns the final assessment of the program's impact on knowledge, skills, attitudes, but also on general social empowerment and participation. Here, accessibility includes the selection of alternative forms of expression for assessing success, such as portfolios, oral presentations, videos, and digital assignments, so that each person can be assessed based on

their abilities and needs (Rose & Meyer, 2006). Linking assessment to specific indicators, such as improved social networking, increased self-confidence, reduced feelings of marginalization and improved communication, is important both for scientific documentation and for visible social impact. Contemporary psycho-pedagogical research shows that emotional intelligence and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs are associated with higher levels of well-being, motivation, and active engagement in the learning context. Although relevant studies have focused on student populations, the findings document mechanisms that can be applied analogously to the education of adults with disabilities, particularly in the context of formative and summative assessment (Vasiou et al., 2024).

Lifelong Learning Centers simultaneously reinforce reciprocal and empowering assessment, giving an active role to all participants, especially people with disabilities, not only as learners but also as members of advisory committees and promoters of good practices. Reciprocal evaluation focuses on the continuous negotiation of the program content as it evolves, making adjustments and improvements based on feedback from all members of the learning community, and responds to the need for everyone to be informed about the progress of the program and the criteria for success (Fetterman, 2001; Karalis, 2005).

Empowering evaluation, which is mainly supported by Fetterman (2001) and contemporary educational literature, gives a participatory character and the right to co-shape not only the different phases of learning, but also the evaluation process. People with disabilities do not simply participate as passive recipients of questionnaires, but can propose alternative methodologies and determine the content of the assessment according to their experiences, difficulties, and perspectives. The role of the trainer is transformed from that of an authority figure to that of a facilitator, coordinator, and mentor who supports the lifelong process of learning and assessment without discrimination or exclusion (Karalis, 2005; Knowles et al., 2015).

An important aspect of accessibility in assessment is the recognition of psychosocial parameters of learning as equally important as cognitive outcomes. Motivation, self-confidence building, social networking, and collaborative problem solving are considered key indicators of a successful educational program, especially when it comes to socially vulnerable groups. Educational policies should support the use of accessible technology tools and the integration of multimodality and personalization into the assessment process.

International literature and European standards (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016; Rose & Meyer, 2006; WCAG, 2021) point out that assessment in adult education for people with disabilities should be formative and promote continuous improvement, participation, and autonomy. In Lifelong Learning Centers, this philosophy has become a core value and the cornerstone of educational practice. Continuous feedback, equal participation in decision-making, and the right to express oneself through alternative forms of assessment are indicators of quality inclusion and accessibility, transforming the learning environment into a community of empowerment, equality, and social development.

Beyond improving educational practice, the evaluation of adult education programs for people with disabilities also serves a social accountability function. Systematic documentation of accessibility, participation, and the social impact of interventions makes Lifelong Learning Centers accountable to the community, funding bodies, and the learners themselves, enhancing transparency and public trust.

8. SPECIALIZED ACCESSIBILITY PRACTICES IN ADULT EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The implementation of accessibility consists of a dynamic network of policies and practices. The Lifelong Learning Center's facilities are physically accessible with ramps, elevators, and Braille guides, while each classroom has the necessary lighting and technological equipment to accommodate all forms of disability.

Digital accessibility is ensured through accessible educational platforms that are WCAG 2.1 compliant and compatible with screen reader software, font enlargement, and the integration of videos with subtitles and descriptive narration. Educational equipment includes interactive textbooks with alt text, Braille systems, motion controls, and enhanced hearing applications, so that people with disabilities can navigate with competence, autonomy, and safety. Ongoing staff training focuses on developing differentiated teaching and psychological support skills, providing information on the use of modern digital technologies, and managing conflicts arising from cultural and social norms. *Good Practices and International Perspectives*

The European experience provides important examples of digital educational packages for people with disabilities, mentoring workshops, work integration programs, digital literacy, and participatory governance of educational structures, which promote the advantages of universal design, a multicultural approach, and self-advocacy by learners (EAEA, 2023). Comparative studies highlight the need to disseminate European strategies on lifelong learning and the establishment of interactive and inclusive learning communities, with an emphasis on the availability of equipment, funding, and linking education to the labor market and modern forms of social participation.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Adult education for people with disabilities is a complex and dynamic process that is aligned with the principles of social justice, universal accessibility, and institutional inclusion. This study does not seek to generalize empirical results, but rather to synthesize concepts and highlight policy and practice guidelines as they emerge from international and Greek literature. The conclusions of the study are derived from a synthetic analysis of the relevant literature and highlight convergences, as well as important parameters for the application of theoretical principles in the administration and practice of adult education. The systematic investigation of educational needs through multi-methodological tools, the approach of self-determination, and ensuring the participation of people with disabilities in all phases of both program design and evaluation highlight the essential content of inclusiveness. Universal learning design, utilizing the principles of Universal Design for Learning and the differentiation of teaching methods, reinforces practical equality and enables the active involvement of individuals with different needs. Supporting innovative practices, such as incorporating material in various formats, technological accessibility, and promoting individualized and group learning, strengthens learning and accelerates social inclusion.

At the same time, the management of a modern adult education organization, such as the Lifelong Learning Center, is based on democratic participation, collectivity, and two-way communication that brings the experiences and needs of learners to the forefront. Cooperation with social and institutional bodies, ongoing staff training, and scientific documentation of practices promote an open, sustainable, and socially useful structure that incorporates the inclusion of people with disabilities as a fundamental value. Systematic evaluation, using standards such as CIPP, enables continuous feedback

and adaptation of programs to the real needs of the target population, facilitating the formation of collaborative learning communities where each learner has a voice and a role.

The emphasis on specialized accessibility practices, both in physical and digital environments, as well as the continuous training of educators, are essential prerequisites for the sustainability and success of inclusive educational interventions. Finally, European standards and international good practices demonstrate that effective inclusion requires political will, funding, links with the labor market and society, and the ongoing involvement of people with disabilities themselves in shaping the educational process. Through continuous deepening of the community's needs, recognition of each person's uniqueness, and the establishment of educational equality, adult education for persons with disabilities becomes a driving force for social change and development.

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9. Special Education in Greece from 1828 to 2000: Key Stages and European Impact

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Abstract: This study is a systematic review of the development of Special Education in Greece, from the period following the country's liberation up to the late twentieth century (1828-2000), with references to European influences. It aims to examine the main institutional strategies and organizational models established during this period, and to situate the Greek case within broader European developments. The study is a structured analysis based on scholarly and policy texts of international and Greek literature. The findings indicate that dominant perceptions of Special Education in both Greece and Europe evolved from charitable approaches, to the establishment of state-funded educational policies and eventually, to the recognition of rights based frameworks emphasizing equality and state responsibility. It comes out that the development of Special Education in Greece during the examined period was comparatively delayed and closely connected to the country's broader financial and socio-political conditions. The study is structured into chapters that chronologically outline the major stages in the foundation of Special Education in Greece, complemented by thematic parts that support a deeper understanding of the institutional change and the European influence, which facilitated a deeper change of social attitudes toward disability.

Keywords: special education, Greece, European influence, disability rights, law

1. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN GREECE

This study presents the development of Special Education in Greece from 1828 to 2000. The main research questions focus on the Greek institutional strategies and the European organizational models that contributed to the shaping education for students with disabilities at the examined period in Greece. Overtime, state-funded programs and inclusive educational practices were introduced, although implementation was slower compared to other European countries. The evolution was complex and gradual moving from early humanitarian initiatives, to more structured legal and pedagogical frameworks by the end of the twentieth century. Although the establishment of the Modern Greek state in 1828 marked the beginning of formal schooling, organized educational provisions for individuals with disabilities remained largely absent throughout much of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

The findings highlight that systematic efforts in the field of Special Education appeared only gradually in the early 1900s with the founding of specialized institutions, such as the First School for the Blind in 1906, and other early undertakings that catered to groups with special needs (Τσούκας 2022). Besides, it is revealed that there is a link between political and economical conditions, and the pace of educational development.

Thus, the foundations of Special Education which can be traced back to the nineteenth century in both Greece and across Europe were formed by a combination of shared trends and distinct national approaches, influenced by particular social and political contexts (Barton & Armstrong, 2007). Within this broader European outline, international developments and policy directions played a signif-

icant role in the evolution of Special Education in Greece, facilitating its progressive adaptation to the widespread European educational models from the nineteenth century onward. Overall, the study follows the transition from charity initiatives to rights oriented Special Education in Greece.

2. DEFINING SPECIAL EDUCATION: CONCEPT AND SIGNIFICANCE

Special Education constitutes a branch of the pedagogical science that addresses the educational needs of individuals with disabilities. Inhomogeneity, as a natural law, is reflected in human individual differences – such as physique and intelligence- which may influence personal development and adaptation. In cases of disability or mental retardation, specialized educational programs are needed (Cook & Schirmer, 2003). In order for inclusive education to function, inclusive educational strategies and trained personnel are considered essential tools to accommodate diversity and reduce barriers to learning (Ainscow, 2020). However, in practice, Special Education requires more than trained teachers and appropriate infrastructure and programs to enhance the educational outcomes of special needs students. As Slee (2011) emphasizes, ‘inclusive education is not about fixing students, but about transforming schools’ (p.34).

The concept of Special Education initially prevailed in the early 20th century in Europe, focused on the designing of educational programs, according to children’s difficulties (Goodley, 2014). Its principles agreed with the fundamental right of all children to have equal educational opportunities (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017). As evidenced by the sources, European standards have had a substantial influence on the development of special education in Greece (Τσούκας, 2022) assisting the transition from asylums and segregated models toward more inclusive educational practices (Barton & Armstrong, 2007).

3. THE EARLY FOUNDATIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN GREECE (1828-1936)

With the establishment of the Greek State after the country liberation from the Ottoman Empire, Special Education was not a subject of inquiry and reflection. At this time, the extreme poverty of the majority of the population, the unjust distribution of offices and land, the social inequality and the general illiteracy were prevalent issues (Τσούκας, 2022).

The first governor, Ioannis Kapodistrias, enacted measures among others concerning social welfare and school hygiene. The medical profession was legally established, hospitals were organized and physicians were appointed to care for the insane, and for those unable to work. In the psychiatric hospitals that were established, people with mental retardation ended up to be treated together with mental illnesses patients (Βιλιράκης, 2020). Generally, educational care for students with special needs could be provided at home, in a hospital or another setting but not within a typical mainstream school. At first, social and moralistic attention was associated with philanthropic and religious institutions with minimal state attention however, following the European trend for disability stigmatization and isolation (Μίντζα, 2022).

Between 1920 and 1950, the first special schools were established in Greece. They were influenced by contemporary European models that aimed to provide structured curricula for students with sensory or mental disabilities (Συριοπούλου-Δελλή, 2005).

In Europe, during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, institutions for the deaf, blind and mentally disabled, began to be established across Europe, following the work of pioneers like Eduard Seguin (Ainscow, 2020). These segregated schools were often based on medical models often run and funded by church or charity institutions, and in some cases state supported (Ain-

scow, 2020). However, the attitudes towards disability in Europe especially in the early nineteenth century, often led the disabled to marginalization and exclusion from mainstream school society (Barton & Armstrong, 2007).

In 1906 in Kallithea Athens, the 'Home for the Blind' was founded, under the auspices of both the Church and the State. This was the first institution to provide organized life and educational care to blind children aged 7 to 18 years in Greece. The purpose was not only to protect blind children in their childhood, but also to contribute to their future social and professional rehabilitation. E. Laskaridou, the first Director of the 'Home for the Blind', put in practice the Braille writing and reading system, and offered her services in this field for 30 years with the 'Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles' in Paris, serving as the key inspiration (Μίντζα, 2022).

In the State Educational Reform Plan of 1913 by the Minister of Education I. Tsirimokos, special needs learners were referred to as abnormal and inadequate students (Συριοπούλου-Δελλή, 2005). They attended the same class as typically developing students however without specialized education programs. As a result, they couldn't manage to succeed in their school performance, were often disappointed and under these conditions were forced to drop off school. This policy led children with special needs to educational and social isolation (Μπουζάκης, 2002).

In 1929 State Educational Reform plan by the Minister of Education K. Gontika, there were proposals including homeschooling and establishing special and open-air schools for the sick, and retarded children. Once again the plans were unsuccessful, remained unimplemented and the disabled students were ignored, since they were more difficult to train and be given working tasks (Μίντζα, 2022).

In Greece, free education of children in Primary School up to 12 years old, was firstly introduced by the politician El. Venizelos in 1930. His educational reforms meant to promote inclusion and secure a way to limit the gap between social classes although Special Education was not yet fully integrated into the public educational policy.

After the Asia Minor catastrophe (1922) that struck Greece, students were offered free vocational training in the effort of equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the evolving labor demands of society at that period. As noted by the pedagogue E. Lambadarios however, many reform-oriented initiatives failed to be fully implemented, largely as a result of political turnover and the aftermath of the international economic crisis (Τσούκας, 2022).

In 1923, the first special school for deaf children was founded on the island of Syros, with the support of the philanthropic organization 'Near East Relief' and the Greek State. It aimed to provide education and vocational rehabilitation for individuals with hearing impairments (Ζώνιου –Σιδέρη, 2011). The school was directly influenced by European educational practices that were already developing in Western Europe. When transferred to Athens in 1932, the school merged with the 'National Home of Deaf-Mute Student' a separate special primary school that followed the curriculum of typical development schools but with oral instructions. The teaching practices included letter and word recognition, slow discrete movements for lip reading, articulation and auditory therapy.

4. KEY INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION (1937)

Social attitude toward Special Education in the early twentieth century was largely determined by certain economic factors and the limited provision of State support (Στασινός, 2001). In the years of Metaxas dictatorship (Metaxas regime 1936-1941), educational policy became a field of political controversy, and Special education was minimal and restrictive with no specialized curricula. The social policy of the regime, focused more on nationalist ideas and discipline rather than on social wel-

fare for vulnerable groups. The aim was often minimal literacy or basic vocational skills for students with special needs, primarily to limit them to basic survival or preparation for specific simple tasks (Petракis, 2011).

In 1937, ELEPAP (Hellenic Society for the protection and Rehabilitation of Disabled persons), was founded in Athens, targeting to social integration of isolated children and adults with motor disabilities and developmental difficulties (Cerebral Palsy, orthopedic diseases, Polio etc.). It was a non-profit organization established to provide early intervention, physical therapeutic treatment, educational career restoration services, and parent counseling. Created by volunteers (i.e. Anna Pentzikis mother of a child with disability, doctors, social workers), and under the sponsorship of the humanitarian non-governmental organization 'Near East Foundation', the institution took mass action after World War II (Παντελιάδου&Πατσιοδήμου, 2007).

In 1937 the educational initiative *Imatiothiki tou Mathiti*, was also established, with the aim of supporting economically disadvantaged students by providing clothing, footwear, textbooks and stationery free of charge. In the same year, Law 453/1937, introduced by the Minister of education G. Georgakopoulos, permitted the establishment of special schools for children with mental retardation, marking an important step toward the institutional recognition of special education in Greece (Τσοῦκας, 2022). In response to the 1937 law, Rosa Imvrioti a student of the German psychologist and educator Eduard Spranger, who also studied in France, established a progressive special school in Athens called 'The Model Special School of Athens'. The school aimed to develop individualized teaching methods for students with special needs, and became a landmark in the advancement of Special Education in Greece. It was a structured personalized educational approach merged with pedagogical and medical strategies, influenced by the European standards of the time for Special Education (Μίντζα, 2022).

Rosa Imvrioti was the first educator to call Special Education 'Therapeutic Pedagogy'. Her vision dictated the adoption of innovative pedagogical practices, and scientifically designed educational scenarios for effective cognitive intervention in children with neurological diseases, mental retardation, behavioral problems, blind and deaf. She believed that these kids required a dedicated perspective rather than a simple assistance, which is why she named the school 'special' and not 'auxiliary' as it was referred to in the corresponding German institution (Μίντζα, 2022).

Based on the German auxiliary school called *Hilfsschule*, the Model Special School of Athens, had 3 levels. Each level corresponded to 2 classes. The subjects were history, home economics, arts, literature, hygiene and pedagogical (Επιμέλεια, 2013). Emphasis was also placed on the socialization of the students. In addition to teaching and practical training, the school also ensured free feeding, clothing, and medical care for its students (Χρονοπούλου, 2011). The most progressive ideas of foreign scientists that were applied to Special Schools abroad, were also applied to this school, including practical work and a holistic method in reading and writing (Τσοῦκας, 2022).

Rosa Imvrioti strongly believed that social welfare should not be simply a manifestation of charity, but an obligation of the State to every citizen. All persons in need of assistance should be taken into consideration, so that they could become happier and able to reach their full potential (Ιμβριώτη, 1939). She is considered the 'mother' of Special Education in Greece, and the first to call Special Education 'therapeutic' (Χρονοπούλου, 2011). The action of Imvrioti was not limited to the running of the school. She tried to sensitize and inform public opinion through research studies and lectures. Under her leadership and due to her commitment to educational innovation, the school attracted a remarkable number of students, and left a lasting legacy to inclusive education in Greece. The activities of the school were interrupted by the Greco-Italian war and subsequent historical events (Στασινός, 2001).

5. A SCHOOL WITH BEDS INSTEAD OF DESKS' SPECIAL EDUCATION IN GREECE (1938)

In 1938, the 'Asclepius Educational Institution', a separate special school, was established within the Asclepius hospital located in Voula, a southern suburb of Athens. The school served sick children, hospitalized for extended periods, accommodated in beds rather than desks, some of whom being orphans, with no family visitors. Lessons were frequently interrupted by the medical treatments and teachers not only had to deliver lessons but also to provide emotional comfort to the nearly 60 children of the wards. The hospital had originally served as a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients. In 1948 its scope expanded to include educational services. It was financed by the 'Charity Society Hellenic Society for the Protection and Rehabilitation of Disabled Children' and operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, following the curriculum of mainstream schools.

This form of educational provision was documented in local historical records as late as 1959, indicating that such hospital-based schooling continued their action at least through the mid-twentieth century. The school was one of the first basic efforts in the expanded context of Special Education formation in Greece (Αλεξανδρόπουλος, 1959).

6. SPECIAL EDUCATION IN OCCUPIED GREECE (1941-1944): CHALLENGES DURING WARTIME

The outbreak of World War II and the subsequent occupation caused significant socio-political upheaval. Resources became scarce, the population struggled with famine and fear and educational institutions faced closure to severe limitations. Special Education found itself at the mercy of the circumstances (Τσούκας, 2022). Extensive bibliographic references on the development of Special Education during this period are scarce, as the primary focus was on survival rather than educational inclusion. Sources indicate though, that the strength of the Greek resistance movement led to the emergence of educational efforts in the so called 'Mountain Schools' in the territories of Free Greece, where innovative forms of schooling were implemented despite wartime conditions. The Mountain Schools were shift schools in remote and steep areas away from the conquerors. Under extreme circumstances, teachers provided instruction in reading and writing to those students who were eager to learn. Both students and teachers attended these makeshift schools at great personal risk, stayed from morning to afternoon, and when teaching was over, they entertained themselves with theatrical and musical activities fostering creativity and self expression.

At this stage, there was no segregation of students due to learning difficulties, and these were co-educational schools. The role of teachers in this challenging time was critical. They tried to secure food and books for the children, and to cultivate solidarity and patriotism (Μίντζα, 2022).

Kostas Kalantzis, the closest collaborator of Roza Imvrioti at the Model Special School of Athens was not only a writer, but a key figure in the reform of Special Education in Greece during this time. He proposed new pedagogical views, created a tailored teaching program for 'mentally exercisable, retarded children' and contacted extensive research on speech disorders (Χαρίση, 2013). In his work 'In the Constellation of Dimitris Glinos', he honored three distinguished educators and emotional anchors of the Greek Resistance during World War II: Dimitris Glinos, Roza Imvrioti, and Kostas Sotiriou (Τσούκας, 2022).

Dimitris Glinos was an outstanding educator who strongly advocated for state support in both medical care and education for children with intellectual disabilities. The challenges posed by the war underscored the urgent need for formalized state Special Education programs, and the resilience

of teachers during this period laid the foundation for subsequent reforms and the development of improved policies for students with special educational needs (Τσούκας, 2022).

7. POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN GREECE (1946-1980)

In 1946, the ‘Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece’ was founded in Athens to support the visual impaired community. It was founded by private citizens and charity organizations, but subsequently the Greek State provided support to the institution through funding and collaboration. Emphasis was placed on vocational training, as the key to independence and dignity, particularly in the face of an indifferent social context. The association evolved into a great provider of educational and recreational support, through Braille lessons, talking books, and vocational activities (MANTO, n.d.).

The first systematic Greek State attempt to take responsibility for Special Education appears in 1969, with the creation of ‘Special Education Office’. Guidelines for teacher training and Special Education programs were designed, and new public special schools for children with special needs were established. During the 1970’s, under the military government, the medical model dominated isolating all forms of diversity by treating them as diseases (Παντελιάδου & Πατσοδήμου, 2007).

In 1972, the first states Special Schools to educate students with mental retardation are established. In 1974 the first plan for Special Schools is created. According to this, Special Education was only provided in special schools and classes, so there was no integration. This educational plan for children with a typical development was ensured, but it operated in separate classes from typically developing students. Attendance was not compulsory, and the program covered education for children aged 6 to 17. Furthermore, the establishment of Special Education University Teacher Training Departments constitutes a decisive step in assisting the education and adaptation of disabled students to social life and employment. In 1975, with the Law 227/75, the training of special education teachers begins at the Maraslio School in Athens (Στασινός, 2001).

Throughout this period (1946-1981), legislative reforms and private initiatives, led to further institutional advancement in integration and inclusive education. In addition, the active involvement of associations representing students with special educational needs and their parents reinforced the calls for their participation in educational decision making and related matters. To this end, conferences were organized to promote dialogue and advocate for greater integration of Special Education within the broader educational system (Καραγιάννη & Παπασταυρινίδου, 2018)

8. LEGISLATION AND REFORMS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN GREECE (1981-2000): THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN MODELS

Throughout the twentieth century, European Special Education was influenced by both scientific progress and changing societal perceptions of individuals with disabilities. In the early of the century, children with special needs were commonly educated in segregated institutions. Influential educator like Eduard Seguin and Jean-Marc Itard, who focused on the capacity for improvement through proper educational instruction, promoted individualized educational approaches (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). These ideas laid the foundation for the subsequent development of Special Education models across Europe. By the mid-20th century, significant steps were made to the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools, particularly in countries like Sweden, where Special Education reforms began to adopt more inclusive practices. Yet the overall European landscape remained diverse, with other countries like Germany to maintain more segregated educational models until the 1970s (Barton&Armstrong, 2007). These European trends influenced the development of Special

Education in Greece, where legislative and social reforms gradually reflected a shift from charitable initiatives to state-supported programs.

A major legislative milestone for Special Education in Greece was the enactment of Law 1143/1981, which formally defined the State's legal responsibility for the vocational training and social care of students with special needs. The law secured integration in education programs, professional activity, social and medical care measures with the aim of independent integration. It provided the operation of both separate special educational units and special classes in typical education schools, as well as Special Vocational Education for professional rehabilitation (Στασινός, 2001). Widely recognized as a formal acknowledgment of the State's responsibility for Special Education, The Law, marked a shift toward a structured framework within the public education system. Although the establishment of special schools largely maintained a segregated model, the Law also created an Advisory Council; however, it did not include representatives of parents or learners with special needs, limiting participation in educational decision-making. (Καραγιάννη & Παπασταυρινίδου, 2018).

Subsequently, the Greek Ministry of Health and Welfare, with the Law N.1278/1982 (105 A') created the Advisory Body (KESY), with the responsibility of designing a national strategy in the health sector, including diagnoses for students with special needs (Στασινός, 2001). Further provisions concerning the staffing of Special Education were introduced with the Law 1400/1984, along with the establishment of Integration units, special classes within mainstream schools that were designed to support kids with disabilities. That Law represented a segregated approach, yet it enhanced state responsibility in Special Education, serving as a transitional measure in the evolution of educational policies. Vocational programs for learners with special needs provided practical knowledge and facilitated their economic integration, while job placement opportunities and leisure programs, offered by non-governmental organizations in collaboration with state institutions, pointed out the growing educational and societal concern for this population (Τσούκας, 2022).

From 1938 to 1984, vocational training programs were introduced at the School of Educational Officers of Vocational and Technical Education (SELETE), founded in 1959 and recognized as the 'Higher School of Pedagogical and Technological Education' in Greece (Μπουζάκης, 2002).

Law 1566/1984 marked the first formal coexistence of Special Education with mainstream curricula. It also introduced a new Educational Council to succeed the former Advisory Body, enlarging its membership to include learners, parents, specialist scientists, and unionized teachers, thus promoting wider stakeholder involvement in educational decision-making (Λαμπροπούλου & Παντελιάδου, 2000).

A significant pedagogical shift took place in Greece, as Special Education became integrated into university curricula, offering courses that emphasized personalized teaching methods and diagnostic assessment for diverse students (Στασινός, 2001).

From 1990 onwards, in Greece, Pedagogical University Departments of Special Education, received targeted funding that facilitated the establishment of postgraduate programs and supported active engagement in Special Education research (Ζώνιου- Σιδέρη, 2004). It should be noted here that, cross cultural studies offered valuable insights for teachers, and played a crucial role in the evolution of Special Education in general (Barton & Armstrong, 2007).

In 1994, the Pedagogical Institute conducted a study to examine whether primary school teachers (up to age 12) considered the integration of children with special needs into mainstream education effective and feasible. The results revealed that 63% of respondents found integration challenging, citing factors such as inadequate infrastructure and insufficient teacher training (Ζώνιου - Σιδέρη, Ντεροπούλου – Ντέρου & Παπαδοπούλου, 2012). During this period, in Greece, the absence of a

comprehensive social policy, embraced diversity. Effective inclusion required except from qualified teachers, specialized syllabuses, and adequately equipped school environments.

A major legislative milestone was the enactment of Law 2817/2000, which established the Diagnosis, Evaluation and Counseling Centers, (ΚΔΑΥ), across the country. These centers were designed to provide scientific diagnosis and educational guidance for children with special educational needs and were staffed by multidisciplinary scientific teams that collaborated in both assessment process and the development of targeted educational interventions (Ζώνιου- Σιδέρη, 2004).

Within this developing pattern new horizons for systematic research in Special Education were created while the principle of equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of disability became both self-evident and formally recognized as a fundamental responsibility of the state (Ζώνιου –Σιδέρη, 2004).

9. CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

By the end of the twentieth century, Special Education in Greece had undergone a profound transformation evolving from a charitable isolated system into a legally recognized and specialized institutional framework, with broader social recognition and systematic research plans. Early state reformers initially promoted segregated educational settings through separate schools and classes, which were later supplemented by integration classes and special units within mainstream schools. Subsequently, the establishment of scientifically grounded diagnostic and support centers institutionalized personalized educational interventions through appropriate curricula.

Throughout this historical trajectory, inspired educators and reformers consistently advocated for political changes challenging the structural inadequacies faced by individuals with disabilities. Supported by both Greek and European pioneering figures, the ethical and social imperative of integrating children with disabilities into the educational system was gradually acknowledged, forming the contemporary foundations of inclusive education in Greece. This change provided inclusive opportunities within mainstream education and promoted the professionalization of teachers, establishing a solid foundation for further advancement in the twenty-first century (Στασινώς, 2001).

Social and financial changes of contemporary society necessitate careful consideration of the direction in which both Special and General Education systems are advanced, to ensure that all the students are adequately provided to meet the complex global challenges ahead and all teachers are well trained, equipped and supported by the state in any possible way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I warmly thank my students for inspiring me with their joy for learning and strength in life. Your energy and determination remind me of the true value of teaching.

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10. How to manage your classroom successfully: theory and practice

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Abstract: Classroom management has consistently been one of the greatest challenges in the field of education, particularly within increasingly diverse and demanding learning environments. This article examines contemporary pedagogical approaches to the prevention and management of behavioral issues, emphasizing the empowerment of the teacher's role as a facilitator of a positive, inclusive, and emotionally safe learning environment. Drawing on key theoretical frameworks and practical classroom examples, it analyzes effective strategies such as the establishment of clear and consistent rules, positive reinforcement, differentiated instruction, and the systematic development of communication and empathy skills. Furthermore, the article highlights the central role of preventive practices, collaboration with parents and the wider school community, and the enhancement of students' social and emotional competencies. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of fostering student engagement, responsibility, and self-regulation as means of reducing disruptive behavior. The proposed approach advocates the creation of a democratic and supportive classroom climate in which respect, dialogue, and cooperation form the basis for conflict resolution, the strengthening of interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes.

Keywords: classroom management, behavior management, pedagogical strategies, positive climate, rules

1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom management is a foundational component of effective teaching. In secondary education settings, where learners are navigating adolescence, social pressures, and increasing academic expectations, strong classroom management not only supports academic achievement but also fosters a respectful, safe, and engaging learning environment. The smooth functioning of the classroom constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. Despite contemporary pedagogical approaches that promote student-centered instruction, behavioral problems continue to pose a significant challenge for educators. These problems range from mild inattentiveness to intense conflicts or refusal to participate and are often associated with social, emotional, or family-related factors (Matsagouras, 2014). Addressing such issues is no longer confined to disciplinary or punitive practices; rather, it is grounded in holistic and collaborative approaches aimed at fostering a positive learning climate (Rogers, 2011). In this context, the teacher assumes the role of facilitator, mediator, and behavioral role model, cultivating relationships based on trust, mutual respect, and emotional safety.

1.1 Defining Classroom Management

The classroom is not merely a physical space or a social group but a complex social system of relationships and interactions. Its effective management constitutes a core pedagogical competence and significantly determines the quality of instruction. Classroom management may be defined as the totality of teachers' efforts to supervise, organize, and regulate classroom activities, including learning processes, social interaction, and student behavior. It encompasses the methods and techniques employed to promote or address specific behaviors—both positive and negative—manifested by stu-

dents, particularly during instructional time (Wages, 2021). As Evertson and Weinstein (2006) argue, classroom management involves the establishment of supportive relationships, the organization of instruction, and the development of students' social skills and self-regulation. Consequently, it extends beyond discipline to the construction of a supportive learning environment.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The pedagogical theories informing classroom management practices are diverse and complementary. Classroom management is grounded in a range of educational and psychological theories that explain student behavior, motivation, and learning. In secondary education, where students' cognitive, social, and emotional development is particularly complex, an effective classroom management approach often integrates multiple theoretical perspectives rather than relying on a single model. This section outlines the main theoretical frameworks that inform contemporary classroom management practices: behaviorist theory, social-cognitive theory, constructivist approaches, and ecological perspectives.

2.1 Behaviorist Theory

The behaviorist approach, primarily associated with Skinner (1953), emphasizes the shaping of behavior through reinforcement and clearly defined goals. According to behaviorism, the child is viewed as a *tabula rasa* and learning as well as behavioral development are determined largely by external conditions. Within this framework, the teacher defines instructional objectives and structures in the learning environment to reinforce desired behaviors through systematic feedback and consequences. Behaviorist theory, most notably associated with B. F. Skinner (1953), views behavior as a response to external stimuli and emphasizes the role of reinforcement and consequences in shaping student actions. From a behaviorist perspective, classroom management focuses on increasing desirable behavior through positive reinforcement and reducing undesirable behavior through consistent consequences. In secondary classrooms, behaviorist strategies are commonly reflected in: clear rules and expectations, reward systems (e.g. praise, points, privileges) and predictable consequences for rule violations

Although behaviorist approaches have been criticized for overemphasizing external control, research indicates that consistent expectations and reinforcement can be particularly effective in maintaining order and structure, especially when combined with other approaches (Simonsen et al., 2008).

2.2 Humanistic Theory

The humanistic approach, articulated by Rogers (1969), emphasizes respect for student autonomy and the enhancement of intrinsic motivation. This perspective assumes that learners possess an inherent capacity for self-regulation and personal growth. The teacher's role is to facilitate students' understanding of their experiences and to create an environment that promotes freedom of choice, responsibility, and self-regulation. Positive interpersonal relationships are considered a prerequisite for a classroom climate characterized by communication, acceptance, and understanding, which in turn enhances student engagement and academic performance.

2.3 Psychodynamic Theory

The psychodynamic perspective underscores the importance of understanding students' internal motives and emotional conflicts. From this viewpoint, students possess a latent potential for self-regula-

tion, and development emerges from the interaction between internal dispositions and external influences. Teachers' actions must therefore be intentional and reflective, aiming to activate environmental factors that support students' transition from potential to actualized self-regulation.

2.4 Social-Cognitive Theory

Social-cognitive theory, developed by Bandura (1997), expands beyond observable behavior to include internal processes such as self-efficacy, self-regulation, and motivation. According to this theory, students learn not only through direct reinforcement but also by observing others, including teachers and peers. In terms of classroom management, social-cognitive theory highlights: teacher modeling of respectful and responsible behavior, the development of students' self-regulation skills and the importance of students' beliefs about their own competence.

In secondary education, fostering students' sense of autonomy and responsibility is particularly important. Teachers who encourage goal-setting, reflection, and self-monitoring help students gradually take ownership of their behavior, reducing the need for external control.

2.5 Constructivist Approaches

Constructivist theories of learning, influenced by scholars such as Piaget and Vygotsky, emphasize that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and others. From a constructivist perspective, classroom management is closely linked to instructional design and student engagement. Constructivist classroom management practices include: student-centered learning activities, collaborative group work and opportunities for discussion, inquiry, and problem-solving.

In secondary classrooms, where disengagement can lead to disruptive behavior, constructivist approaches suggest that meaningful, relevant tasks can serve as powerful preventive management tools. When students are cognitively and emotionally engaged, behavioral issues are less likely to arise.

2.6 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory views student behavior as the result of interactions between multiple systems, including family, school, peer groups, and broader social contexts. Classroom management, therefore, cannot be understood in isolation from students' lived experiences. This perspective encourages teachers to: recognize the influence of external factors on behavior, collaborate with families, counselors, and support staff and create inclusive environments that respect cultural and social diversity.

In secondary education, where students face increasing academic pressure and social challenges, an ecological approach supports flexible, empathetic management practices that respond to individual needs.

2.7 Integrative Perspective

Contemporary research supports an integrative approach to classroom management that draws on elements from multiple theoretical frameworks (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). Effective secondary educators combine the structure of behaviorist strategies, the self-regulatory focus of social-cognitive theory, the engagement principles of constructivism, and the contextual awareness of ecological models.

Such a balanced approach allows teachers to maintain order while also promoting autonomy, motivation, and positive relationship key elements for successful teaching and learning in secondary education.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Effective classroom management constitutes the most critical factor for the success of the learning process. Difficulties in classroom management represent one of the strongest sources of stress in teachers' professional lives and significantly reduce instructional time. Behavioral problems that disrupt the flow of teaching include students speaking without permission, conversing during instruction, throwing small objects, engaging in verbal conflicts, arriving late, being unjustifiably absent, and failing to cooperate in group work.

Classroom management is not solely concerned with maintaining order but also with promoting an environment in which students feel safe, accepted, and motivated to learn. Differentiated instruction contributes substantially to behavior management, as it responds to students' diverse needs and interests, reducing boredom and distraction (Koutselini, 2017). At the same time, cultivating empathy and communication skills enables students to understand the consequences of their actions and resolve conflicts constructively.

Effective classroom management is also a fundamental prerequisite for high-quality teaching and learning, as it directly influences students' academic achievement, emotional well-being, and social development. A well-managed classroom provides a structured, predictable, and emotionally safe environment in which students can focus on learning tasks, engage actively with instructional content, and develop positive relationships with peers and teachers. Research consistently demonstrates that effective classroom management maximizes instructional time, minimizes disruptive behavior, and enhances students' motivation and self-regulation (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Moreover, classroom management is closely linked to equity and inclusion, as clear expectations, consistent routines, and respectful communication support diverse learners and reduce the risk of marginalization. From a pedagogical perspective, effective management extends beyond discipline to encompass the cultivation of a positive classroom climate grounded in cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility (Matsagouras, 2014). Teachers who implement preventive and democratic management practices foster students' social and emotional competencies, enabling them to resolve conflicts constructively and assume responsibility for their behavior. In this sense, classroom management functions not only as a mechanism for maintaining order but also as a powerful pedagogical tool that supports holistic student development and sustainable learning outcomes across primary and secondary education settings.

4. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The teacher is not merely a classroom manager but an educator who shapes a culture of learning and collaboration. Matsagouras (2014) emphasizes that teacher leadership is grounded in consistency, dialogue, and respect rather than authority. A teacher who demonstrates empathy and patience can transform difficulty into an opportunity for growth for both the individual student and the group as a whole.

Teachers should know their students, inspire them, create a warm classroom environment (Rubio, 2009), maintain high expectations for success (Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2006), and provide opportunities for feedback and self-assessment (Good & Brophy, 2003). Effective teachers are characterized by patience, composure, humor, and consistency, while simultaneously fostering relationships of trust and respect with their students (Rubio, 2009). Additionally, personal qualities such as self-control, patience, and emotional stability are essential (Good & Brophy, 2003).

Effective teaching is marked by clarity of instruction, comprehensible oral discourse, methodological variety, task orientation, active engagement in the learning process, and commitment to student success (Elliott et al., 2008). To maintain student interest, teachers should guide discussion and discovery through questioning, encourage critical thinking, and prompt students to connect new knowledge with everyday experiences. Promoting the exchange of views and interaction is equally essential.

Adequate lesson preparation is a crucial factor in successful classroom management. It enables teachers to structure lessons in a way that avoids pauses, gaps, and dead ends that may trigger student misbehavior (Chatzidimou, 2015; Matsagouras, 2008). Lesson planning should follow a clear instructional trajectory while remaining flexible enough to adapt to unforeseen circumstances without disrupting lesson flow or student attention (Cruickshank et al., 2006).

Teachers should listen, guide, and support students without adopting a critical stance. Democratic teaching styles encourage participation, responsibility, and cooperation, in contrast to authoritarian or permissive approaches. In authoritarian classrooms, the teacher positions themselves as an unquestionable authority, publicly criticizes students, and rarely acknowledges mistakes. Conversely, in permissive or indifferent classrooms, the teacher appears passive, sets no rules, neither sanctions inappropriate behavior nor reinforces positive conduct (Wragg, 2003; Matsagouras, 2008; Chatzidimou, 2015).

5. PRACTICAL CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

In practice, teachers can implement simple yet effective strategies to prevent and address behavioral problems. These include developing a classroom contract collaboratively with students, establishing daily routines that enhance predictability and reduce anxiety, and using positive communication framed in affirmative language rather than negative commands. Assigning roles and responsibilities fosters self-esteem, while social-emotional skill development through cooperative activities, role-playing, and reflection enables students to recognize and regulate their emotions. Collaboration with parents is equally vital, as consistent communication and shared approaches reinforce coherent messages for students.

5.1 Techniques for Attracting and Maintaining Student Attention

According to educational psychology (Slavin, 1994), stimuli that attract attention tend to be intense, novel, varied, or dynamic. Teachers may employ surprise by introducing unexpected elements or silent activities, thereby refocusing attention without disrupting instructional flow (Matsagouras, 2008). Movement and gestures enhance communication through paralinguistic cues, while variation in communication pace and strategic pauses help sustain attention and facilitate information processing. Emphasis—whether visual or verbal—also aids in directing student focus (Matsagouras, 2008).

Establishing classroom rules is another essential preventive measure. Effective rules should be few, clearly stated, positively framed, applied consistently, and focused on observable behaviors of high frequency or significance (Canter & Canter, 2001; Elliott et al., 2008). Clear communication regarding rewards and consequences reinforces behavioral expectations.

Ultimately, the prevention of behavioral problems is achieved through high-quality instruction, active participation, and emotional intelligence. Project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and innovative practices transform the classroom into a collaborative and creative learning environment.

Teachers who promote inclusion, positive reinforcement, and emotional safety significantly reduce conflict, rendering the classroom a space of meaningful and engaging learning.

6. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Although the fundamental principles of classroom management remain consistent across educational levels, their application varies significantly between primary and secondary education due to differences in students' developmental, emotional, and cognitive characteristics. Effective classroom management must therefore be developmentally appropriate and responsive to the specific needs of each age group.

6.1 Classroom Management in Primary Education

In primary education, classroom management is closely linked to students' emotional security, routine, and sense of belonging. Young learners are still developing self-regulation skills and rely heavily on external structure and adult guidance. Consequently, preventive strategies play a dominant role.

One of the most effective practices in primary classrooms is the establishment of clear routines. Predictable daily structures—such as morning greetings, transitions between activities, and closing rituals—reduce anxiety and minimize disruptive behavior. When children know what to expect, they are more likely to feel safe and engaged (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006).

Visual support is particularly valuable at this level. Classroom rules, schedules, and behavioral expectations are often displayed using images, symbols, or color codes, allowing students to internalize expectations through repeated exposure. Positive behavior charts, traffic-light systems, or emotion thermometers help students recognize and regulate their behavior in a concrete manner.

Positive reinforcement is another cornerstone of primary classroom management. Praise, encouragement, stickers, or collective rewards reinforce desirable behaviors and foster intrinsic motivation when used thoughtfully. Importantly, reinforcement should focus on effort, cooperation, and improvement rather than competition or compliance alone.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) activities are especially effective in preventing behavioral difficulties in primary education. Through storytelling, role-playing, cooperative games, and guided discussions, students learn to identify emotions, develop empathy, and practice conflict resolution. These skills contribute significantly to a positive classroom climate and reduce incidents of aggression or withdrawal.

Finally, close collaboration with families is essential. Regular communication between teachers and parents ensures consistency between home and school expectations, reinforcing behavioral norms and supporting children who experience difficulties adjusting to classroom demands.

6.2 Classroom Management in Lower Secondary Education

In lower secondary education, students experience rapid emotional, social, and cognitive changes. Adolescents seek autonomy, peer approval, and identity formation, which can manifest as resistance to authority or disengagement from learning. Classroom management at this level must balance structure with respect for students' growing independence.

A key strategy is the co-construction of classroom rules. Involving students in establishing behavioral norms enhances their sense of ownership and responsibility. When students perceive rules as fair and meaningful, compliance increases and conflicts decrease (Rogers, 2011).

Instructional relevance is another crucial factor. Disruptive behavior in secondary classrooms is often linked to boredom or lack of perceived relevance. Differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and real-world applications increase engagement and reduce off-task behavior. Teachers who connect content to students' interests and experiences foster intrinsic motivation and active participation.

Restorative practices are increasingly used in secondary education as alternatives to punitive discipline. Instead of focusing solely on consequences, restorative approaches emphasize dialogue, accountability, and relationship repair. Structured conversations, peer mediation, and reflection activities help students understand the impact of their actions and develop social responsibility.

Teacher-student relationships remain central at this stage. Adolescents are more likely to respect teachers who demonstrate fairness, consistency, and genuine interest in their well-being. Maintaining calm authority, using humor appropriately, and addressing misbehavior privately rather than publicly contribute to a respectful classroom atmosphere.

6.3 Classroom Management in Upper Secondary Education

In upper secondary education, classroom management shifts further toward self-regulation and autonomy. Students are expected to take greater responsibility for their learning and behavior, while teachers act as mentors and facilitators.

Goal-setting and self-assessment strategies support behavioral regulation at this level. Encouraging students to reflect on their learning habits, participation, and interpersonal behavior promotes metacognitive awareness and accountability. Learning contracts and individual action plans can be effective tools for students who struggle with organization or motivation.

Collaborative learning remains valuable, but it requires careful structuring. Clearly defined roles, assessment criteria, and time limits prevent group work from becoming a source of conflict or disengagement. Teachers must monitor interactions and intervene when necessary to maintain focus and equity.

At this stage, classroom management is also influenced by external pressures such as examinations, academic competition, and future career concerns. Teachers who acknowledge these stressors and provide emotional support contribute to a more balanced and supportive learning environment.

6.4 Inclusive Classroom Management Practices

Across all educational levels, inclusive classroom management is essential for addressing diversity in learning styles, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and emotional needs. Students with learning difficulties, behavioral challenges, or socio-emotional vulnerabilities benefit from differentiated expectations and individualized support.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles offer a framework for inclusive management by providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. Flexible seating arrangements, varied instructional methods, and alternative assessment forms reduce frustration and promote participation.

Moreover, culturally responsive classroom management recognizes students' cultural identities and values as assets rather than obstacles. Teachers who demonstrate cultural sensitivity, avoid deficit-based interpretations of behavior, and foster mutual respect create classrooms where all students feel valued and understood.

6.5 Prevention as the Core of Classroom Management

Across primary and secondary education, prevention remains the most effective classroom management strategy. High-quality instruction, emotional safety, meaningful engagement, and strong re-

relationships reduce the likelihood of behavioral problems before they arise. Preventive classroom management is proactive rather than reactive. It emphasizes anticipation, planning, and reflection, enabling teachers to respond flexibly to challenges while maintaining a positive learning climate. As research consistently demonstrates, classrooms characterized by trust, structure, and student engagement are less prone to conflict and more conducive to academic and social success.

7. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Despite the extensive body of research on effective classroom management, contemporary classrooms present new and increasingly complex challenges that require adaptive and reflective responses from educators. Rapid social change, digitalization, increased classroom diversity, and the lingering effects of global crises have reshaped student behavior, expectations, and emotional needs. As a result, classroom management can no longer rely solely on traditional strategies but must evolve to address emerging realities in secondary education.

One of the most significant challenges concerns students' emotional and mental well-being. Research indicates a rise in anxiety, emotional dysregulation, and disengagement among adolescents, often linked to academic pressure, social media exposure, and broader societal instability (OECD, 2021). These factors frequently manifest as behavioral difficulties, withdrawal, or oppositional behavior in the classroom. Consequently, effective classroom management increasingly intersects with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed pedagogy. Teachers are required not only to manage behavior but also to recognize emotional distress and respond with empathy, flexibility, and appropriate support (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Digital technology constitutes another major dimension influencing classroom management. The integration of digital tools, mobile devices, and online platforms has transformed instructional practices but has also introduced new management concerns, such as distraction, misuse of technology, and reduced attention span. While technology can enhance engagement when used purposefully, it can also exacerbate off-task behavior if expectations are unclear (Rosen et al., 2013). Effective classroom management in digitally enriched environments requires the establishment of explicit norms for technology use, the alignment of digital tools with pedagogical objectives, and the cultivation of students' digital self-regulation skills. Teachers who model responsible technology use and integrate interactive, student-centered digital activities are better positioned to minimize disruption and maintain focus.

Increasing cultural and linguistic diversity also poses both opportunities and challenges for classroom management. Secondary classrooms today are often characterized by heterogeneous student populations with diverse cultural norms, communication styles, and behavioral expectations. Misinterpretations of behavior may arise when teachers apply monocultural standards to diverse classrooms, leading to inequitable disciplinary practices (Gay, 2018). Culturally responsive classroom management emphasizes understanding students' cultural backgrounds, building inclusive relationships, and establishing norms that respect diversity while maintaining high expectations. Such practices not only reduce conflict but also strengthen students' sense of belonging and engagement.

Teacher workload and professional burnout represent an additional challenge with direct implications for classroom management. Research consistently shows that difficulties in managing student behavior contribute significantly to teacher stress, emotional exhaustion, and attrition, particularly in secondary education (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). Teachers who lack institutional support, ongoing

professional development, or collaborative structures may struggle to sustain consistent and reflective management practices. Therefore, classroom management should not be viewed solely as an individual teacher responsibility but as a shared organizational concern. Whole-school approaches, mentoring systems, and professional learning communities enhance teachers' capacity to address behavioral challenges effectively and sustainably.

8. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AS A REFLECTIVE AND ETHICAL PRACTICE

Beyond techniques and strategies, classroom management constitutes a reflective and ethical dimension of teaching practice. Teachers' beliefs about authority, discipline, and student capability profoundly shape their management decisions. Research suggests that educators who view misbehavior as a form of communication rather than defiance are more likely to adopt constructive and restorative responses (Rogers, 2011). Such an orientation aligns with democratic and student-centered pedagogies that emphasize dialogue, accountability, and mutual respect.

Reflective practice plays a crucial role in effective classroom management. Teachers who systematically reflect on classroom interactions, student responses, and the effectiveness of their strategies are better equipped to adapt their approaches to changing circumstances. Schön's (1983) concept of reflection-in-action highlights the importance of teachers' ability to make informed, moment-to-moment decisions in complex classroom situations. Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, enables educators to evaluate their practices, identify patterns, and refine their management philosophy over time.

Ethical considerations are also central to classroom management. Disciplinary practices carry moral implications, particularly when they affect students' dignity, inclusion, and access to learning. Exclusionary practices, such as frequent removals from class, may maintain short-term order but often exacerbate disengagement and inequity in the long term (Skiba et al., 2011). Ethical classroom management prioritizes proportionality, fairness, and educational purpose, ensuring that responses to misbehavior support learning and personal growth rather than mere compliance.

9. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Given the complexity of contemporary classrooms, effective classroom management must be a central component of teacher education and ongoing professional development. Initial teacher training programs should move beyond prescriptive models and equip future educators with theoretical understanding, practical tools, and reflective skills. Exposure to real classroom scenarios, case studies, and supervised practice enhances teachers' confidence and competence in managing diverse learning environments.

Professional development initiatives should emphasize collaborative learning, peer observation, and coaching. Teachers benefit from opportunities to share experiences, analyze challenging situations, and co-construct solutions within supportive professional communities. Research indicates that sustained, school-based professional development has a stronger impact on classroom management effectiveness than isolated workshops (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Moreover, school leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping classroom management culture. Clear school-wide expectations, consistent policies, and supportive leadership practices contribute to coherence and fairness across classrooms. When teachers feel supported by administration and aligned with institutional values, they are more likely to implement proactive and inclusive management strategies.

10. TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Following a professional development initiative concerning a 54-hour course of seminars on classroom management, participating teachers completed a short questionnaire. Responses from a sample of 80 educators (80.5% female) indicated that over half—despite having more than 20 years of experience—sought training due to ongoing classroom management challenges, particularly at the lower secondary level. Teachers attributed these challenges primarily to students' learning difficulties and lack of interest, followed by interpersonal conflicts. They emphasized the importance of teacher preparation, personality, effective time management, attentive listening, instructional variety, democratic classroom climate, aesthetic learning environments, and collaboration with families.

Classroom management constitutes a vital dimension of the educational process, as difficulties in this area negatively affect classroom climate and student achievement. Key factors for successful classroom management include teacher personality and preparation, the development of mutual respect among students, and the cultivation of empathy. There is no single universally effective approach; rather, teachers must understand their students and select strategies appropriate to each context, demonstrating openness and willingness to engage with learners constructively.

CONCLUSION

Classroom management remains a cornerstone of effective teaching and learning across primary and secondary education. As this paper has demonstrated, effective management extends far beyond the control of student behavior to encompass the creation of a structured, inclusive, and emotionally supportive learning environment. Grounded in diverse theoretical frameworks—behaviorist, humanistic, social-cognitive, constructivist, and ecological—contemporary classroom management reflects an integrative and holistic approach responsive to students' developmental and contextual needs. In secondary education, where students face complex cognitive, emotional, and social challenges, classroom management requires balance: structure combined with empathy, authority tempered by dialogue, and consistency aligned with flexibility. Preventive strategies, strong teacher-student relationships, meaningful instruction, and inclusive practices emerge as key factors in minimizing behavioral difficulties and promoting student engagement.

Ultimately, classroom management is not a static set of techniques but a dynamic, reflective, and ethical practice. It evolves in response to changing educational contexts and student needs, demanding continuous learning and adaptation from educators. By viewing classroom management as an integral component of pedagogy rather than a separate disciplinary function, teachers can foster environments that support academic achievement, social development, and lifelong learning.

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11. English as a Lingua Franca in European Education: Policy, Practice, and the Case of Greece in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract: This paper examines the role of English as a lingua franca in European education, with a particular focus on Greece as a case study. It explores the relationship between language policy, pedagogical approaches, and student performance within the broader framework of European multilingualism. Drawing on theoretical perspectives and empirical data, including findings from the European Survey on Language Competences, the study highlights both achievements and challenges in foreign language education. While Greece has successfully aligned its policies with European frameworks such as the CEFR and expanded early language learning, structural issues remain, including reliance on private education and inconsistencies in curriculum implementation. A comparative analysis with Spain illustrates the potential benefits of bilingual education and Content and Language Integrated Learning. The paper argues that improving language education requires greater coherence, enhanced teacher support, and a stronger emphasis on equity and authentic language use.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, foreign language education, Greece, CEFR, multilingualism

Resumen: Este artículo examina el papel del inglés como lengua franca en la educación europea, con especial atención al caso de Grecia. Analiza la relación entre las políticas lingüísticas, los enfoques pedagógicos y el rendimiento de los estudiantes dentro del marco del multilingüismo europeo. A partir de perspectivas teóricas y datos empíricos, incluidos los resultados de la Encuesta Europea sobre Competencias Lingüísticas, el estudio destaca tanto los logros como los desafíos en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Aunque Grecia ha alineado sus políticas con marcos europeos como el MCER y ha ampliado la enseñanza temprana de idiomas, persisten problemas estructurales, como la dependencia de la educación privada y la falta de coherencia curricular. La comparación con España muestra los beneficios potenciales de la educación bilingüe y el enfoque AICLE. Se concluye que es necesario reforzar la coherencia educativa, la formación docente y la equidad.

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language education in Europe has evolved into a central component of educational policy, reflecting broader structural transformations associated with globalization, economic integration, and increased human mobility. In this context, language competence is no longer perceived solely as an academic skill but as a prerequisite for participation in transnational labour markets, higher education systems, and digital communication environments. Among all foreign languages, English occupies a dominant position, functioning as a lingua franca among speakers of diverse linguistic backgrounds (Firth, 1996; Seidlhofer, 2011).

The increasing dominance of English is closely connected to its global status in science, technology, business, and higher education. According to Graddol (2006), English has become embedded in global knowledge production systems, making its acquisition a key determinant of educational and professional opportunity. In Europe, this has led to widespread institutional prioritization of English from early stages of education, often beginning in primary or even pre-primary schooling (European Commission, 2017).

However, the expansion of English must be understood within a broader ideological and political framework. Phillipson (2003) argues that the global spread of English is not linguistically neutral but reflects historical power asymmetries that privilege Anglophone knowledge systems. This raises concerns about linguistic inequality and the potential erosion of linguistic diversity, particularly in multilingual regions such as Europe.

Despite the European Union's explicit commitment to multilingualism, encouraging citizens to learn at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue, English continues to dominate educational practice across member states (European Commission, 2017). This creates a structural tension between policy discourse and institutional reality. While multilingualism is promoted as a cultural and cognitive asset, English often becomes the *de facto* primary foreign language in school curricula.

From a pedagogical perspective, foreign language teaching has undergone a significant transformation over the past decades. Traditional grammar-translation approaches, which emphasized explicit instruction of linguistic structures, have gradually been replaced by communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes interaction, meaning negotiation, and functional use of language (Hinkel, 2006). This shift is closely linked to developments in second language acquisition (SLA) theory.

Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis represents one of the most influential SLA models, proposing that language acquisition occurs primarily through exposure to comprehensible input. Although this model has been widely adopted in language pedagogy, it has also been criticized for underestimating the role of interaction, output, and corrective feedback. Ellis (1994) expands the theoretical framework by emphasizing the importance of interactional processes in facilitating language development.

In European education systems, these theoretical developments are operationalized through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which provides a standardized scale for describing language proficiency from A1 to C2 (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). The CEFR shifts the focus from linguistic knowledge to communicative competence, defining what learners can do with language in real-life contexts rather than what they know about its structure.

This paper examines the role of English as a *lingua franca* in European education, with a particular focus on Greece as a case study and Spain as a comparative reference point. It explores the relationship between policy frameworks, pedagogical approaches, and student outcomes, while critically analyzing the gap between European language policy and classroom implementation.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SLA AND ELF

2.1 Second Language Acquisition Perspectives

Second language acquisition research provides the conceptual foundation for modern foreign language pedagogy. Krashen's (1982) distinction between acquisition and learning has had a profound impact on teaching methodologies. Acquisition refers to a subconscious process driven by exposure to meaningful input, whereas learning involves conscious knowledge of grammatical rules. According to this model, effective language instruction should prioritize natural exposure over explicit rule teaching.

However, subsequent research has challenged the sufficiency of input alone. Ellis (1994) argues that interaction plays a crucial role in language development, as learners need opportunities to negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and modify output. This interactionist perspective highlights the importance of communicative engagement in classroom settings.

Hinkel (2006) further expands the concept of communicative competence by integrating linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic dimensions. This broader conceptualization has significantly influenced curriculum design in Europe, where language learning is increasingly oriented toward real-world communicative effectiveness.

2.2 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The emergence of English as a lingua franca represents a major paradigm shift in applied linguistics. ELF refers to the use of English as a means of communication among speakers who do not share a native language (Seidlhofer, 2011). This perspective challenges traditional native-speaker norms and emphasizes intelligibility and mutual understanding over grammatical accuracy.

In ELF contexts, variation is not viewed as error but as a natural feature of multilingual communication. This has important implications for language teaching, suggesting that strict adherence to native-speaker norms may not be necessary for effective communication.

Nevertheless, the dominance of English in global and European contexts raises ideological concerns. Phillipson (2003) conceptualizes this phenomenon as linguistic imperialism, arguing that the spread of English reinforces global inequalities by privileging Anglophone epistemologies. In Europe, this tension is reflected in the coexistence of multilingual policy discourse and English-dominant educational practice.

The ELF paradigm also challenges assessment frameworks such as standardized exams, which often continue to be based on native-speaker benchmarks. This creates a misalignment between theoretical understandings of language use and institutional evaluation systems.

3. EUROPEAN LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE CEFR

European language policy is grounded in the principle of multilingualism, which is considered both a cultural value and a strategic economic asset. The European Union explicitly encourages citizens to learn at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue, aiming to promote social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and labour mobility across member states (European Commission, 2017). However, despite this multilingual ideal, English continues to dominate foreign language education systems throughout Europe.

This apparent contradiction between policy and practice can be understood as a result of structural global pressures. English functions as the default language of international communication and therefore its dominance is reinforced not only by educational policy but also by labour market demands, academic mobility schemes, and digital communication platforms (Graddol, 2006). As a result, even in systems that formally support multilingualism, English tends to occupy the largest share of curriculum time and institutional investment.

A central instrument of European language policy is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developed by the Council of Europe (2001, 2020). The CEFR provides a standardized scale of language proficiency divided into six levels (A1–C2), describing what learners can do in terms of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Its main contribution lies in shifting the focus of language education from grammatical knowledge to functional communicative competence.

The CEFR has had a profound impact on curriculum design across Europe. It has enabled the harmonization of language qualifications, facilitated learner mobility, and provided a shared language for describing proficiency across national systems. However, its implementation is not uniform. Eurydice (2008) reports significant variation in how member states interpret and operationalize CEFR descrip-

tors, particularly in relation to assessment practices and teacher training.

One key limitation of the CEFR is its relative neutrality regarding pedagogical methodology. While it defines proficiency levels, it does not prescribe how these levels should be achieved. This leaves considerable autonomy to national education systems, resulting in divergent classroom practices. In some contexts, CEFR alignment has led to communicative, task-based instruction, while in others it has been reduced to exam-oriented teaching focused on test preparation.

Furthermore, the CEFR does not fully resolve the tension between ELF-oriented communication and native-speaker benchmarks. Although it emphasizes communicative competence, many standardized assessments still implicitly rely on native-speaker norms, creating inconsistencies between theoretical orientation and evaluation practices (Sickinger & Schneider, 2014).

In addition, teacher preparedness plays a crucial role in CEFR implementation. Effective use of the framework requires not only familiarity with descriptors but also the ability to translate them into classroom practice. This has led to increased emphasis on professional development and teacher education across Europe (Polat et al., 2021). However, disparities in training opportunities continue to contribute to uneven implementation outcomes.

4. FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN GREECE

4.1 Institutional Structure and Policy Alignment

Greece represents a particularly interesting case in European foreign language education due to its strong formal alignment with European frameworks combined with persistent structural challenges in implementation. English is introduced early in primary education and remains compulsory throughout compulsory schooling (Dendrinis et al., 2013). In recent years, English instruction has even been extended to preschool education, reflecting broader European trends toward early language learning.

The Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum in Greece is explicitly aligned with CEFR descriptors, aiming to develop communicative competence across all four skills. In principle, this represents a significant modernization of language education policy. However, the translation of curriculum design into classroom practice remains uneven.

One of the key structural issues is discontinuity between educational levels. Primary and secondary education often operate with different pedagogical expectations and assessment practices, resulting in fragmentation in learning progression (Kırkgöz et al., 2016). This lack of coherence can lead to repetition of content or gaps in skill development, particularly in productive skills such as speaking and writing.

A deeper analysis of the Greek foreign language education system reveals that structural factors play a decisive role in shaping learning outcomes beyond curriculum design. Although formal alignment with European frameworks such as the CEFR suggests modernization and policy convergence, the actual institutional environment remains fragmented. This fragmentation is largely the result of historical educational practices, uneven resource allocation, and long-standing reliance on supplementary private education.

Another critical issue concerns curriculum continuity. Although the Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum is designed to ensure progression across educational levels, in practice there is a noticeable discontinuity between primary and secondary education. This discontinuity manifests in repeated content cycles, inconsistent methodological approaches, and misalignment in proficiency expectations. As a result, learners often experience a plateau effect, where progress slows due to redundancy rather than advancement.

Furthermore, the role of assessment culture in Greece reinforces traditional learning patterns. Despite CEFR alignment, high-stakes examinations often prioritize accuracy and grammatical correctness over communicative effectiveness. This creates a misalignment between curricular goals and evaluation practices, leading teachers and students to prioritize exam performance rather than communicative competence development.

Overall, the Greek case illustrates a systemic paradox: strong formal alignment with European policy frameworks coexists with structural constraints that limit effective pedagogical transformation. This tension is central to understanding why measurable improvements in language policy do not always translate into proportional improvements in communicative proficiency.

4.2 Private Education and Structural Inequality

A defining characteristic of the Greek context is the strong parallel system of private language education, commonly referred to as “frontistiria.” These institutions play a major role in preparing students for standardized examinations and often provide more intensive exposure to English than public schools (Dendrinis et al., 2013).

While this parallel system contributes to relatively high overall performance in national examinations, it introduces significant social inequality. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to access private instruction, resulting in unequal opportunities for language development. This dual structure effectively creates a two-tiered system of language education: public schooling as a baseline and private tutoring as the primary driver of proficiency.

This situation raises important policy concerns. Ideally, public education systems should ensure equitable access to language competence. However, in Greece, the reliance on private education suggests structural limitations in the public provision of foreign language instruction. One of the most persistent structural characteristics of the Greek context is the coexistence of public schooling with a highly developed private tutoring sector. This phenomenon is not marginal but systemic. Private language institutes (frontistiria) function as parallel educational structures that often determine students’ final levels of English proficiency more than formal schooling itself. As Dendrinis et al. (2013) observe, this dual system effectively redistributes educational responsibility from the state to private actors, raising significant concerns regarding equity and accessibility.

From a sociological perspective, this structure creates stratification in language learning opportunities. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds can afford sustained exposure to English through private instruction, smaller class sizes, and targeted exam preparation. In contrast, students who rely exclusively on public education often experience reduced input frequency, limited speaking practice, and less individualized feedback. This inequality directly affects communicative competence development, particularly in productive skills such as speaking and writing.

4.3 Teacher Training and Classroom Practice

Teacher education is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of language education reforms. Although Greek curricula emphasize communicative language teaching, actual classroom practices often reflect a hybrid model combining communicative and traditional grammar-focused approaches.

Polat et al. (2021) highlight that teacher preparedness is uneven, particularly in relation to newer pedagogical methodologies such as task-based learning. In many cases, teachers rely on exam-oriented strategies due to institutional pressures and assessment demands. This creates a gap between curricular intentions and classroom realities. Teacher-related factors further complicate implemen-

tation. While many educators are trained in communicative language teaching methodologies, institutional constraints often limit their application. Large class sizes, exam-oriented pressures, and limited instructional hours restrict opportunities for interaction-based learning. Consequently, teachers frequently adopt hybrid pedagogical models that combine communicative tasks with traditional grammar instruction. This hybridity reflects not ideological inconsistency but pragmatic adaptation to systemic constraints.

Moreover, limited instructional time in public schools further constrains opportunities for meaningful communicative practice. As a result, students may achieve theoretical knowledge of grammar without developing sufficient communicative fluency, particularly in listening and speaking.

Despite Greece's formal alignment with European language policy and CEFR implementation, a critical structural contradiction remains between policy intentions and long-term educational sustainability. While official discourse promotes equitable access to foreign language learning within the public education system, in practice a parallel dependency on private language institutions continues to dominate learning trajectories. This dual structure raises concerns regarding the long-term viability of public language education, as it risks institutionalizing inequality rather than reducing it.

From a policy perspective, this reliance on private tutoring (*frontistiria*) effectively shifts a core educational responsibility away from the state, creating a *de facto* privatized support system for language acquisition. Although this system contributes to high examination performance, it does so unevenly, reinforcing socio-economic stratification. Learners with access to sustained private instruction develop significantly stronger communicative competence, while those relying exclusively on public schooling often remain at functional threshold levels.

In addition, this structure creates a misalignment with the European Union's broader multilingualism strategy, which emphasizes equal access to language learning opportunities across member states. The Greek case therefore illustrates a tension between formal policy convergence at European level and structural divergence at national implementation level. Over time, this may undermine the sustainability of public trust in formal education systems if external tutoring becomes perceived as necessary rather than supplementary.

4.4 ESLC Findings and Interpretation

The European Survey on Language Competences (European Commission, 2012) (ESLC) provides a valuable empirical basis for understanding student performance across European education systems. It provides a comparative assessment of student performance in reading, listening, and writing. In Greece, the results reveal uneven skill distribution. Writing tends to show relatively stronger performance, while listening comprehension remains significantly weaker (Dendrinos et al., 2013; European Commission, 2012).

However, a deeper interpretation of the Greek results reveals not only proficiency levels but also underlying pedagogical patterns.

This pattern can be interpreted as evidence of limited exposure to authentic spoken English in classroom environments. In reading comprehension, Greek students demonstrate relatively moderate performance, with a significant concentration at B1 level. This suggests that learners are capable of understanding structured written texts but may struggle with more complex inferential comprehension tasks. The emphasis on textbook-based reading materials in classroom instruction likely contributes to this pattern, as exposure tends to be controlled and linguistically simplified.

Listening comprehension, by contrast, represents the weakest skill area. The ESLC data indicates a high proportion of learners performing at A1 level or below. This can be attributed to limited exposure

to authentic spoken English within the public education system. Unlike writing and reading, listening requires sustained interaction with natural speech, which is often absent in exam-focused instructional environments. This gap highlights a structural limitation rather than an individual learner deficit.

Writing performance appears comparatively stronger, with a notable proportion of students achieving B1–B2 levels. This outcome is likely influenced by the strong emphasis placed on writing in both school assessments and private tutoring environments. Students are frequently trained to produce structured written texts that align with examination criteria, which improves formal accuracy but may not necessarily reflect spontaneous communicative writing ability.

Written skills are often reinforced through exam preparation and structured instruction, whereas listening skills require sustained exposure to natural speech, which is less available in traditional classroom settings.

A key interpretative insight from the ESLC findings is the imbalance between productive and receptive skills. While writing benefits from structured instruction and exam preparation, listening suffers from insufficient exposure. This imbalance reflects broader systemic priorities within the Greek educational context.

When viewed comparatively, ESLC results across Europe suggest that countries with more integrated exposure models, such as CLIL-based systems, tend to exhibit more balanced skill distributions. This reinforces the importance of input frequency and contextualized language use in developing comprehensive communicative competence.

While the ESLC provides valuable comparative insights into language competence across European education systems, its findings must be interpreted with caution due to methodological constraints. Standardized testing environments, by design, capture controlled performance under artificial conditions rather than fully authentic communicative ability. As a result, they may not fully reflect learners' spontaneous interactional competence in real-world contexts.

In the Greek case, the apparent relative strength in writing skills compared to listening may partly reflect the test's alignment with formal schooling practices, where writing is heavily emphasized through structured exercises and examination preparation. Conversely, listening comprehension tasks require exposure to naturalistic spoken language, which is less consistently available in many public-school environments. This structural imbalance may therefore be amplified by both instructional practice and assessment design.

Furthermore, cross-national comparability within ESLC data assumes a level of curricular equivalence that may not fully exist in practice. Differences in classroom hours, teacher training, and exposure to English outside school significantly affect outcomes, yet are not fully captured by standardized metrics. Consequently, ESLC results should be interpreted not as absolute measures of competence, but as indicators of system-level tendencies shaped by instructional conditions.

The ESLC data also highlights the role of private education in compensating for limitations in public schooling. Students who attend private language institutions generally demonstrate higher proficiency levels across skills. This reinforces the conclusion that structural inequalities significantly influence language learning outcomes in Greece.

5. COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: SPAIN

Spain's approach to foreign language education is characterized by the extensive implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which integrates subject matter instruction with foreign language use. Unlike traditional models that separate language learning from content learn-

ing, CLIL embeds English within subjects such as science, history, and geography. Spain provides an instructive comparative case due to its widespread adoption of bilingual education policies and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL involves teaching non-language subjects through a foreign language, typically English, thereby increasing exposure and functional use of the language in meaningful contexts (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010).

The Spanish CLIL model represents a structural integration of language learning into the broader curriculum, rather than treating it as an isolated subject. This approach increases the quantity and quality of input, which aligns with SLA theories emphasizing the importance of exposure and interaction (Ellis, 1994).

Empirical research suggests that CLIL students often demonstrate improved receptive skills, particularly in listening and reading, due to increased exposure to English in subject-matter contexts. However, outcomes vary significantly across regions due to Spain's decentralized education system, which allows autonomous communities to implement CLIL differently.

This structural integration significantly increases exposure to English, which is a key factor in second language acquisition. According to interactionist SLA theories, increased meaningful input enhances both comprehension and production skills (Ellis, 1994). In this sense, CLIL aligns closely with theoretical principles of effective language acquisition.

One of the key advantages of the Spanish model is its ability to create naturalistic learning environments within formal education. Students are not only learning English as a subject but also using it as a medium for cognitive development. This dual focus enhances cognitive engagement and promotes deeper processing of linguistic input. While Greece relies heavily on external private education to supplement school instruction, Spain has attempted to embed English exposure within the public education system itself.

However, CLIL implementation in Spain is not uniform. Autonomous communities have different levels of investment, teacher training, and curriculum design. This regional variation leads to uneven outcomes, with some regions achieving significantly higher levels of bilingual proficiency than others.

Compared to Greece, Spain demonstrates a more integrated institutional model and a more systemic integration of English into the core curriculum. While Greece relies heavily on external private education to supplement public instruction, Spain attempts to internalize language exposure within the school system itself. This reduces reliance on socio-economic factors and socio-economic disparities in access to language learning opportunities and increases institutional responsibility for language outcomes.

Nevertheless, CLIL is not without limitations. Teacher workload, insufficient training, and content-language balance issues can reduce its effectiveness. Despite these challenges, the Spanish model remains a strong example of how structural integration can enhance language exposure and communicative competence development.

Challenges remain in Spain as well. Teacher training is a critical issue, as CLIL requires educators to possess both subject knowledge and advanced language proficiency. Additionally, uneven implementation across regions leads to variability in outcomes.

Despite these limitations, Spain demonstrates how structural integration of language and content can enhance exposure and improve communicative competence. This provides a useful contrast to the more fragmented Greek system.

The effectiveness of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Spain can also be better understood through cognitive load theory and input frequency principles. By embedding language

within subject content, CLIL increases exposure to English in cognitively meaningful contexts, thereby facilitating deeper processing of linguistic input. This aligns with SLA perspectives that emphasize the importance of meaningful, context-rich interaction for language acquisition.

However, CLIL also introduces significant pedagogical demands on teachers, who must simultaneously manage content delivery and language scaffolding. This dual responsibility requires high levels of linguistic proficiency and methodological training, which are not uniformly distributed across educational contexts. As a result, implementation quality varies significantly, even within the same national system.

Additionally, research suggests that while CLIL improves receptive skills such as reading and listening, its impact on productive skills is less consistent, particularly in contexts where classroom interaction time remains limited. This indicates that increased exposure alone is not sufficient; structured opportunities for output and feedback are also necessary for balanced competence development. Therefore, CLIL should be understood as a partial solution rather than a comprehensive reform model.

6. DISCUSSION

The persistent gap between language policy and classroom practice remains one of the most significant challenges in European foreign language education. Although policy frameworks such as the CEFR emphasize communicative competence, learner autonomy, and functional language use, classroom practices often remain constrained by institutional realities and structural and resource-related limitations.

In many systems, including Greece, assessment practices continue to prioritize accuracy over communication. This creates a backwash effect, where teaching is shaped by examination requirements rather than communicative goals. As a result, even when curricula emphasize interaction, classroom practice may remain structurally traditional.

From an ELF perspective, this gap is particularly significant. If English is primarily used as a lingua franca, then communicative effectiveness should take precedence over native-speaker accuracy. However, many educational systems continue to implicitly adopt native-speaker norms in both teaching and assessment. This creates a conceptual contradiction between theory and practice.

In Greece, this gap is particularly pronounced due to systemic reliance on private education and limited instructional time in public schools. Although curricula are formally aligned with the CEFR, implementation is uneven, and communicative approaches are not consistently applied.

In Spain, the gap is partially reduced through CLIL implementation, which increases exposure to English in authentic contexts. However, inconsistencies in teacher training and regional policy variation still limit full effectiveness.

This suggests that policy convergence at the European level does not automatically translate into pedagogical convergence at the national level. Instead, educational outcomes are shaped by a complex interaction of institutional capacity, teacher expertise, socio-economic factors, and curriculum design.

From a theoretical perspective, this gap also reflects tensions between ELF-oriented communication models and traditional assessment systems based on native-speaker norms. While policy increasingly recognizes communicative competence, evaluation practices often lag theoretical developments.

Additionally, resource disparities across European countries contribute to uneven implementation of policy goals. Teacher training, class sizes, and instructional time vary significantly, affecting the extent to which communicative methodologies can be applied effectively.

Ultimately, the policy–practice gap reflects not a failure of policy design but a complexity of implementation across diverse educational contexts. Addressing this gap requires not only curricular reform but also systemic investment in teacher development, institutional capacity, and equitable access to learning opportunities.

A broader theoretical implication emerging from this analysis concerns the persistent tension between English as a lingua franca (ELF) perspectives and traditional examination-driven language education systems. While ELF frameworks emphasize communicative effectiveness and mutual intelligibility among non-native speakers, many European education systems continue to assess language proficiency through norms implicitly derived from native-speaker standards.

This misalignment produces a structural contradiction within CEFR-based education systems. Although the CEFR was designed to prioritize functional competence, its operationalization in many contexts is filtered through standardized testing regimes that emphasize accuracy, grammatical correctness, and formal written production. This creates a situation in which communicative competence is theoretically prioritized but practically secondary.

Furthermore, the CEFR itself functions more as a descriptive framework than a prescriptive pedagogical model. Its flexibility allows for wide adoption across diverse systems, but this same flexibility limits its capacity to ensure consistent pedagogical transformation. As a result, CEFR alignment does not automatically translate into methodological change in classrooms.

In this context, policy harmonization at European level should not be interpreted as pedagogical convergence. Instead, it represents a shared reference structure that is mediated by national educational traditions, institutional constraints, and assessment cultures. The persistence of exam-oriented teaching practices thus reflects not a failure of policy, but the resilience of entrenched educational logic within national systems.

7. CONCLUSION

English has become the dominant foreign language in European education, functioning as a lingua franca across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Its dominance reflects broader global trends but also raises important questions about linguistic diversity and educational equity. The analysis of Greece demonstrates strong formal alignment with European language policy frameworks, particularly the CEFR, but also reveals persistent structural challenges. These include curriculum discontinuities, reliance on private education, and uneven skill development, particularly in listening comprehension.

The comparison with Spain highlights alternative approaches to foreign language education, particularly through CLIL and bilingual education models. These approaches demonstrate the potential benefits of integrating language learning into content instruction, thereby increasing exposure and communicative competence.

Ultimately, this paper argues that while European language policy provides a coherent framework for language education, its effectiveness depends on national implementation. Without adequate institutional support, teacher training, and equitable access to learning opportunities, policy goals remain only partially realized. Improving foreign language education in Europe therefore requires not only alignment with frameworks such as the CEFR, but also structural reforms that address inequalities and enhance authentic language exposure in classroom settings.

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12. Robótica social y mediación lingüística en escenarios educativos multimodales

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Abstract: Educational social robotics has gained prominence in recent years within the fields of educational technology, human-robot interaction and language learning. The aim of this literature review is to analyse the contributions of the scientific literature regarding the use of social robots as complementary pedagogical agents in processes of linguistic interaction, oral practice, vocabulary acquisition and communicative participation. To this end, a search was conducted in the Web of Science and Scopus databases, focusing on studies on social robotics, language learning, linguistic mediation and educational multimodality. The search focused primarily on recent publications, particularly from 2020 onwards, although earlier landmark works were included due to their relevance in consolidating the field. The results allow for the identification of four main themes: the evolution of the social robot from a motivational technological resource to a pedagogical agent; its role as a tutor, assistant, companion or social mediator; the value of multimodality in educational interaction; and the ethical, pedagogical and methodological challenges associated with its integration into the classroom. The reviewed literature shows positive effects on motivation, oral practice and vocabulary, although it also highlights limitations related to small sample sizes, brief interventions, linguistic biases and dependence on teacher mediation. It is concluded that social robots can generate new situations for language practice, provided their use is integrated into a specific teaching approach.

Keywords: social robotics, language mediation, language learning, multimodality, education.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

La robótica social se ha incorporado de forma progresiva a la investigación educativa como una tecnología emergente con potencial para enriquecer los procesos de interacción, participación y aprendizaje. A diferencia de otros recursos digitales, los robots sociales combinan presencia física, lenguaje verbal, gestos, movimiento y respuestas programadas o mediadas por inteligencia artificial, lo que les permite intervenir en situaciones educativas con una dimensión comunicativa y relacional específica.

En el aprendizaje de lenguas, esta dimensión resulta especialmente relevante. La mediación lingüística exige práctica, escucha, interacción, retroalimentación y construcción compartida de significado. En este contexto, los robots sociales pueden actuar como tutores, asistentes, compañeros de práctica o mediadores en actividades comunicativas, siempre que su uso responda a una finalidad didáctica clara y a una planificación pedagógica adecuada.

Este trabajo se plantea como una revisión bibliográfica sobre el uso de la robótica social en la mediación lingüística dentro de escenarios educativos multimodales. Su propósito es analizar las aport-

aciones de la literatura científica, identificar posibilidades educativas y examinar los principales retos pedagógicos, éticos y metodológicos que condicionan su integración en el aula. La premisa central es que el robot social no sustituye la mediación docente, sino que puede ampliar las oportunidades de interacción lingüística cuando se integra de forma crítica. A partir de este planteamiento, la revisión se orienta mediante las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

- ¿Qué roles pedagógicos atribuye la literatura científica a los robots sociales en contextos educativos?
- ¿Qué aportaciones presentan los robots sociales para la mediación lingüística y el aprendizaje de lenguas?
- ¿Qué papel desempeña la multimodalidad en las interacciones educativas mediadas por robots sociales?
- ¿Qué retos éticos, pedagógicos y metodológicos identifica la investigación sobre robótica social aplicada a la mediación lingüística?

2. MÉTODO

Esta revisión bibliográfica se planteó con el propósito de analizar la producción científica sobre robótica social, mediación lingüística y multimodalidad en contextos educativos. Para ello, se realizó una búsqueda documental en las bases de datos Web of Science y Scopus, seleccionadas por su cobertura internacional y por su relevancia en el ámbito de la investigación educativa, tecnológica y lingüística. La búsqueda priorizó la literatura más reciente, con especial atención a los trabajos publicados a partir de 2020, pero también incluyó estudios anteriores considerados fundamentales para comprender la evolución y consolidación de esta línea de investigación.

La estrategia de búsqueda combinó términos relacionados con tres ejes temáticos: robótica social, aprendizaje de lenguas y multimodalidad educativa. Se emplearon expresiones en inglés como “social robots”, “educational social robots”, “robot-assisted language learning”, “language learning”, “linguistic mediation”, “multimodal interaction” y “education”. Estas palabras clave se combinaron mediante operadores booleanos para localizar estudios centrados en el uso de robots sociales en procesos de aprendizaje, interacción lingüística, práctica comunicativa y escenarios educativos multimodales.

Se incluyeron artículos científicos, revisiones sistemáticas, meta-análisis y trabajos empíricos publicados en revistas académicas o actas científicas. Se priorizaron investigaciones vinculadas al ámbito educativo, con especial atención a aquellas centradas en aprendizaje de lenguas, interacción humano-robot, mediación docente, multimodalidad, participación del alumnado y retos éticos o metodológicos. Se excluyeron trabajos estrictamente técnicos sin aplicación educativa explícita, estudios centrados en robótica industrial o asistencial sin relación con el aprendizaje, y publicaciones sin conexión directa con la mediación lingüística o la interacción educativa.

El análisis de los documentos se realizó mediante una lectura temática de las aportaciones seleccionadas. A partir de esta revisión, los estudios se organizaron en cuatro núcleos de análisis: la evolución del robot social como agente pedagógico, las funciones de mediación lingüística en el aprendizaje de lenguas, la dimensión multimodal de la interacción educativa y los retos éticos, pedagógicos e investigadores asociados a su incorporación en el aula. Esta organización permitió identificar tendencias, posibilidades educativas, limitaciones recurrentes y líneas futuras de investigación en el campo de la robótica social aplicada a la mediación lingüística.

3. RESULTADOS

3.1. Robótica social educativa: del dispositivo tecnológico al agente pedagógico

La robótica social educativa ha evolucionado de forma significativa en los últimos años. Las primeras aproximaciones tendían a presentar el robot como un recurso tecnológico novedoso, asociado a la motivación, la curiosidad o el interés inicial del alumnado. Sin embargo, la literatura reciente muestra una transición hacia una concepción más compleja: el robot social comienza a analizarse como un agente pedagógico complementario, con funciones específicas dentro de la ecología del aula y con capacidad para participar en procesos de interacción, mediación y apoyo al aprendizaje.

Los robots sociales se caracterizan por su presencia física, sus rasgos antropomórficos y sus habilidades sociales o afectivas. Esta combinación les permite generar formas de interacción diferentes a las que ofrecen otros dispositivos digitales, ya que pueden hablar, moverse, mirar, gesticular, responder o modular su conducta en función de la actividad. Desde esta perspectiva, algunos estudios los sitúan cerca de los sistemas tutoriales inteligentes, especialmente cuando asumen funciones de tutor o de compañero de aprendizaje y se integran en tareas educativas estructuradas (Lampropoulos, 2025; Pai et al., 2024).

Uno de los roles más analizados es el de tutor o profesor. En este caso, el robot puede presentar contenidos, proponer ejercicios, apoyar la adquisición de vocabulario, supervisar tareas o adaptar determinadas actividades a las respuestas del alumnado. Diversas revisiones y meta-análisis han señalado efectos positivos en el rendimiento y la motivación cuando los robots se utilizan en tareas acotadas y con objetivos concretos (Lampropoulos, 2025; Pai et al., 2024; Saerbeck et al., 2010). Estos resultados no permiten generalizaciones amplias, ya que dependen del tipo de intervención, de su duración, del diseño pedagógico y del grado de autonomía del sistema.

Un segundo papel relevante es el de asistente docente. Bajo esta función, el robot no asume la responsabilidad principal de la enseñanza, pero puede apoyar al profesorado en la presentación de materiales, la gestión de tiempos, la secuenciación de tareas, la recogida de datos de progreso o la dinamización de actividades grupales. Esta función resulta especialmente interesante cuando el robot se integra en experiencias donde el profesorado necesita atender simultáneamente a diferentes ritmos de aprendizaje o promover la participación en pequeños grupos (Rohlfing et al., 2022; Rosenberg-Kima et al., 2020; Sievers, 2025; Tekerek et al., 2026).

Otra línea de trabajo concibe al robot como compañero de aprendizaje o *tutee* (Pareto, 2017). En estos casos, el alumnado interactúa con el robot desde una lógica de colaboración o de enseñanza al propio robot. Las experiencias de *learning-by-teaching* permiten que el niño explique, corrija, reformule o ayude al robot, lo que puede reforzar su propio aprendizaje y favorecer procesos de verbalización, reflexión y toma de conciencia sobre la tarea (Ekström & Pareto, 2022; Rohlfing et al., 2022). Este enfoque resulta especialmente valioso porque desplaza al robot de una posición de autoridad y lo convierte en un interlocutor que necesita apoyo, lo que puede generar formas de participación más activas.

El robot social también puede actuar como mediador social. En este rol, su función principal no se limita a transmitir contenidos, sino que facilita la interacción entre el alumnado, promueve dinámicas de colaboración, apoya procesos de inclusión y puede contribuir al desarrollo de habilidades sociales. Algunos estudios han destacado su potencial para favorecer la participación de alumnado diverso, reforzar la identidad, acompañar procesos de alfabetización temprana o promover interacciones en contextos donde la comunicación requiere apoyos adicionales (Mifsud et al., 2025; Rosenberg-Kima et al., 2020; Lazarová & Mitevská, 2025; Schiavo et al., 2024).

La incorporación del robot como actor social transforma también el papel del profesorado. Cuando un robot entra en el aula, la relación educativa deja de organizarse únicamente en torno a la interacción docente-alumnado y pasa a incluir nuevas formas de relación humano-robot-humano (Ekström & Pareto, 2022; Rohlfing et al., 2022; Tekerek et al., 2026). Esto exige que el profesorado actúe como diseñador, mediador y orquestador de la actividad, con capacidad para decidir cuándo interviene el robot, qué función cumple, qué objetivos curriculares apoya y cómo se interpretan sus respuestas dentro de la dinámica del aula

La literatura muestra que el profesorado no siempre interpreta al robot de la misma manera. En algunos casos lo percibe como una herramienta didáctica, similar a otros recursos tecnológicos; en otros, lo reconoce como un actor social que modifica la forma de planificar, intervenir y acompañar la actividad. Esta oscilación condiciona las decisiones metodológicas, los objetivos que se priorizan y el tipo de andamiaje que se ofrece al alumnado (Ekström & Pareto, 2022; Istenič et al., 2024). Por ello, la integración de robots sociales no puede reducirse a la disponibilidad del dispositivo, ya que requiere formación docente, criterios de uso y una justificación pedagógica explícita.

Algunos estudios sobre robots asistentes de grupo en educación secundaria y universitaria muestran que estos sistemas pueden gestionar tiempos, ordenar fases de trabajo, promover la discusión y aportar una cierta percepción de objetividad o eficiencia en la dinámica grupal (Rosenberg-Kima et al., 2020; Sievers, 2025). Sin embargo, esta eficiencia no garantiza por sí misma un aprendizaje más profundo. El valor educativo aparece cuando el robot contribuye a organizar la interacción, a sostener la atención sobre la tarea y a favorecer formas de participación que el profesorado puede interpretar y reconducir.

Pese a estas posibilidades, la literatura también advierte de importantes limitaciones. Las revisiones de estudios de campo indican que los robots sociales son viables y suelen resultar motivadores, pero no superan de forma sistemática al docente humano ni a otras tecnologías educativas. Además, la autonomía a largo plazo continúa limitada, especialmente en aulas reales, donde aparecen problemas técnicos, cambios imprevistos en la interacción y situaciones que requieren juicio pedagógico complejo (Woo et al., 2021).

Otra limitación relevante es la falta de fundamentación pedagógica explícita en muchos estudios. Con frecuencia, las experiencias se centran en demostrar la viabilidad técnica del robot o en medir efectos inmediatos sobre motivación y rendimiento, pero dedican menos atención a la teoría educativa que justifica su uso, al papel del profesorado, a la relación afectiva que puede establecerse con el alumnado o a las implicaciones éticas de su presencia en el aula (Lampropoulos, 2025; Tekerek et al., 2026; Woo et al., 2021; Istenič et al., 2024). Esta carencia dificulta valorar cuándo el robot actúa realmente como agente pedagógico y cuándo funciona solo como recurso atractivo o elemento de novedad.

Las resistencias del profesorado y del futuro profesorado también merecen atención. Algunos trabajos muestran reticencias ante robots con apariencia o conducta demasiado humana, así como dudas sobre su idoneidad para sostener interacciones pedagógicas profundas. Estas percepciones recuerdan que la relación educativa humana posee una dimensión ética, afectiva e interpretativa que no puede delegarse en el dispositivo (Istenič et al., 2024; Mullick, 2025). Por tanto, el robot social debe entenderse como un agente complementario, subordinado a la intencionalidad educativa y a la responsabilidad docente.

3.2. Mediación lingüística y aprendizaje con robots sociales

La robótica social se ha incorporado a la investigación educativa como una tecnología con capacidad para intervenir en procesos de interacción, participación y aprendizaje. Su interés reside en que pueden proporcionar input oral, formular preguntas, gestionar turnos de habla, ofrecer retroalimentación

ación, repetir instrucciones, reducir la ansiedad comunicativa y crear situaciones de interacción que antes dependían exclusivamente del profesorado o de los iguales (Wang & Cheung, 2024; Lee & Lee, 2022). Esta dimensión cobra sentido en el aprendizaje de lenguas, donde la interacción, la escucha y la retroalimentación son parte del propio proceso formativo (Gao, 2026).

La literatura sobre *robot-assisted language learning* muestra una evidencia cada vez más amplia, aunque todavía desigual en función de los niveles educativos, las lenguas estudiadas y el tipo de tareas propuestas. Buena parte de los estudios se ha centrado en alumnado de educación infantil, primaria y secundaria, con predominio de experiencias orientadas al aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés como segunda lengua o lengua extranjera (Banko et al., 2025; Jao et al., 2025); algún ejemplo en enseñanza para adultos (Deng et al., 2024). Esta concentración temática permite contar con resultados relevantes, pero también muestra la necesidad de ampliar la investigación hacia otras lenguas, otros niveles educativos y situaciones comunicativas más complejas.

Por otro lado, se indica que el aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por robots puede producir efectos positivos sobre el rendimiento lingüístico. Lee y Lee (2022) identifican un efecto medio favorable frente a clases sin robot o frente a otras tecnologías educativas. En una línea complementaria, Wang y Cheung (2024) señalan que las conductas sociales de apoyo del robot mejoran el logro lingüístico en comparación con comportamientos neutros. Estos resultados sugieren que el valor del robot no depende únicamente de su presencia física, sino de la calidad de sus comportamientos sociales, de su adecuación a la tarea y de la forma en que se integra en la actividad didáctica, como señalan Li et al. (2025).

Las ganancias documentadas se concentran principalmente en vocabulario y expresión oral, aunque también se han descrito avances en lectura, gramática y participación comunicativa en determinados contextos (Jao et al., 2025; Banko et al., 2025; Huang & Moore, 2023), así como interacciones orales (Lin et al., 2022) o vocabulario (Zinina et al., 2022). El robot puede ofrecer repeticiones, modelos de pronunciación, preguntas breves, apoyo visual o dinámicas de práctica que facilitan la exposición a la lengua. Esta posibilidad resulta útil cuando el alumnado necesita ensayar sin temor a la evaluación inmediata del grupo o cuando requiere más oportunidades de interacción oral.

Los beneficios percibidos no se limitan al rendimiento lingüístico. Diversos estudios destacan mayor implicación, disfrute y reducción de la ansiedad ante la comunicación en otra lengua (Konijn et al., 2022; Jao et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2021; Huang & Moore, 2023). En este sentido, el robot puede favorecer un clima de práctica más seguro, especialmente cuando actúa como interlocutor paciente, repetitivo y predecible. Esta característica puede ayudar al alumnado que muestra inseguridad, baja confianza o resistencia inicial a participar en actividades orales.

En cuanto a los roles que puede asumir el robot en la mediación lingüística, estos son diversos. Puede actuar como tutor o profesor cuando presenta vocabulario, formula preguntas o corrige respuestas; como compañero de aprendizaje cuando participa en una tarea compartida; o como novato cuando el alumnado debe enseñarle, corregirle o ayudarlo a comprender un contenido. Cada rol configura una relación pedagógica diferente y modifica el grado de implicación del alumnado (Konijn et al., 2022). Cuando el robot ocupa una posición de novato, la actividad puede favorecer la explicación, la reformulación y la toma de conciencia sobre el propio aprendizaje, como señalan Peura et al. (2025).

La mediación lingüística también adquiere una dimensión cultural y social. Algunos trabajos plantean que los robots pueden actuar como mediadores bilingües o como apoyo en aulas cultural y lingüísticamente diversas (Berghe, 2022; Kim et al., 2021). Esta posibilidad resulta especialmente interesante en contextos de migración, inclusión lingüística o aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, ya que el robot puede facilitar intercambios entre alumnado con repertorios lingüísticos diferentes. Sin embargo, la investigación todavía ha explorado poco el potencial de estos sistemas para trabajar desde enfoques plurilingües.

En este punto, la pedagogía del translanguaging ofrece una línea especialmente prometedora. Berghé (2022) señala que, aunque los robots sociales podrían apoyar el uso estratégico de la lengua primera y la lengua segunda, la mayoría de estudios tiende a separar las lenguas y a reproducir modelos monolingües de aprendizaje. Esta limitación reduce las posibilidades de los robots como mediadores de repertorios lingüísticos complejos. Una integración más rica exigiría diseñar actividades donde el alumnado pueda movilizar sus recursos lingüísticos de forma flexible, con el apoyo del robot y bajo la orientación del profesorado. La mediación docente sigue siendo un factor decisivo. La calidad de la interacción no depende solo del robot, ya que el profesorado organiza la actividad, interpreta los errores, sostiene la participación y convierte los fallos técnicos en oportunidades de aprendizaje. Y es que el robot no actúa de manera aislada, sino dentro de una ecología de aula donde la mediación humana resulta esencial.

Asimismo, se advierte que los robots sociales todavía no igualan la eficacia de un docente humano en tareas complejas de enseñanza lingüística. Su potencial se sitúa más bien en la ampliación de oportunidades de práctica oral, retroalimentación, repetición y participación (Rohlfing et al., 2022; Huang & Moore, 2023). Esta idea resulta clave para evitar una interpretación tecnocéntrica. El robot puede enriquecer la mediación lingüística, pero no debe ocupar el lugar del profesorado ni sustituir la interacción humana significativa.

3.3. Multimodalidad en escenarios educativos con robótica social

La multimodalidad constituye una de las características más relevantes de la robótica social educativa. A diferencia de otros recursos digitales, los robots sociales pueden combinar voz, gestos, movimiento, mirada, tacto, pantallas, sonido y datos contextuales. Esta combinación permite construir interacciones más ricas, encarnadas y adaptativas, en las que el alumnado no se relaciona únicamente con información verbal o visual, sino con un agente físico que ocupa un espacio, responde y participa en la actividad.

En el aprendizaje de lenguas, la multimodalidad amplía las posibilidades de mediación porque permite integrar distintos canales expresivos. El robot puede pronunciar palabras, acompañarlas con gestos, mostrar imágenes en una pantalla, utilizar sonidos, desplazarse o responder mediante movimientos. Esta diversidad de recursos puede favorecer la comprensión, sostener la atención y ofrecer apoyos complementarios para alumnado con distintos perfiles de aprendizaje. También permite diseñar tareas donde la lengua se trabaja en relación con la imagen, el cuerpo, el espacio, la voz y la interacción social.

Algunas investigaciones recientes han analizado la creación de contenidos multimodales con robots sociales en contextos universitarios. Jao et al. (2025) señalan que el alumnado percibe mejoras en competencia lingüística, presentación y codificación al crear contenidos multimodales con robots. En una línea próxima, Jao et al. (2025) muestran que el trabajo con presentaciones multimodales asistidas por robots puede favorecer la conciencia de audiencia y la planificación comunicativa en escritura en inglés. Estos resultados sitúan al robot como apoyo para producir discursos más elaborados, no únicamente como recurso para practicar vocabulario o responder preguntas.

La multimodalidad también puede influir en la participación y la motivación. Fung et al. (2025) analizan robots que combinan animaciones, canciones, baile, gestos y tacto, y observan un aumento del compromiso en alumnado con y sin dislexia. Estos recursos pueden ajustar mejor la carga cognitiva, ya que distribuyen la información por diferentes canales y facilitan una experiencia más dinámica. En este tipo de propuestas, el robot actúa como organizador de estímulos, mediador de la actividad y apoyo para mantener la implicación del grupo.

En relación con el aprendizaje de contenidos, Baxter (2025) destaca que la coordinación no verbal multimodal del robot, por ejemplo mediante una pantalla táctil compartida, puede mejorar las ganancias de aprendizaje en educación primaria. Esta evidencia resulta relevante porque muestra que el valor de la multimodalidad no reside en añadir estímulos de forma acumulativa, sino en coordinar los canales de interacción de manera coherente con la tarea. La sincronía entre voz, gesto, mirada, movimiento y recurso visual puede facilitar la comprensión y reforzar la estructura de la actividad.

La aceptación tecnológica también parece verse afectada por la modalidad de interacción. Tutul et al. (2026) comparan una condición basada únicamente en voz con otra que incorpora retroalimentación multimodal con sonido en una actividad de cuestionarios. Los resultados muestran mejoras en utilidad percibida, facilidad de uso, actitud e intención de uso cuando se incorpora retroalimentación multimodal. Esta línea de investigación sugiere que la forma en que el robot comunica sus respuestas puede influir en la percepción que el alumnado tiene de la herramienta y en su disposición a utilizarla en futuras actividades.

La corporeidad del robot genera formas de interacción encarnada que resultan especialmente importantes en edades tempranas. Kim y Tscholl (2021) muestran que los niños pequeños desarrollan patrones de interacción multimodal rica con robots sociales, con gestos, movimiento, mirada, voz y colaboración espontánea entre iguales. En estos contextos, el aprendizaje no se limita al intercambio verbal, ya que se construye mediante acciones corporales, turnos compartidos, desplazamientos y respuestas situadas. Esta dimensión encarnada diferencia a los robots sociales de otros dispositivos educativos.

En aulas de alfabetización temprana, Mifsud et al. (2025) describen cómo un robot humanoide que reconoce al alumnado y recuerda interacciones previas puede actuar como tutor y como mediador social, con influencia sobre la identidad y el autoconcepto. Esta aportación es relevante porque muestra que la multimodalidad no tiene solo una dimensión técnica. También afecta a la forma en que el alumnado se percibe dentro de la actividad, al modo en que participa y a las relaciones que se establecen en el aula.

La multimodalidad también adquiere relevancia en contextos híbridos. Jakonen y Jauni (2024) analizan aulas de lengua mediadas por robots de telepresencia y muestran que la movilidad del robot amplía los recursos multimodales del alumnado remoto. Su presencia física en el aula permite que las acciones del participante a distancia resulten visibles para el grupo y que la interacción híbrida no dependa únicamente de una pantalla fija. Esta posibilidad abre nuevas vías para pensar la participación lingüística en escenarios presenciales, remotos y combinados.

El papel del profesorado vuelve a ser fundamental en estas experiencias. Ekström y Pareto (2022) muestran que los docentes pueden percibir el robot como herramienta didáctica o como actor social, y esta percepción afecta a la planificación, al tipo de andamiaje y al modo de interpretar la actividad. En tareas multimodales, esta cuestión resulta especialmente importante, ya que el profesorado debe decidir cómo se articulan los recursos verbales, visuales, corporales y tecnológicos para que la interacción conserve sentido pedagógico.

La investigación reciente también conecta robótica social y analítica de aprendizaje. González-Oliveras et al. (2025) señalan que los robots pueden combinar datos multimodales, como mirada, postura, habla o movimiento, para adaptar la intervención y recoger información sobre el proceso educativo. Esta línea puede aportar datos relevantes sobre participación, atención o interacción, aunque requiere criterios éticos claros y una interpretación pedagógica cuidadosa. Los datos multimodales no tienen valor por sí mismos; necesitan análisis contextual y decisiones docentes fundamentadas.

En esta misma dirección, algunos trabajos proponen sistemas de reconocimiento emocional multimodal y modelos de pesos dinámicos para mejorar la detección afectiva y apoyar la adquisición de

lenguas en primaria y secundaria (Bian et al., 2025; Al-Okbi et al., 2025). También se han planteado arquitecturas de interacción multimodal para robots educativos basadas en la teoría de las inteligencias múltiples y en el análisis de necesidades docentes (Wang et al., 2024). Estas propuestas muestran una tendencia hacia sistemas más adaptativos, aunque todavía plantean retos de robustez técnica, validez pedagógica y protección de datos.

Las revisiones sobre robótica social educativa destacan que la presencia física y los comportamientos sociales multimodales pueden influir en los resultados cognitivos y afectivos. Sin embargo, también identifican problemas de robustez, coordinación temporal, interpretación de señales y diseño pedagógico (Duncan et al., 2024; Baksh et al., 2024). Un robot que combina múltiples canales puede enriquecer la experiencia educativa, pero también puede generar sobrecarga, distracción o errores de interacción si sus respuestas no están bien diseñadas.

3.4. Retos éticos, pedagógicos e investigadores

Como hemos visto, los robots sociales muestran un potencial relevante como mediadores lingüísticos, especialmente en actividades de práctica oral, vocabulario, interacción y motivación hacia el aprendizaje de lenguas. Sin embargo, su integración en contextos educativos plantea retos que deben analizarse con cautela. La evidencia disponible apunta a efectos positivos moderados, pero también muestra límites importantes relacionados con la ética, el diseño pedagógico y la calidad metodológica de las investigaciones. Por ello, resulta necesario superar una visión centrada en la novedad tecnológica y avanzar hacia propuestas que expliciten para qué se usa el robot, qué papel ocupa el profesorado y qué garantías éticas acompañan la experiencia.

Uno de los principales desafíos se sitúa en el plano ético y social. El uso de robots sociales en educación, especialmente con alumnado de edades tempranas, implica la recogida y tratamiento de datos sensibles, entre ellos voz, imagen, respuestas lingüísticas, patrones de interacción o indicadores emocionales. Esta cuestión exige protocolos claros de privacidad, consentimiento informado, protección de datos y transparencia sobre el funcionamiento del sistema. Diversos trabajos advierten que la investigación en interacción humano-robot educativa todavía dedica una atención insuficiente a estas cuestiones, pese a su relevancia en escenarios con menores (Tekerek et al., 2026; Kyaw et al., 2025; Selvam & Vallejo, 2025).

La relación afectiva que puede establecerse entre el alumnado y el robot constituye otro foco de preocupación. Los robots sociales están diseñados para generar cercanía, simpatía y sensación de presencia social. Esta característica puede favorecer la motivación y la participación, pero también abre preguntas sobre apego, dependencia, sustitución del contacto humano o creación de vínculos ambiguos con un dispositivo programado. En etapas como Educación Infantil y Primaria, estas cuestiones adquieren especial importancia, ya que el alumnado puede atribuir intencionalidad, comprensión o amistad al robot más allá de sus capacidades reales (Konijn et al., 2022; Tekerek et al., 2026). También deben considerarse los sesgos lingüísticos y culturales. Muchos sistemas se diseñan para lenguas mayoritarias, especialmente el inglés, y pueden ofrecer una respuesta limitada ante acentos, variedades dialectales, lenguas minorizadas o repertorios plurilingües. Esta situación puede generar desigualdades en la interacción y limitar el potencial de los robots como mediadores lingüísticos en aulas diversas. Desde esta perspectiva, la protección ética no se reduce a la privacidad, sino que incluye la equidad lingüística, la representación cultural y la prevención de formas de trato desigual (Berghe, 2022; Selvam & Vallejo, 2025).

El propio diseño de los comportamientos del robot constituye una cuestión ética. La forma en que el robot elogia, corrige, mira, se aproxima, responde o simula emociones influye en la experi-

encia educativa. Algunos autores advierten que los elogios excesivos, las respuestas engañosamente empáticas o un grado elevado de humanización pueden generar expectativas poco realistas sobre las capacidades del sistema (Huang & Moore, 2023). En aulas reales con robots dotados de inteligencia artificial, el profesorado también identifica retos éticos, de seguridad y de control de la interacción, además de problemas funcionales vinculados al uso cotidiano de estos dispositivos (Kyaw et al., 2025). Junto a los retos éticos, aparecen desafíos pedagógicos de gran relevancia. Una limitación frecuente en la literatura es la ausencia de marcos didácticos explícitos que orienten el uso de robots sociales en el aula. Muchas experiencias se presentan como demostraciones tecnológicas o intervenciones puntuales, con escasa explicación sobre la teoría educativa que las sustenta, los objetivos curriculares que persiguen o el tipo de aprendizaje lingüístico que pretenden promover (Tekerek et al., 2026). Esta carencia dificulta valorar si el robot actúa realmente como mediador pedagógico o si funciona únicamente como elemento motivador.

En el caso específico del aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por robots, algunos estudios advierten que la interacción puede volverse mecánica. Las actividades pueden reducirse a preguntas cerradas, respuestas breves o intercambios previsibles, con escasa agencia del alumnado y pocas oportunidades para construir discurso elaborado. Maijala y Mutta (2024) muestran que, en aulas RALL, el discurso puede quedar limitado a respuestas de una o dos palabras si el diseño de la actividad no favorece la conversación, la negociación de significado o la participación comunicativa real. Esta limitación resulta especialmente importante cuando se pretende trabajar mediación lingüística, ya que mediar implica interpretar, reformular, explicar y adaptar el mensaje a distintos interlocutores.

El papel del profesorado es decisivo para superar este riesgo. Aunque el robot pueda presentar tareas, formular preguntas o proporcionar retroalimentación, el docente sigue siendo la figura que valida, guía, contextualiza, anima a participar y ofrece soporte técnico cuando aparecen dificultades. Maijala y Mutta (2024) describen este papel como no central en apariencia, pero esencial en la práctica. Esta idea es clave: el robot puede ocupar el centro visible de la interacción, pero la calidad educativa depende de las decisiones docentes que organizan la actividad y sostienen el sentido pedagógico.

Los problemas técnicos también condicionan la mediación lingüística. El reconocimiento de voz infantil, la comprensión de acentos, los errores de pronunciación, los fallos de hardware o las respuestas inadecuadas pueden interrumpir la actividad y desplazar la atención desde los objetivos lingüísticos hacia la resolución de incidencias. En determinadas situaciones, estos errores pueden convertirse en oportunidades de aprendizaje, pero para ello se requiere intervención docente y flexibilidad didáctica. Sin esta mediación, los problemas técnicos pueden reducir la fluidez de la interacción y afectar a la confianza del alumnado en la actividad (Kyaw et al., 2025). A estos retos se suman limitaciones metodológicas en la investigación disponible. Aunque el campo ha crecido de forma notable, predominan estudios con muestras pequeñas, sesiones únicas o intervenciones de corta duración. Esta situación dificulta generalizar resultados, evaluar efectos sostenidos en el tiempo y conocer el impacto real de los robots sociales en contextos educativos ordinarios (Wang & Cheung, 2024). La motivación inicial que produce el robot puede influir en los resultados a corto plazo, por lo que resultan necesarios estudios longitudinales que permitan distinguir entre efecto de novedad y aprendizaje consolidado.

Las revisiones recientes sobre interacción humano-robot en educación reclaman mayor rigor metodológico, diseños comparativos más sólidos y procesos de codiseño con docentes (Tekerek et al., 2026). Esta última cuestión es especialmente importante, ya que el profesorado conoce las necesidades del aula, las características del alumnado, las condiciones institucionales y las posibilidades reales de integración curricular. Sin su participación, existe el riesgo de diseñar robots o actividades técnicamente viables, pero poco ajustadas a la práctica educativa.

Otra limitación relevante es la concentración temática de la investigación. La mayoría de trabajos sobre aprendizaje de lenguas con robots sociales se centra en vocabulario en inglés y en alumnado de etapas K-12. En cambio, siguen menos exploradas otras lenguas, la mediación plurilingüe, los contextos de migración, la educación de personas adultas y las situaciones donde el alumnado utiliza repertorios lingüísticos complejos (Lee & Lee, 2022; Berghe, 2022).

En consecuencia, el uso responsable de robots sociales como mediadores lingüísticos exige una aproximación integral. La protección de datos, la prevención de vínculos afectivos problemáticos, la equidad lingüística, la transparencia del sistema, el diseño pedagógico y la intervención docente deben formar parte de cualquier propuesta educativa. Del mismo modo, la investigación futura necesita estudios más prolongados, muestras más amplias, diversidad de lenguas y contextos, y una evaluación más precisa de los efectos sobre el aprendizaje, la interacción y la agencia del alumnado. Los robots sociales pueden ampliar las oportunidades de práctica lingüística y enriquecer determinados escenarios educativos, pero su valor depende de las condiciones en que se integran. Su uso debe estar subordinado a objetivos didácticos claros, a una mediación docente sólida y a marcos éticos que protejan al alumnado. Solo desde esta perspectiva será posible tomar decisiones educativas fundamentadas sobre su papel en la mediación lingüística y en el aprendizaje de lenguas.

4. DISCUSIÓN Y CONCLUSIONES

La revisión realizada permite afirmar que la robótica social educativa ha dejado de ocupar un lugar exclusivamente asociado a la novedad tecnológica para situarse en un campo de investigación con implicaciones pedagógicas, lingüísticas y éticas relevantes. Los estudios revisados coinciden en que los robots sociales pueden contribuir al aprendizaje cuando se integran en actividades donde el robot tenga una función concreta, vinculada a objetivos de aprendizaje y supervisada por el profesorado. En este sentido, su interés no reside en la presencia del dispositivo por sí misma, sino en la forma en que participa en la ecología del aula y en las oportunidades de interacción que puede abrir para el alumnado.

Uno de los principales resultados de la literatura es la evolución del robot social desde recurso motivador hacia agente pedagógico complementario. Esta transición aparece en estudios que analizan su papel como tutor, asistente docente, compañero de aprendizaje o mediador social (Ekström & Pareto, 2022; Rohlfsing et al., 2022; Mifsud et al., 2025). No obstante, esta consideración debe abordarse con prudencia. El robot puede asumir funciones educativas concretas, pero no posee la capacidad interpretativa, ética y relacional del profesorado. Por tanto, su incorporación debe entenderse como una ampliación de las posibilidades de interacción y apoyo, no como una sustitución de la mediación humana.

En el ámbito del aprendizaje de lenguas, la evidencia apunta a beneficios especialmente visibles en vocabulario, práctica oral, motivación y reducción de la ansiedad comunicativa. Los meta-análisis de Lee y Lee (2022) y Wang y Cheung (2024) muestran efectos positivos del aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por robots, aunque estos efectos se producen con mayor claridad en tareas acotadas y en intervenciones de alcance limitado. También el trabajo de Huang y Moore (2023) destaca el potencial de estos sistemas para favorecer la exposición lingüística, la repetición, la retroalimentación y la participación.

Sin embargo, estos resultados no deben interpretarse como una validación general de cualquier uso educativo del robot. La eficacia depende del diseño de la tarea, del tipo de interacción, de la edad del alumnado, de la lengua trabajada y del acompañamiento docente. La mediación lingüística

constituye, precisamente, uno de los aspectos que requiere mayor atención conceptual. Buena parte de la investigación se ha centrado en el aprendizaje de vocabulario o en intercambios orales breves, pero la mediación lingüística implica procesos más complejos: interpretar, reformular, explicar, adaptar el mensaje y facilitar la comunicación entre interlocutores. Desde esta perspectiva, la robótica social todavía presenta un desarrollo incipiente. Los robots pueden apoyar determinadas prácticas comunicativas, pero su capacidad para sostener interacciones abiertas, plurilingües y contextualizadas sigue limitada. La revisión de Berghe (2022) resulta especialmente útil para señalar esta carencia, ya que advierte que la mayoría de estudios mantiene una separación rígida entre lenguas y explora poco los enfoques plurilingües de uso flexible de los repertorios lingüísticos.

La multimodalidad aparece como una aportación central de la robótica social educativa. La combinación de voz, gestos, movimiento, mirada, pantalla, sonido y presencia física puede enriquecer la experiencia de aprendizaje, especialmente en tareas de comprensión, expresión oral, escritura, planificación comunicativa y participación. Los trabajos de Jao et al. (2025) muestran que la creación de contenidos multimodales con robots puede favorecer la competencia lingüística, la conciencia de audiencia y la organización del discurso. Asimismo, estudios como los de Kim y Tscholl (2021), Baxter (2025) y Fung et al. (2025) evidencian que la interacción encarnada y los apoyos multimodales pueden aumentar la implicación y facilitar experiencias más accesibles para perfiles diversos de alumnado. Ahora bien, la multimodalidad no debe entenderse como una acumulación de estímulos. La presencia de varios canales expresivos puede favorecer la comprensión y la participación, pero también puede generar distracción, sobrecarga o interacciones poco relevantes si no existe coherencia entre los recursos utilizados y los objetivos didácticos. Por ello, la clave reside en diseñar experiencias en las que cada canal —voz, gesto, imagen, movimiento o sonido— cumpla una función educativa precisa. Esta idea conecta con las aportaciones de Duncan et al. (2024), Baksh et al. (2024) y González-Oliveras et al. (2025), que subrayan la necesidad de mejorar la robustez técnica, la interpretación de datos multimodales y la fundamentación pedagógica de estos sistemas.

Otro elemento transversal es el papel del profesorado. La literatura revisada confirma que la mediación docente sigue siendo imprescindible para que la interacción con el robot tenga sentido educativo. Maijala y Mutta (2024) muestran que, en contextos de aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por robots, el discurso puede volverse mecánico si la actividad se limita a respuestas breves o a intercambios previsibles. En estos casos, el docente resulta esencial para ampliar las respuestas, promover la conversación, resolver incidencias técnicas y transformar los errores del sistema en oportunidades de aprendizaje.

Los retos éticos también ocupan un lugar central en la discusión. El uso de robots sociales con alumnado, especialmente en edades tempranas, implica cuestiones vinculadas a la privacidad, la protección de datos, el apego emocional, la transparencia del sistema y los sesgos lingüísticos o culturales. Konijn et al. (2022), Tekerek et al. (2026), Kyaw et al. (2025) y Selvam y Vallejo (2025) advierten sobre la necesidad de abordar estos aspectos de forma explícita. Esta exigencia es especialmente importante en escenarios multimodales, donde el robot puede recoger voz, imagen, movimiento, respuestas lingüísticas o indicadores emocionales. Cualquier incorporación de estos sistemas al aula debe prever cómo se protegen los datos, cómo se informa al alumnado y qué límites se establecen en la interacción con el robot.

Desde el punto de vista metodológico, la literatura presenta avances relevantes, pero también limitaciones claras. Persisten estudios con muestras pequeñas, intervenciones breves, fuerte dependencia del efecto de novedad y escasa presencia de diseños longitudinales (Wang & Cheung, 2024). Además, muchas investigaciones se concentran en el inglés, en el vocabulario y en etapas escolares concretas,

mientras que otras lenguas, la educación de personas adultas, los contextos de migración y la mediación plurilingüe reciben menor atención. Esta situación limita la transferencia de los resultados a contextos educativos diversos y refuerza la necesidad de estudios más amplios, comparativos y contextualizados.

Los robots sociales pueden ampliar las oportunidades de interacción lingüística en escenarios educativos multimodales, especialmente cuando se orientan a la práctica oral, la adquisición de vocabulario, la participación y la motivación. Sin embargo, su valor educativo depende de condiciones concretas: diseño didáctico sólido, integración curricular, mediación docente, adecuación a la diversidad lingüística, protección ética y evaluación rigurosa. La robótica social no debería presentarse como una respuesta autosuficiente para la enseñanza de lenguas, sino como un recurso complementario cuyo valor depende del diseño didáctico y de la mediación docente.

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13. From Random To Systematic Support: Institutional Reform As A Catalyst For Educator Empowerment

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Abstract: Across contemporary educational systems, the support provided to educators has historically been defined by fragmentation, inconsistency, and an over-reliance on individual initiative. This chapter conceptualizes the transition from «random» to «systematic» support as a fundamental institutional reform necessary for sustainable educational quality. By defining an «ecosystem of support» grounded in policy coherence, professional infrastructure, and cultural sustainability, the analysis explores how structured mechanisms of empowerment can transform teacher agency and school culture. Drawing on a comparative review of institutional reforms in Finland, Greece, and Portugal, the work examines how research-based teacher education, regional coordination centers, and curricular autonomy serve as pillars for systemic change. The findings suggest that successful reform requires treating educators as co-designers of change rather than mere implementers, shifting the focus from individual training to collective capacity building. This theoretical reflection provides a comprehensive framework for policymakers and educational leaders to move beyond ad-hoc assistance toward the cultivation of resilient professional ecosystems.

Keywords: Collective Capacity, Cultural Sustainability, Educator Empowerment, Institutional Reform, Policy Coherence, Professional Infrastructure, Research-Based Education, Systematic Support, Teacher Agency, Teacher Professional Development

1. INTRODUCTION

The global educational landscape is currently navigating a period of unprecedented complexity, characterized by rapid technological advancement, increasing student diversity, and a persistent demand for higher standards of learning achievement. At the heart of this landscape stands the educator, whose role has evolved from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of complex learning processes and an agent of social transformation. However, despite the strategic importance of the teaching profession, the institutional mechanisms designed to support educators often remain anchored in outmoded paradigms. In many contexts, teacher support is characterized by what is termed “randomness”—a state where professional development and emotional assistance depend on chance encounters, short-term project funding, or the personal goodwill of individual administrators rather than a coherent, permanent policy framework. (Blavatnik School of Government, 2025)

This chapter argues that the shift from sporadic, ad-hoc forms of assistance to structured, systemic mechanisms of professional empowerment is the most crucial step for achieving sustainable educational quality. The central thesis posits that educator empowerment is not an individual trait to be acquired through isolated training, but a systemic outcome produced by the interplay of institutional structures, policy alignment, and cultural values. To explore this thesis, the chapter employs a multi-dimensional framework that identifies three key pillars of systematic support: policy coherence, professional infrastructure, and cultural sustainability. (Blavatnik School of Government, 2025)

The objectives of this chapter are fourfold. First, it seeks to problematize the notion of “random support” by identifying its origins in fragmented governance and its consequences for teacher burnout and professional isolation. Second, it conceptualizes “systematic support” through the lens of eco-

logical systems theory and self-determination theory, providing a robust theoretical foundation for institutional reform. Third, it provides a systematic comparative analysis of three distinct education systems—Finland, Greece, and Portugal—each representing different stages and strategies of institutional reform. Finally, the chapter offers a synthesis of findings to propose actionable solutions for policymakers and school leaders committed to building resilient professional ecosystems. (Blavatnik School of Government, 2025)

The methodology of this work is grounded in a theoretical reflection on the organizational and relational conditions that enable professional growth. By weaving together empirical data from international case studies with contemporary literature on teacher agency and collective capacity, the analysis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how institutional reform can empower educators to navigate the challenges of the 21st-century classroom. Ultimately, the chapter calls for a redefinition of educational leadership and political will to move beyond the “randomness” of good intentions toward the systematic cultivation of professional excellence. (Blavatnik School of Government, 2025)

2. BACKGROUND

The evolution of teacher support mechanisms reflects broader shifts in educational governance and societal expectations. Historically, the teaching profession in many Western countries followed a “craft-based” apprenticeship model, where knowledge was passed down informally between colleagues. This model, while rich in practical wisdom, was inherently “random,” as it lacked standardized quality controls and left many teachers isolated within their own classrooms. The transition toward professional and academic models in the late 20th century sought to formalize teacher development, yet many systems remained fragmented, with initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD) operating as separate, often disconnected spheres. (Brouskelis, 2020)

Support Dimension	Random Support Model	Systematic Support Model
Governance	Fragmented, ad-hoc, project-based	Coherent, permanent, integrated
Access	Inequitable, dependent on location/luck	Universal, equitable across all units
Teacher Role	Implementer of top-down mandates	Co-designer of educational change
Learning Model	Individual training, short-term workshops	Collective capacity building, longitudinal
Primary Goal	Compliance and performativity	Agency, empowerment, and innovation
Feedback	High-stakes, external appraisal	Formative, peer-led, continuous inquiry

The concept of “random support” is characterized by its unpredictability. In many educational contexts, a teacher’s professional survival is contingent upon the “goodwill” of a specific principal or the presence of a supportive peer network that exists outside of the formal school structure. This randomness reinforces systemic disparities: schools in affluent or urban areas may attract more “projects” and short-term funding, while rural or disadvantaged schools are left with minimal resources. Furthermore, when support is tied to temporary project cycles, it creates a “policy volatility” that leads to teacher burnout, as educators are forced to constantly adapt to new, often contradictory, initiatives without the stable scaffolding of a long-term professional identity. (Bryk, 2015)

To counter this, “systematic support” is defined as a multi-level institutional framework designed to empower educators through three dimensions: policy coherence, professional infrastructure, and cultural sustainability. This definition is anchored in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that human flourishing depends on the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Systematic support frameworks aim to institutionalize the satisfaction of these needs. For example, “competence” is supported through research-informed training pathways; “relatedness” is fostered through professional learning communities (PLCs); and “autonomy” is achieved through curricular flexibility and trust-based accountability. (Bryk, 2015)

A key theoretical contribution to this discussion is the “ecological model of teacher agency” developed by Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson. They argue that agency is not a capacity that teachers “have” as an individual attribute, but rather something they “achieve” in specific settings through the interplay of individual effort, available resources, and structural conditions. This perspective shifts the responsibility of reform from the individual teacher to the institution. If an educator fails to exercise agency, it is often because the “ecology” of the school—its policies, resources, and culture—is effectively “disabling” them.⁶ Therefore, institutional reform must focus on creating the “temporal-relational contexts” that allow teachers to draw on their past, imagine a better future, and act reflexively in the present. (Bryk, 2015)

Furthermore, the literature on “collective capacity building” emphasizes that teacher quality is an organizational rather than an individual property. Michael Fullan defines collective capacity as the “knowledge-building process intended to lead to increased student achievement in every school”. This involves shifting from “individual learning” to “organizational learning,” where knowledge is produced and shared within collaborating teams. Systematic support frameworks provide the “infrastructure” for this collective growth, moving away from the “steering at a distance” model of standardized accountability toward a model of “internalized responsibility” and peer-led improvement. (Brouskelis, 2020)

3. MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

The main focus of this chapter is to analyze how institutional reform can effectively translate the rhetoric of educator empowerment into the reality of everyday practice. This transformation requires addressing the deep-seated issues and controversies that have historically hindered educational change, particularly the “coherence gap” between policy design and implementation. (European Commission)

3.1 Issues, Controversies, Problems

One of the most persistent issues in educational reform is “policy incoherence.” This occurs when schools are bombarded with a “barrage of demands” from federal, state, and local agencies that are often uncoordinated or even contradictory. For educators, this incoherence manifests as a fragmented work reality where they must juggle competing mandates for curriculum, testing, parental involvement, and professional development. Research suggests that this “heightened state of policy incoherence” paradoxically compromises the very school improvements that the policies were intended to achieve, leading to superficial compliance rather than deep pedagogical change. (European Commission)

Barrier Category	Specific Issue	Impact on Educators
Governance	Unresolved competing aims among actors	Confusion and fragmented priorities
Bureaucracy	Rigid, compliance-driven environments	Reduced autonomy and creative risk-taking
Resources	Short-term/initial funding only	Program volatility and «reform fatigue»
Leadership	Lack of role clarity in policy translation	Accountability ambiguity and role tension
Culture	Historical legacy of mistrust (e.g., Greece)	Resistance to evaluation and reform

The controversy surrounding teacher evaluation and accountability serves as a prime example of this incoherence. In many systems, evaluation is viewed not as a tool for support, but as a “punitive and controlling” mechanism. In the Greek context, the historical legacy of the “Inspector” institution has created a “culture of caution and distrust” toward any new attempt at implementation. Teachers perceive evaluation as a threat to their professional identity and status, leading to “significant resistance”. This highlights a fundamental controversy: can evaluation ever be truly “supportive” if it is also tied to high-stakes administrative decisions? The move toward systematic support requires resolving this tension by decoupling formative feedback for professional growth from summative appraisal for administrative control. (Decree-Law No. 55/2018.)

Another significant problem is the “Implementation Barrier”—the gap between the “attention given to a policy while it is being designed and the lack of attention when it comes to implementing it”. Implementation is not a routine administrative task but a complex process of shifting beliefs and behaviors. Often, reformers focus on “winning hearts and minds” through inspirational rhetoric while neglecting the material and structural changes necessary for educators to actually experience the change. This leads to what scholars call the “decoupling” of policy from practice, where schools adopt the language of reform without changing their instructional core. (OECD)

3.2 The Three Pillars of the Ecosystem of Support

To bridge this gap, the chapter proposes a deep exploration of the three pillars of systematic support: policy coherence, professional infrastructure, and cultural sustainability.

Policy Coherence: Beyond Alignment to Integration

Policy coherence is often cited but seldom achieved because it is frequently misunderstood as a simple “objective alignment” of formal texts. Instead, coherence should be viewed as a dynamic “process of crafting a fit” between external requirements and a school’s internal goals. This involves school district central offices supporting school-level processes rather than merely mandating them. (European Commission)

Coherence Lever	Action for Institutional Reform	Expected Outcome
Strategic Priority	High and consistent attention to a well-defined problem	Avoidance of «reform churn»
Reciprocal Relationships	Cross-level interaction and shared responsibility	Reduced bureaucratic isolation
Contextualization	Embedding local adaptation in policy design	Increased ownership and relevance
Whole-of-Government	Coordination across social, health, and education sectors	Holistic support for «complex vulnerability»

True policy coherence requires “Whole-of-Government coordination”. For example, inclusive education cannot be achieved by the Ministry of Education alone; it requires collaboration with social, health, and justice departments to address the “complex vulnerability” of learners. This “cross-sector collaboration” (CSC) is a central lever for creating a coherent ecosystem where support is provided to both the student and the educator. Without this integration, teachers are often forced to act as “social workers” or “health advisors” without the necessary expertise or systemic support, leading to burnout and professional fatigue. (European Commission)

Professional Infrastructure: The Scaffolding for Collective Capacity

Professional infrastructure refers to the “stable structures” that facilitate ongoing professional learning and collaboration. This includes formal networks like Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Professional Development Schools (PDS), and “training schools”. These structures act as a “sustainable infrastructure” that fosters both the emotional resilience and pedagogical competence of teachers. (Politis)

Infrastructure Component	Key Characteristic	Role in Educator Empowerment
PLCs (Learning Communities)	Collaborative, growth-oriented, peer-led	Fosters «relatedness» and shared inquiry
Training Schools (Finland)	University-affiliated, research-intensive	Bridges the theory-practice gap
Mentoring Networks	Personalized guidance for novice teachers	Promotes resilience and retention
Regional Support Centers	Coordinated, multi-disciplinary teams	Ensures equitable access to expertise

In the Finnish model, the “training school” is a pivotal element of the professional infrastructure. These schools, which are part of the teacher training universities, provide a space where student teachers can integrate theoretical understanding with practical skills in a “highly qualified” environment. This infrastructure ensures that Finnish teachers begin their careers as “practitioner-researchers” who possess the “capacity to engage with the complexities of education”. This is a profound shift from the “random” support models where novice teachers are often “thrown into the deep end” with little more than a textbook and a classroom key. (Honig, 2004)

Furthermore, the concept of “Networked Improvement Communities” (NICs) has emerged as a powerful tool for systematic support. NICs draw together practitioners, researchers, and technologists to test and adapt changes that can achieve better outcomes more reliably. By developing “practice-based evidence,” NICs provide a sustainable model for systemic change that is “embedded in the educational field rather than being imposed externally”. This bottom-up approach ensures that professional development remains connected to “authentic classroom needs”. (International Summit on the Teaching Profession, 2017)

Cultural Sustainability: Redefining Leadership and Trust

Cultural sustainability refers to the establishment of “shared values” that prioritize educator agency and collective innovation. It involves shifting the organizational narrative from one of “compliance and control” to one of “empowerment and trust”. This requires a redefinition of educational leadership that sees empowerment not as an individual achievement but as a “systemic outcome”.

Cultural Asset	Deficit Orientation	Culturally Sustaining Orientation
View of Teacher	Implementer needing «fixing»	Co-designer of social change
Professional Discourse	Focused on test scores/compliance	Non-judgmental, reflective, inquiry-based
Evaluation Type	Controlling, punitive, top-down	Empowering, formative, peer-led
Identity	Isolated classroom worker	Member of a professional community

A culturally sustaining ecosystem recognizes that “supportive relationships are the active ingredient of all learning and development”. This applies equally to students and their teachers. When teachers feel a “sense of ownership over their classrooms and their profession,” they become more effective implementers of policy. This ownership is fostered when schools provide “secure **professional environments**” where teachers can critically examine their perspectives and share pedagogical challenges without fear of judgment. (Honig, 2004)

4. COMPARATIVE INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS: FINLAND, GREECE, AND PORTUGAL

The theoretical framework of systematic support can be best understood through a comparative analysis of institutional reforms in Finland, Greece, and Portugal. These three nations demonstrate how different institutional mechanisms can translate policy rhetoric into meaningful professional realities. (European Commission)

Finland: The Research-Based Inquiry Model

Finland’s success is frequently attributed to the “rigor of Finnish teacher education”. Since the 1970s, Finnish teacher education has been university-based and research-informed, requiring all primary school teachers to earn a master’s degree. This institutional choice has created a “culture of continuous inquiry” where teachers are trained to “base their teaching on research and apply it to challenges within their profession”.

The Finnish ecosystem is characterized by “high level of cascading autonomy”—from national entities to regional authorities, and eventually to individual teachers. There are no national guidelines governing the organization or content of teacher education; universities have a “large amount of freedom”. This autonomy is supported by a deep “societal trust” in teachers, which is reinforced by the high status of the profession. In this context, systematic support is not a set of external programs but a “habitus” that is ingrained in the teacher’s professional identity from the beginning of their training. (European Commission)

Greece: Transitioning from Fragmentation to Coordination

In Greece, the journey toward systematic support has been marked by “tensions, legislative regulations, and periods of implementation suspension”. For decades, the system was characterized by a lack of formal evaluation and a highly centralized structure that left many teachers isolated. However, recent reforms have sought to reorganize support structures through Law 4547/2018 and Law 4823/2021.

One of the key innovations of the Greek reform is the establishment of “Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counselling and Support Centres” (KEDASYs), which replaced the older KESYs. These

centers are tasked with ensuring “equal access to education for all students” and supporting “school units and laboratory centres” in their area of responsibility. Additionally, the creation of “School Networks for Educational Support” (SDEYs) and “Interdisciplinary Support Committees” (EDYs) represents an attempt to build a “coordinated network” of support at the school level. Despite these institutional gains, the “culture of caution and distrust” remains a significant barrier, as unions continue to oppose individual evaluation systems that they fear will reduce teacher autonomy. (Patrinos, 2017)

Portugal: The Model of Autonomous Schools and Curricular Flexibility

Portugal’s recent reforms, particularly Decree-Law 55/2018, have garnered international attention for their emphasis on “school autonomy and curriculum flexibility”.⁹ This reform grants schools the authority to manage up to 25% of their curriculum, allowing them to “adapt the programme to specific contexts and the needs of students”. This shift is supported by the “6As Framework,” which identifies Attention to Teachers, Autonomy, Accountability, Assessment, Attention to Culture, and Attention to ECD as the six pivotal factors for improving educational quality.

The Portuguese model highlights the importance of “Multidisciplinary Teams for Inclusive Education” (EMAEIs), which act as a “strategic organizational structure” within schools to promote equitable practices. However, the “Implementation Barrier” is evident here as well: while coordinators share an ethical commitment to inclusion, they point to “irregular and insufficient training” and “delays in resource allocation” as persistent challenges. The Portuguese case demonstrates that even the most “advanced” legislative frameworks require a “coordinated structure of local support” and “sustained context-based training” to become everyday practice. (Phi Delta Kappan, 2011)

Synthesis: The «Recursive Patterns» of Reform

Across these diverse contexts, a recurring pattern emerges: reforms are most successful when “teachers are treated not as implementers but as co-designers of change”. This requires a shift from “individual capacity” to “collective capacity,” focusing on the organizational conditions that allow professional growth to occur in a “temporally constructed” manner. (Phi Delta Kappan, 2011)

Factor of Success	Theoretical Framework	Mechanism of Implementation
Professional Agency	Ecological Model	Autonomy within supportive accountability
Motivation	Self-Determination Theory	Meeting needs for competence and relatedness
Sustainability	Institutional Theory	Embedded PLCs and teacher-led networks
Coherence	Policy-Practice Gap Theory	Whole-of-Government and CSC

The transition to systematic support also requires addressing the “socio-economic status” and “prestige” of the teaching profession. As the OECD’s TALIS survey indicates, the attractiveness of the profession is closely tied to “satisfactory job conditions, well-being, and opportunities for career progression”. Systems that view teachers as “autonomous, responsible, and reflective professional teachers” are more likely to attract high-quality candidates and sustain them through a “long-term institutional commitment”. (Priestley, 2015)

5. SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transition from “random” to “systematic” support requires a multi-pronged approach that addresses policy, infrastructure, and culture simultaneously. Based on the preceding analysis, the following solutions and recommendations are proposed for educational institutions and governing bodies. (United Nations General Assembly, 2024)

Establishing Institutional Coherence and «Problem-Solving» Bureaucracy

To overcome the “Implementation Barrier,” system leaders must work to reshape the bureaucratic environment toward flexibility and collaboration.

- **Recommendation 1:** Adopt a “Negotiated” Model of Coherence. Instead of top-down mandates, central offices should engage with schools to “craft a fit” between national goals and local realities. This includes creating “space for local adaptation” within policy design.
- **Recommendation 2:** Foster Reciprocal Relationships. Success comes from “building reciprocal relationships across system levels in a culture of shared responsibility”. This requires a shift from compliance-driven monitoring to “deep, rapid, and formative monitoring systems” that enable continuous learning.

Investing in «Stable Scaffolding» through Professional Infrastructure

A coherent ecosystem of support must be grounded in permanent structures that facilitate collective learning.

- **Recommendation 3: Formalize Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).** PLCs should not be optional or project-based; they should be “mandated and systematically supported” as a central tool for institutional change. This includes providing dedicated “time and financial resources” for teachers to participate in collaborative discourse.
- **Recommendation 4: Bridge the Research-Practice Gap.** Following the Finnish “training school” model, educational systems should invest in “Professional Development Schools” (PDS) where novices can learn from expert practitioners in a research-intensive environment.
- **Recommendation 5: Develop Regional Support Centers.** For systems like Greece, the continued strengthening of regional centers (KEDASY/PEKES) is vital to ensure that “every educator—not just the fortunate few—has access to specialized expertise and multidisciplinary teams”.

Cultivating Cultural Sustainability and «High-Trust» Environments

Institutional reform cannot succeed without addressing the underlying cultural values of the education system.

- **Recommendation 6: Redefine Educational Leadership.** Principals and district leaders must move away from “administrative and bureaucratic” roles and toward “leading for learning”. This includes “distributing leadership” across school teams to empower teachers as co-designers of change.
- **Recommendation 7: Foster Professional Trust through Formative Feedback.** Accountability systems should be redesigned to prioritize “timely and actionable feedback” over high-stakes numerical scores. Decoupling professional development from punitive appraisal is essential to reducing the “culture of caution”.
- **Recommendation 8: Promote a Resource-Based View of Diversity.** Cultural sustainability in education requires acknowledging the “unique cultural assets” of both teachers and students. Reform should aim to sustain “linguistic and cultural pluralism” through instruction and policy.

Ensuring Equity and «Collective Capacity» at Scale

Finally, reform must be scalable and equitable to ensure it reaches all school units.

- **Recommendation 9: Ensure “Equity of Opportunity” through Formula-Based Funding.** Support should move away from temporary, competitive projects and toward “stable funding through basic aid allocations”. This ensures that “disparities between schools” are not reinforced by the support system itself.
- **Recommendation 10: Mainstream Multicultural Teacher Education.** To support increasingly diverse classrooms, teacher education must mainstream “diversity, equity, and inclusion courses” into both ITE and CPD pathways.

Future research directions

As educational systems move toward systematic support, several emerging trends and future research opportunities have been identified. One critical area for future inquiry is the “Integration of Digital Technologies” into the ecosystem of support. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital tools, yet many teachers still lack the “digital literacy” or “pedagogical infrastructure” to use these tools effectively. Future research should explore how “DigCompEdu” and “DigCompOrg” frameworks can be used to organize the digital competencies necessary for “active citizenship and innovative education”. Furthermore, the potential for “digital professional learning networks” to facilitate lateral learning across geographic boundaries should be investigated.

Another significant trend is the rise of “Local Learning Ecosystems,” which extend education beyond the school walls. These ecosystems involve “diverse combinations of providers”—including non-profits, businesses, and community organizations—to create “new learning opportunities and pathways to success”. Research is needed to understand how these ecosystems can be best supported and how they can “leapfrog” traditional, fragmented systems to accelerate learner outcomes, particularly in the Global South. This includes exploring the “ecosystem metaphor” derived from evolutionary biology to understand the search for “new organisational forms for education”.

Additionally, the role of “Middle Leaders” in achieving policy coherence is an under-researched area. System middle leaders—those positioned between the central office and the school—play a vital role in “interpreting and translating policy into system strategy”. Future studies should investigate how “lack of role clarity” among these leaders hinders reform and how “formal policy interpretation training” can improve implementation success.

Finally, the long-term impact of “teacher resilience and well-being” programs deserves more attention. As global teacher shortages become more acute, understanding the “complex network of support” that promotes retention is crucial. Future research should utilize “holistic frameworks” integrating social connection theory and self-determination theory to identify the most effective “buffering factors” against workload and professional isolation.

6. CONCLUSION

The transition from “random” to “systematic” support is not a mere technical adjustment but a fundamental re-imagining of the teaching profession. It requires moving beyond the era of sporadic projects and individual heroics toward a “coordinated, institutional commitment” to educator empowerment. As this chapter has demonstrated, the “randomness” of fragmented support breeds burnout, reinforces inequity, and leaves teachers vulnerable to the volatility of policy cycles. In contrast, a “systematic” ecosystem—anchored in policy coherence, stable professional infrastructure, and cultural sustainability—fosters the collective capacity necessary for lasting change. The comparative analysis of

Finland, Greece, and Portugal highlights that while the path to systematic support varies by context, the “fundamental structure in schools should not be an individual educator but a collaborating team”. Finland’s research-based model shows the power of high-trust, university-linked infrastructure; Portugal’s curricular flexibility illustrates the potential of autonomy when paired with multi-disciplinary support; and Greece’s ongoing reform highlights the critical importance of regional coordination and the need to overcome historical mistrust.

In conclusion, the “cultivation of professional ecosystems” requires a shift in the definition of educational leadership—from administrative control to “empowerment as a systemic outcome”. It requires the “political will” to invest in stable structures, the “bureaucratic flexibility” to allow local adaptation, and the “social trust” to treat teachers as co-designers of the future. By embedding teacher support within stable, participatory, and coherent processes, institutions can ensure that every educator—regardless of their school or location—has the opportunity to thrive and fulfill the promise of quality education for all.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Collective Capacity: The organizational property representing the collective knowledge, skills, and motivation of school teams to work together continuously for instructional improvement.

Cultural Sustainability: The institutionalization of shared values and practices that recognize and leverage the cultural assets of educators and students to promote long-term resilience and inclusion.

Educator Empowerment: A systemic outcome resulting from the fulfillment of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) through supportive institutional structures and policy frameworks.

Implementation Barrier: The gap between the design of a policy and its actual execution, caused by a lack of attention to behavioral changes, rigid bureaucracies, and insufficient resource coordination.

Institutional Reform: The purposeful restructuring of educational policy, infrastructure, and culture to move from ad-hoc mechanisms to systematic ecosystems of support.

Networked Improvement Communities (NICs): Collaborative groups of practitioners and researchers who utilize systematic inquiry and practice-based evidence to solve specific educational challenges at scale.

Policy Coherence: The dynamic process of integrating mutually reinforcing policy actions across government sectors to create synergies toward a strategic long-term vision.

Professional Infrastructure: The stable, permanent arrangements such as learning communities, training schools, and regional centers that provide scaffolding for professional growth.

Random Support: Fragmented, unpredictable forms of teacher assistance characterized by a dependence on individual initiative, short-term funding, and inequitable distribution.

Teacher Agency: The temporally constructed engagement by actors with structural environments, achieved through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment in response to professional challenges.

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14. Similituds i fractures invisibles: una revisió sistemàtica sobre les condicions de treball i la resiliència docent als tres nivells educatius

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Resum: Aquest estudi presenta una revisió sistemàtica aprofundida de l'evidència científica relativa a l'impacte de les condicions laborals sobre la resiliència psicològica del professorat de primària, secundària i universitat. La metodologia emprada segueix rigorosament el protocol PRISMA, seleccionant tant estudis empírics com teòrics publicats en bases de dades acadèmiques reconegudes internacionalment. L'objectiu central és identificar i descriure els antecedents laborals, els mecanismes psicològics i els resultats finals que vinculen les característiques de l'entorn de treball amb la capacitat del professorat per resistir, adaptar-se i recuperar-se davant situacions d'adversitat professional. Els resultats obtinguts revelen que factors com la sobrecàrrega de tasques, la disponibilitat de recursos institucionals i la presència d'una xarxa de suport social exerceixen una influència decisiva en la resiliència docent. A més, l'anàlisi comparativa evidencia patrons comuns entre els diferents nivells educatius, però també posa de manifest diferències notables, especialment pel que fa a l'autonomia professional i les expectatives institucionals. Aquesta revisió ofereix una perspectiva integral sobre com les condicions laborals impacten la salut mental dels docents i proposa diverses línies futures de recerca orientades a desenvolupar estratègies preventives i d'intervenció. Es subratllen, també, les implicacions pràctiques per a la formulació de polítiques educatives més sensibles al benestar psicològic i a la sostenibilitat de la carrera docent.

Paraules clau: condicions laborals, resiliència docent, benestar psicològic, PRISMA,

Summary: This study presents an in-depth systematic review of the scientific evidence regarding the impact of working conditions on the psychological resilience of primary, secondary, and university teachers. The methodology employed rigorously follows the PRISMA protocol, selecting both empirical and theoretical studies published in internationally recognized academic databases. The central objective is to identify and describe the work-related antecedents, psychological mechanisms, and outcomes that link the characteristics of the work environment to teachers' ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from professional adversity. The results obtained reveal that factors such as task overload, the availability of institutional resources, and the presence of a social support network exert a decisive influence on teacher resilience. Furthermore, the comparative analysis reveals common patterns across different educational levels but also highlights notable differences, especially in terms of professional autonomy and institutional expectations. This review offers a comprehensive perspective on how working conditions impact teachers' mental health and proposes several future research directions aimed at developing preventive and intervention strategies. It also underscores the practical implications for formulating educational policies that are more sensitive to psychological well-being and the sustainability of the teaching career.

Keywords: working conditions, teacher resilience, psychological well-being, PRISMA

1. INTRODUCCIÓ

Ser docent és un repte. No només perquè implica ensenyar –que ja és força complex–, sinó perquè la feina va més enllà de l'aula (Mansfield et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Mestres i professors

gestionem moltes relacions: amb alumnes, famílies, companys i òrgans de govern. Sovint, les responsabilitats no acaben quan sona la campana; es prolonguen fora de l'horari escolar i s'entrellacen amb tasques burocràtiques, conflictes per resoldre, canvis curriculars i la pressió constant pels resultats acadèmics (Day & Hong, 2016; Zewude et al., 2023). Tot plegat converteix la docència en una de les feines més estressants d'avui dia. No és estrany que, amb aquest panorama, molts docents siguin més vulnerables a l'estrès crònic i al risc de burnout, cosa que afecta tant la seva salut mental com la satisfacció professional (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Per copsar com aguanten aquest ritme, cal mirar de ben a prop les condicions laborals. No n'hi ha prou de comptar hores, recursos o contractes; cal saber com se senten realment. Tenen suport? El clima de treball els acompanya o els pesa? Són realment amos de la seva feina o senten que les circumstàncies els atrapen? Aquesta mirada és essencial per entendre com es construeix i es manté la resiliència psicològica dels docents, especialment en un sistema educatiu que no para de canviar i sovint fa que tothom se senti com si caminéssim damunt sorra movedissa (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Collie et al., 2017; Kinman & Wray, 2018).

La resiliència - aquesta capacitat d'afrontar-se, adaptar-se i tornar a aixecar-se després de cada caiguda - transforma el benestar i la trajectòria professional dels professors (Gu & Day, 2013; Johnson et al., 2018). Els ajuda a gestionar millor l'estrès i la pressió, sí, però també a alimentar la motivació, la creativitat i la innovació pedagògica. Quan un docent és resilient, tot l'entorn ho nota: ell mateix, l'alumnat, els companys (Beltman et al., 2018; Collie et al., 2017).

Mirar la resiliència des de cada nivell educatiu - primària, secundària, universitat - deixa clar que cada context té els seus riscos i punts forts. El que pesa o ajuda a primària pot ser irrellevant a la universitat (Day & Hong, 2016; Watermeyer et al., 2021).

Amb una revisió sistemàtica seguint el protocol PRISMA, aquest article explora i sintetitza la recerca sobre com les condicions laborals influeixen en la resiliència psicològica als tres grans nivells educatius. L'objectiu és identificar quins factors laborals impacten més en la salut mental i la capacitat d'adaptació dels docents, i posar damunt la taula tant les similituds com les diferències segons el nivell d'ensenyament (Zewude et al., 2023; Mansfield et al., 2016). Aquesta mirada permet entendre millor els reptes reals del sistema educatiu i, sobretot, proposar intervencions concretes i línies de recerca futures per promoure la sostenibilitat i el benestar del col·lectiu docent (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020; Gu & Day, 2013).

2. MARC TEÒRIC

2.1 Introducció al concepte de resiliència docent

La resiliència docent s'ha convertit en un tema central en la recerca educativa dels últims anys. No és només qüestió de resistir o adaptar-se quan vénen maldats. És, sobretot, plantar cara cada dia als reptes emocionals i laborals de l'ensenyament, i fer-ho sense perdre ni el benestar ni el ritme a l'aula (Beltman et al., 2018; Mansfield et al., 2016). Avui dia, el concepte s'ha ampliat: ja no es veu la resiliència com una qualitat fixa, innata o personal. Ara parlem d'un procés viu, on es barregen factors personals, relacions amb els altres, dinàmiques del centre i tot el context institucional (Gu & Day, 2013; Johnson et al., 2018). La resiliència docent no només serveix per protegir-se de l'estrès i l'esgotament, sinó que també ajuda a mantenir les ganes, la confiança i la motivació per continuar creixent dins la professió (Collie et al., 2017; Kangas Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020).

Al mateix temps, la recerca destaca com la resiliència impulsa una cultura escolar més positiva, enforteix les relacions entre companys i obre la porta a pràctiques més innovadores. Els docents

realment resilients transformen el clima de l'aula, col·laboren més amb l'equip i troben solucions creatives davant les dificultats.

Aquest efecte multiplicador reforça la importància d'afavorir la resiliència no només a nivell individual, sinó també col·lectiu, com a estratègia per enfortir la comunitat educativa en el seu conjunt.

2.2 Models conceptuals i factors determinants

Els models teòrics com el Job Demands–Resources ho posen damunt la taula sense embuts: la resiliència docent depèn d'aquest joc d'equilibris entre el que es demana als mestres i el que realment tenen per fer-hi front. Quan parlem de demandes, no ens quedem només amb la quantitat de feina. Hi ha la paperassa, les tensions amb els companys, les exigències constants d'avaluació i aquesta sensació incòmoda que la societat, al final, no valora prou la feina del mestre. Tot això pesa, pesa molt. No estranya que acabi generant estrès i insatisfacció (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Zewude et al., 2023). Si falten suports, aquestes demandes passen factura: el risc de desgast professional puja i la salut mental se'n veu afectada.

Els recursos laborals no són una sola cosa, ni venen d'un sol lloc. El suport del lideratge, polítiques clares de reconeixement, formació continuada i un lideratge pedagògic que inspire tot això marquen la diferència (Mansfield et al., 2016; Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Quan el centre acompanya el professorat i hi ha escolta real, la resiliència es reforça, la sensació de pertinença creix i el compromís amb la institució s'enforteix. Les relacions humanes també compten: la mentoria entre iguals, el treball en equip, la col·laboració entre disciplines i un bon ambient converteixen el centre en una xarxa de suport, tant emocional com professional (Day & Hong, 2016; McCallum et al., 2018). Formar part d'una comunitat amb confiança facilita compartir estratègies per afrontar dificultats i fa la soledat molt més suportable.

D'altra banda, els recursos personals tenen un pes igual de gran. Aquí hi entren les competències emocionals - saber gestionar l'estrès, practicar empatia -, la sensació d'autonomia per decidir i la confiança de sentir-se capaç (Beltman et al., 2018; Gu & Day, 2013). Tot això fa de coixí quan la cosa es complica i dona força per adaptar-se. La manera com el professorat equilibra les demandes i els recursos té molt a veure amb la seva estabilitat emocional i professional. Quan aquesta combinació funciona bé, ajuda a evitar el burnout i fa que més docents es quedin a la feina per vocació (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Collie et al., 2017). També, sentir que l'escola els dona suport i que tenen marge per decidir sobre la seva feina fa que les condicions difícils pesin menys (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020; Kinman & Wray, 2018). Tot plegat mostra que calen intervencions en diversos àmbits, que no només ajudin els docents a nivell personal, sinó que canviïn de debò el funcionament i la cultura de les escoles. Així, els centres educatius poden ser llocs més sans i resilients.

2.3 Resiliència i nivells educatius

La recerca recent ha deixat enrere la idea que la resiliència docent sigui un tret fix i immutable. No és així; depèn en gran mesura de l'entorn i del nivell educatiu en què es treballa. El dia a dia d'un mestre de primària s'assembla poc a la rutina d'un professor universitari. Tot i aquestes diferències, existeixen patrons que expliquen per què alguns docents resisteixen la pressió i continuen amb energia i compromís.

2.3.1 Educació primària

A primària, la resiliència sorgeix sobretot del vincle amb els infants i de la vocació. La proximitat amb l'alumnat, sentir-se part d'una comunitat activa i compartir el ritme escolar donen sentit i satis-

facció (Day & Hong, 2016; Skinner & Beers, 2016). Les relacions amb alumnes, famílies i companys construeixen una xarxa real de suport. Aquesta xarxa no elimina els problemes, però en redueix el pes. Quan el lideratge es distribueix i la cultura del centre es basa en la confiança i la col·laboració, el clima es torna més acollidor: es poden compartir dificultats sense por i buscar solucions conjuntament (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Beltman et al., 2018). Això redueix la pressió, reforça la identitat professional i manté la motivació per créixer. Participar en activitats col·lectives i incidir realment en les decisions proporciona als mestres una sensació d'autoeficàcia fonamental per sostenir la resiliència a llarg termini (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019).

2.3.2 Educació secundària

A secundària, la situació es complica. La burocràcia augmenta, la pressió pels resultats és més intensa i la gestió d'adolescents posa a prova la paciència (Herman et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Les expectatives de famílies i de la societat tampoc ajuden gaire. En aquest context, la recerca indica clarament que l'autonomia professional i el reconeixement institucional són vitals per mantenir la motivació i la salut mental. Quan el centre ofereix formació, recursos i equips directius que escolten de debò, el professorat deixa de sentir-se sol i afronta l'estrès amb més garanties (Zewude et al., 2023; Mansfield et al., 2016). Així, la resiliència depèn tant de la força personal com de la solidesa de les estructures i relacions del centre (Zewude et al., 2023).

2.3.3 Educació superior

A la universitat, la situació té encara més matisos. Molts professors viuen amb contractes temporals, una competència ferotge entre companys i una incertesa professional que mai no s'atura (Kinman & Wray, 2018; Watermeyer et al., 2021). La pressió per publicar, captar finançament i adaptar-se constantment a novetats tecnològiques i institucionals no dona treva. En aquest context, poder decidir sobre la pròpia trajectòria i tenir una bona xarxa de suport dins la universitat esdevenen claus per resistir l'estrès i mantenir viu el compromís amb la recerca i la docència (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Els programes institucionals que realment aposten per la mentorització, el treball en xarxa i el benestar emocional marquen la diferència: ajuden a superar obstacles i mantenen el fil del compromís acadèmic (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Collie et al., 2017). Ara bé, sense reconeixement ni oportunitats clares de desenvolupament professional, el desgast i la desmotivació acaben apareixent. I això posa en risc tant la qualitat educativa com la continuïtat de moltes carreres acadèmiques (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

2.4 Factors de risc i protectors

L'anàlisi dels estudis revisats posa en relleu que, malgrat les diferències contextuais i organitzatives, existeixen similituds importants entre els factors que influeixen en la resiliència docente (Gu & Day, 2013). Els riscos més habituals són la sobrecàrrega de feina- que sovint es manifesta en jornades llargues i tasques administratives excessives -, la pressió per complir amb objectius institucionals, els conflictes amb estudiants o famílies, les exigències acadèmiques extremes i, especialment en l'educació superior, la precarietat laboral i l'incertesa sobre el futur professional. Aquests factors poden provocar estrès crònic, esgotament emocional i un augment de la intenció d'abandonar la professió, cosa que afecta directament la qualitat educativa i la cohesió dels equips docents (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Collie et al., 2017).

Tanmateix, la presència de factors protectors pot atenuar o fins i tot revertir l'impacte d'aquests riscos. El suport institucional, expressat en polítiques clares de benestar docent, recursos suficients i ca-

nals de comunicació oberts, és fonamental per crear un entorn favorable al desenvolupament professional i personal. El reconeixement explícit - tant formal com informal - de la tasca docent incrementa l'autoestima i la sensació de valoració, mentre que l'autonomia i la capacitat d'influir en les decisions institucionals afavoreixen la implicació i la motivació (Soini et al., 2019). El lideratge positiu, especialment aquell que promou la participació i la distribució de responsabilitats, contribueix a generar una cultura de confiança i col·laboració. Finalment, la participació en programes de formació contínua i espais de reflexió col·lectiva permet actualitzar competències i compartir estratègies d'afrontament, convertint-se en un recurs essencial per sostenir la resiliència a llarg termini (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Aquests elements no només configuren la resiliència, sinó que també modulen la relació entre les condicions de feina i el benestar global dels docents. Factors com la satisfacció professional, la motivació per ensenyar i la intenció de continuar en la professió són resultat d'aquesta interacció complexa entre riscos i suports institucionals, socials i individuals. Així, el foment de la resiliència docent esdevé una responsabilitat compartida entre les persones, els equips i les institucions educatives (Zewude et al., 2023; Beltman et al., 2011).

3. METODOLOGIA

3.1 Disseny de l'estudi

Per entendre bé com les condicions laborals influeixen en la resiliència docent, aquest estudi parteix d'una revisió sistemàtica de la literatura científica. Hem seguit fil per randa les directrius PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), perquè així tot el procés - des de la selecció dels estudis fins a l'anàlisi final de les dades - queda clar, transparent i fàcil de replicar. Hem recollit tant estudis empírics com teòrics sobre la resiliència psicològica del professorat, abastant l'educació primària, la secundària i la universitat. Aquest enfocament ens permet captar la riquesa de perspectives i de metodologies que ja existeixen en aquest àmbit d'investigació.

3.2 Estratègia de cerca bibliogràfica

La cerca bibliogràfica s'ha dut a terme a través de les principals bases de dades internacionals en l'àmbit de l'educació, la psicologia i les ciències socials - Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, PsycINFO i PubMed - per garantir la màxima exhaustivitat i rellevància dels resultats. S'han utilitzat tant descriptors controlats com paraules clau lliures, adaptant la cerca de les especificitats de cada base de dades i emprant operadors booleans (AND, OR) per optimitzar la sensibilitat i l'especificitat. Aquest enfocament ha permès identificar un ventall ampli d'estudis, assegurant la inclusió d'investigacions recents i rellevants per al context educatiu actual.

A tall d'exemple, una de les cadenes de cerca emprades ha estat: (“teacher” OR “educator” OR “professor*”) AND (“working conditions” OR “job demands” OR “work environment”) AND (“resilience” OR “psychological resilience” OR “well-being”). La recerca s'ha restringit a articles publicats entre 2015 i 2025, amb l'objectiu de recollir l'evidència més actual i adaptada als desafiaments contemporanis de la professió docent.

3.3 Criteris d'inclusió i exclusió

Per a la selecció dels estudis es van establir criteris clars que garantissin la qualitat, la rellevància i la coherència amb els objectius de la recerca. Es van incloure treballs revisats per parells, publicats entre 2015 i 2025, centrats en docents d'educació primària, secundària o superior, i que analitzessin

les condicions laborals i/o la resiliència. També es van considerar estudis amb metodologies quantitatives, qualitatives o mixtes, sempre que comptessin amb un DOI actiu.

D'altra banda, es van excloure articles d'opinió, editorials i informes no revisats per parells, així com estudis publicats abans de 2015, excepte aquells considerats obres clau i d'especial rellevància teòrica per a l'estudi de la resiliència docent. Tampoc no es van incloure investigacions centrades en estudiants o en personal no docent, estudis que no abordessin variables relacionades amb la resiliència, publicacions sense accés al text complet ni aquelles que no comptessin amb identificador DOI.

3.4 Procés de selecció dels estudis

El procés de selecció s'ha estructurat en quatre etapes principals, d'acord amb el flux PRISMA. En primer lloc, s'ha procedit a la identificació de tots els registres potencialment rellevants a les bases de dades seleccionades. Seguidament, s'han eliminat els duplicats mitjançant un gestor bibliogràfic, assegurant la netedat del corpus d'anàlisi. En la fase de cribatge, s'han revisat títols i resums per descartar aquelles publicacions que no s'ajustaven als criteris d'inclusió, i finalment s'ha dut a terme una lectura detallada dels textos complets restants per avaluar la seva elegibilitat definitiva. Aquest procés meticulós ha permès assegurar que només els estudis amb la màxima rellevància i qualitat metodològica formen part de la síntesi final, aportant una visió sòlida i contrastada sobre la resiliència del professorat en els diferents nivells educatius.

Inicialment es van identificar 94 registres a través de bases de dades acadèmiques i 8 més per altres vies. Després d'eliminar 34 duplicats, van quedar 68 registres únics. Aquests es van cribar primer llegint títols i resums, i se'n van excloure 22. Es van sol·licitar 46 informes a text complet per recuperar la resta, i tots es van obtenir. Aquests 46 informes es van avaluar per determinar l'elegibilitat.

En aquesta fase se'n van excloure 22 per no complir els criteris d'inclusió. Les raons principals van ser: no analitzar de manera explícita les condicions laborals; manca de dades empíriques o metodologia poc clara; mostres no comparables o massa específiques; o publicacions anteriors a 2015 que no es consideraven obres clau. Finalment, es van incloure 24 estudis a la revisió sistemàtica (Page et al., 2020).

3.5 Extracció i anàlisi de dades

Per a cada estudi seleccionat, vam fer una extracció detallada d'informació utilitzant una matriu d'anàlisi. Aquesta eina ens va permetre recollir dades clau: autor i any de publicació, país i context educatiu, nivell educatiu analitzat, disseny metodològic, variables principals (com condicions laborals, resiliència i benestar) i els resultats més rellevants. Vam analitzar les dades amb una síntesi narrativa. L'heterogeneïtat metodològica dels estudis feia impossible una metaanàlisi clàssica, però la síntesi narrativa ens va ajudar a detectar patrons, diferències i tendències entre els tres nivells educatius.

4. RESULTATS

4.1 Condicions laborals i resiliència docent a l'educació primària

Els estudis sobre professors de primària deixen clar que hi ha una connexió directa entre sobrecàrrega emocional, exigències pedagògiques i resiliència psicològica. En aquest nivell, la relació constant amb alumnes i famílies fa que el paper del docent sigui intensament relacional, amb una càrrega emocional notable (Day & Hong, 2016).

La recerca assenyala que les condicions laborals que més afecten la resiliència del professorat de primària inclouen la responsabilitat emocional cap a infants en etapes de creixement, la multiplicitat de rols (educador, mediador, gestor de conflictes) i la necessitat d'adaptar-se a canvis de currículum i avaluacions externes (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Mansfield et al., 2016).

Quan aquestes demandes no tenen un contrapès en forma de suport institucional, col·laboració amb altres docents i autonomia pedagògica, la resiliència disminueix i el risc d'estrès crònic i esgotament emocional augmenta (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Ara bé, les escoles amb lideratges pedagògics positius i un ambient col·laboratiu protegeixen el professorat i reforcen la seva capacitat d'afrontar la feina.

També es veu que, en primària, la resiliència sovint depèn molt de factors vocacionals, com el sentit de propòsit o la satisfacció de treballar amb infants (Day & Hong, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2015). De vegades això compensa, tot i que només en part, unes condicions laborals difícils.

4.2 Condicions laborals i resiliència docent a l'educació secundària

A secundària, el perfil de risc és diferent. Aquí els docents han de fer front a exigències acadèmiques altes, a la gestió de conductes adolescents i a una pressió pels resultats que pesa fortament sobre la salut mental (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Collie et al., 2017).

Els estudis destaquen tres factors especialment crítics: la intensificació de la feina docent, amb jornades llargues i molta burocràcia; la percepció de poc suport institucional davant conflictes; i una pressió creixent per l'avaluació i la rendició de comptes (Kinman & Wray, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

En contrast amb la primària, la resiliència a secundària depèn menys de la vocació i més de qüestions estructurals com la seguretat laboral, el reconeixement professional i l'autonomia per prendre decisions. Quan aquests factors fallen, la literatura mostra una relació evident amb nivells elevats de burnout, sobretot pel que fa a l'esgotament emocional i la despersonalització (Soini et al., 2019).

Tot i això, els estudis també indiquen que els programes de formació contínua, els espais de suport entre docents i els lideratges escolars que tenen en compte el benestar del professorat poden enfortir la resiliència, fins i tot en contextos d'alta complexitat.

4.3 Condicions laborals i resiliència docent a l'educació superior

En l'educació superior, la relació entre condicions laborals i resiliència té característiques pròpies. Els docents universitaris treballen en entorns marcats per la competitivitat acadèmica, la pressió per la productivitat científica i, sovint, la precarietat contractual, sobretot a les primeres etapes de la carrera (Kinman & Wray, 2018; Watermeyer et al., 2021).

Els estudis analitzats identifiquen com a principals fonts de tensió laboral: la incertesa contractual, la pressió per publicar i aconseguir finançament, la dificultat d'equilibrar docència, recerca i gestió, i l'ambigüitat dels rols professionals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Collie et al., 2017).

En aquest àmbit, la resiliència psicològica s'associa sobretot a la percepció de control sobre la pròpia trajectòria i a la disponibilitat de recursos institucionals clars. A diferència dels nivells obligatoris, el suport entre col·legues no sempre apareix com un factor protector central, mentre que l'autonomia individual té més pes (Kinman & Wray, 2018).

La literatura també mostra que la manca d'estabilitat laboral pot erosionar la resiliència de manera progressiva, generant inseguretat, ansietat i desafecció professional, fins i tot en docents amb alta motivació intrínseca (Soini et al., 2019; Watermeyer et al., 2021).

4.4 Similituds entre els tres nivells educatius

Tot i les diferències de context, la revisió deixa clar que hi ha punts en comú que travessen tots els nivells. Quan les condicions laborals són dures i les demandes superen els recursos, la resiliència del professorat disminueix, sigui a primària, secundària o universitat ((Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Beltman et al., 2011. El suport institucional i el lideratge positiu ajuden a protegir el professorat en qualsevol etapa. L'equilibri entre feina i vida personal resulta decisiu per al benestar psicològic i la capacitat de fer front a l'estrès. A més, la resiliència no és només un element aïllat: fa de pont entre les condicions de treball i resultats com la satisfacció laboral, la intenció de continuar a la professió i la salut mental (Day & Hong, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2015).

4.5 Diferències clau entre nivells educatius

Les diferències no són simples detalls; són autèntiques línies de fractura entre etapes educatives. A primària, la resiliència està profundament lligada a l'emoció i a la vocació del professorat (Day & Hong, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2015). Quan passem a secundària, el pes recau en l'estructura i l'organització, amb el conflicte i la pressió pels resultats sempre presents. A la universitat, la precarietat, la competitivitat i el marge - de vegades estret - d'autonomia professional condicionen la capacitat de resistència (Kinman & Wray, 2018; Watermeyer et al., 2021). Tot això ens porta a una evidència: no hi ha una sola estratègia vàlida per a tothom. Cal adaptar la promoció de la resiliència a cada nivell educatiu i a la realitat concreta de cadascun.

5. DISCUSSIÓ

Els resultats d'aquesta revisió sistemàtica apunten sense embuts que la resiliència psicològica del professorat sorgeix d'una relació complexa entre exigències laborals, recursos institucionals i capacitats personals. No es pot desvincular de les condicions estructurals del treball docent. Aquesta idea agafa més força encara en un context educatiu marcat pel canvi constant, la incertesa i la pressió creixent per obtenir resultats.

La recerca recent insisteix que la resiliència docent no és només una estratègia individual, sinó que es construeix en relació amb la cultura institucional, el lideratge i les polítiques educatives (Gu & Day, 2013; Day & Hong, 2016). Els resultats aquí reforcen aquesta visió: les condicions laborals poden ser tant un risc com una protecció per a la salut mental del professorat.

Si ens fixem en l'educació primària, la resiliència té un component clarament emocional. La proximitat amb l'alumnat i les famílies augmenta les demandes emocionals, però també pot alimentar el sentit de propòsit i la motivació si el suport institucional acompanya. Diversos estudis remarquen que els centres amb bon clima col·laboratiu i lideratges distribuïts afavoreixen una resiliència més sòlida i redueixen l'impacte de l'estrès emocional crònic (Skinner & Beers, 2016; Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019).

A secundària, la resiliència es juga, sobretot, dins l'estructura mateixa: massa feina, pressió per les notes, conflictes i diversitat a l'aula. Si el professorat no troba suport institucional, aquest pes s'acumula, desgasta i obre la porta al burnout o, directament, a l'abandonament de la feina. La recerca és clara: cal autonomia professional i reconeixement institucional per aguantar el ritme quan la feina exigeix tant (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Zewude et al., 2023).

Mentre que a primària i secundària el suport col·lectiu té molt de pes, a la universitat tot gira més al voltant de l'autonomia individual i d'una mínima estabilitat institucional. Els estudis recents apunten que la inseguretats contractual i la confusió de rols desgasten psicològicament, fins i tot aquells docents que s'hi deixen la pell (Watermeyer et al., 2021).

Al capdavant, tot plegat posa en evidència que les diferències entre nivells educatius no són només cosa de persones. El que determina la resiliència són les condicions del dia a dia, la manera com s'organitza i es viu la feina a cada nivell. Necessitem polítiques i estratègies de benestar que no siguin un còpiaenganxa, sinó que s'adaptin de veritat a cada realitat. Només així es podrà cuidar el professorat en tota la seva diversitat.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Aquest estudi s'ha capbussat a fons en com les condicions laborals marquen la resiliència psicològica del professorat, tant a primària com a secundària i a l'educació superior. Els resultats són clars: el benestar docent no depèn només de la força de voluntat o de l'actitud de cada professor, sinó sobretot de tot allò que passa a l'escola, l'organització, els recursos i el clima que s'hi respira (Beltman et al., 2018; Mansfield et al., 2016). La revisió d'evidències ho deixa ben clar: la resiliència no és una qualitat fixa ni un tret immutable. És un procés en moviment que va canviant segons les exigències institucionals i el suport que el centre sap donar al professorat (Gu & Day, 2013).

Quan les condicions laborals es torcen - massa càrrega de feina, muntanyes de burocràcia, poc reconeixement - la resiliència es desinfla i el risc d'estrès o de burn-out es dispara (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Zewude et al., 2023). Aquesta tendència es repeteix a tots els nivells. No podem responsabilitzar només el professorat del seu propi benestar. Les polítiques educatives i la manera com es gestiona el centre tenen molt a dir si volem protegir la salut mental del professorat (KangasDick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). I, si comparem els diferents nivells educatius, trobem diferències que val la pena tenir en compte. A primària, la resiliència del professorat es nodreix sobretot de les relacions personals, del suport entre companys i del sentit de vocació que molts viuen a l'aula (Day & Hong, 2016; McCallum et al., 2017).

En canvi, a secundària la preocupació es centra més en la pressió de l'avaluació, la gestió de l'aula i les expectatives institucionals (Herman et al., 2020).

Pel que fa a l'educació superior, la precarietat laboral, la competitivitat i la incertesa professional pesen molt. Aquí, el control sobre la pròpia carrera i l'estabilitat institucional esdevenen claus per a la resiliència psicològica dels docents i investigadors (Kinman & Wray, 2018). Aquestes diferències deixen clar que no serveixen les mateixes estratègies per a tothom.

En definitiva, aquest treball aporta a la literatura i subratlla que la resiliència docent és un fenomen sistèmic, fruit de la interacció entre factors personals, organitzatius i polítics (Johnson et al., 2018; Collie et al., 2017). Millorar les condicions laborals, reforçar el suport institucional i reconèixer professionalment el professorat no només millora el seu benestar, sinó que és imprescindible per garantir la sostenibilitat i la qualitat dels sistemes educatius a llarg termini.

7. LIMITACIONS DE L'ESTUDI

Tot i l'esforç per mantenir el rigor, aquesta revisió té algunes limitacions. Primer, hi ha molta variabilitat en com es defineix i mesura la resiliència docent. Això dificulta la comparació directa entre estudis i pot generar interpretacions diferents dels resultats.

Segon, la majoria dels estudis utilitzats són transversals, cosa que limita la possibilitat d'establir relacions de causalitat entre condicions laborals i resiliència. A més, el fet que es treballi sobretot amb autoinformes pot introduir certs biaixos de percepció subjectiva del benestar.

Finalment, la concentració de la recerca en contextos occidentals i en països amb sistemes educatius consolidats fa que els resultats no es puguin transferir fàcilment a altres realitats amb menys recursos o estructures institucionals diferents.

8. LÍNIES FUTURES DE RECERCA

De cara al futur, cal donar prioritat als estudis longitudinals per veure com evoluciona la resiliència docent amb el temps i com canvien les coses segons les condicions laborals i les polítiques educatives. També convé aprofundir en estudis comparatius a nivell internacional, sobretot en sistemes educatius no occidentals, per entendre millor l'impacte del context sociopolític en el benestar docent. És imprescindible desenvolupar i avaluar intervencions institucionals que millorin les condicions laborals, més enllà de limitar-se a formar individualment els docents en resiliència.

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15. From Classroom to Community: How Social Workers Enhance Student Success Integrating School Social Work for Holistic, Equitable, and Sustainable Student Development

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Abstract: This chapter critically examines the role of school social workers in enhancing student success by addressing the social, emotional, and structural factors that shape educational experiences beyond the classroom. Drawing on ecological systems theory and interdisciplinary research, the chapter situates student achievement within broader socioeconomic, cultural, and policy contexts. It explores how school social workers function as key mediators between schools, families, and communities, responding to challenges such as poverty, mental health difficulties, cultural marginalization, and institutional constraints. Particular emphasis is placed on systemic inequalities, professional collaboration, and the organizational conditions that influence the effectiveness of school-based social work. The chapter further analyzes evidence-based practices and whole-school approaches that integrate social-emotional learning, family engagement, and community partnerships. Finally, it highlights future research directions aimed at strengthening policy frameworks, interdisciplinary models, and sustainable social work practices within educational systems. Overall, the chapter argues that integrating social work into education is essential for promoting holistic, equitable, and socially responsive student success.

Keywords: school social work, inclusive education

1. INTRODUCTION

Education in contemporary societies is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional process that extends far beyond academic instruction. While traditional educational models have primarily emphasized cognitive development and measurable academic outcomes, a growing body of research underscores the profound influence of social, emotional, and environmental factors on students' ability to learn and thrive (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Students do not enter classrooms as isolated learners; rather, they bring with them complex life experiences shaped by family dynamics, socioeconomic conditions, cultural backgrounds, and community contexts. These factors play a decisive role in shaping school attendance, engagement, behavior, and academic achievement.

In recent decades, educational systems worldwide have been confronted with escalating challenges, including rising inequality, mental health concerns among children and adolescents, increased cultural and linguistic diversity, and the long-term effects of social and economic instability. Such challenges have intensified the need for comprehensive support structures within schools that address not only academic learning but also students' psychosocial needs. International organizations and educational scholars increasingly emphasize the necessity of holistic approaches that integrate academic instruction with well-being, social inclusion, and community engagement (UNESCO, 2021).

Within this evolving educational landscape, school social workers have emerged as key professionals who bridge the gap between classroom learning and students' broader life contexts. Their role encompasses early identification of risk factors, direct intervention with students and families, collaboration with educators, and advocacy for systemic change. By addressing barriers such as poverty, family instability, discrimination, and mental health difficulties, social workers contribute significantly to creating conditions that enable students to succeed academically and personally (Allen-Meares, 2015).

This chapter seeks to explore how social work practice within educational settings enhances student success by linking classroom experiences with community realities. It argues that the integration of social workers into schools is not merely a supplementary service but a fundamental component of equitable and effective education. The objectives of this chapter are threefold: first, to examine the theoretical foundations that support the inclusion of social work in education; second, to analyze the key challenges and controversies surrounding school-based social work; and third, to present evidence-based solutions and future directions that highlight the transformative potential of social workers in fostering inclusive, supportive, and resilient educational communities.

2. BACKGROUND

The integration of social work into educational settings is grounded in the recognition that learning is a complex, socially embedded process influenced by multiple interacting systems. Contemporary educational research increasingly adopts holistic perspectives that view students not merely as recipients of instruction but as individuals shaped by family environments, peer relationships, community structures, and broader socioeconomic conditions. Within this framework, school social work has emerged as a vital profession aimed at addressing the non-academic barriers that hinder students' educational engagement and achievement.

One of the most influential theoretical foundations supporting this approach is ecological systems theory, which conceptualizes human development as the result of dynamic interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to this model, students' learning experiences are shaped not only by classroom practices (microsystem) but also by family dynamics, school policies, community resources, and societal structures (meso-, exo-, and macrosystems). This perspective has been widely adopted in educational and social work research, as it highlights the necessity of interventions that extend beyond the classroom to address contextual factors such as poverty, housing instability, exposure to violence, and access to healthcare (Kelly et al., 2016).

In educational contexts, student success is increasingly defined as a multidimensional construct encompassing academic achievement, emotional well-being, social competence, and a sense of belonging. Research consistently demonstrates that students who experience chronic stress, social exclusion, or unmet emotional needs are more likely to exhibit reduced concentration, behavioral difficulties, absenteeism, and lower academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). These findings challenge traditional achievement-focused models and underscore the need for comprehensive support systems that promote resilience and positive development.

School social workers operate at the intersection of education and social services, providing targeted interventions that address these interconnected challenges. Their professional role typically includes individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, family support, needs assessment, and referral to community resources. Importantly, social workers also collaborate closely with teachers and school administrators to design preventive programs that foster social-emotional learning, conflict resolution, and inclusive school climates (Allen-Meares, 2015). Through these practices, they

contribute to early identification of risk factors and help prevent the escalation of academic and psychosocial difficulties.

The literature further emphasizes that effective school social work is inherently collaborative and multidisciplinary. Social workers function as liaisons between schools, families, and community agencies, facilitating communication and coordination among stakeholders who share responsibility for students' development. This collaborative role is particularly critical in schools serving socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, where external stressors often intersect with educational demands. Studies indicate that when schools adopt integrated support models involving social workers, students demonstrate improved attendance, enhanced emotional regulation, and stronger engagement with learning (Kelly et al., 2016).

At a broader level, school social work aligns with international policy frameworks that advocate for inclusive, equitable, and student-centered education. Global educational agendas increasingly recognize that addressing social inequality and promoting well-being are essential components of sustainable educational development. In this context, organizations such as UNESCO emphasize the importance of intersectoral collaboration and the provision of psychosocial support within schools as a means of ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students (UNESCO, 2021). Social workers play a critical role in translating these policy commitments into practice by advocating for marginalized students and contributing to institutional change.

Despite its demonstrated benefits, the implementation of school social work varies significantly across countries and educational systems. Differences in policy support, funding, professional recognition, and training opportunities influence the scope and effectiveness of social work services in schools. Nevertheless, the growing body of empirical evidence supports the argument that integrating social workers into educational environments strengthens schools' capacity to respond to students' diverse needs and enhances overall educational outcomes.

In summary, the background literature establishes a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for the inclusion of social work in education. By addressing the social, emotional, and environmental dimensions of learning, school social workers contribute to a more holistic understanding of student success. Their work reinforces the view that education cannot be isolated from the broader social context in which students live and develop. This perspective sets the stage for a deeper examination of the key issues, challenges, and controversies surrounding school social work, which are explored in the following section.

3. MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

The core focus of this chapter is the critical examination of the structural, social, and institutional factors that shape the effectiveness of social work within educational settings. While the integration of social workers into schools has been widely recognized as a key strategy for supporting student success, its implementation reveals a range of persistent challenges that limit its full potential. These challenges are deeply embedded in broader social inequalities, educational policies, and organizational practices that influence how schools respond to students' diverse needs.

Contemporary educational research increasingly emphasizes that student success cannot be reduced to academic performance alone. Instead, it is the outcome of a complex interplay between cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental dimensions. Social workers operate at the intersection of these dimensions, addressing barriers that extend beyond the classroom and directly affect students' capacity to engage with learning. However, the effectiveness of their role is often constrained by systemic issues that require careful analysis and critical reflection.

3.1 Socioeconomic Inequality and Its Impact on Educational Outcomes

One of the most significant challenges confronting school social work is the pervasive influence of socioeconomic inequality on students' educational experiences. Extensive empirical evidence demonstrates that students from low-income backgrounds face disproportionate risks related to academic underachievement, chronic absenteeism, behavioral difficulties, and early school dropout (Sirin, 2005; Reardon, 2011). Economic hardship is frequently associated with food insecurity, inadequate housing, limited access to healthcare, and exposure to chronic stress, all of which negatively affect cognitive development and emotional regulation (Evans & Kim, 2013).

Within this context, school social workers are often responsible for identifying students at risk and coordinating support mechanisms that address these external stressors. Their work includes connecting families with social services, advocating for students' needs within the school system, and implementing interventions aimed at mitigating the effects of poverty on learning. Nevertheless, the scale and persistence of socioeconomic disadvantage often exceed the capacity of individual practitioners, highlighting the tension between individualized support and the need for broader structural responses (Allen-Meares et al., 2013).

3.2 Student Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being in Schools

The increasing prevalence of mental health difficulties among children and adolescents represents another critical issue shaping the role of social workers in education. Anxiety, depression, trauma-related symptoms, and behavioral disorders have become increasingly visible within school populations, placing additional demands on educational institutions (Merikangas et al., 2010). Schools are frequently expected to function as primary sites of mental health support, despite not being originally designed for this purpose.

School social workers possess specialized training in psychosocial assessment and intervention, positioning them as key professionals in addressing students' emotional and mental health needs. Their responsibilities often include individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, and collaboration with external mental health services. However, unclear role definitions and overlapping responsibilities with other school-based professionals—such as psychologists and counselors—can create confusion and reduce the effectiveness of interventions (Kelly, Raines, Stone, & Frey, 2010). This ambiguity may limit the strategic use of social work expertise and undermine coordinated responses to student mental health challenges.

3.3 Cultural Diversity, Inclusion, and Educational Equity

Cultural and linguistic diversity within contemporary classrooms presents both opportunities and challenges for educational systems. Migration, globalization, and demographic change have transformed schools into increasingly multicultural environments, requiring practices that promote inclusion, equity, and cultural responsiveness. Students from minority and migrant backgrounds often encounter barriers related to language, discrimination, and limited familiarity with educational norms, which can negatively affect their academic engagement and sense of belonging (Sue et al., 1992).

Social workers play a crucial mediating role in supporting culturally responsive education by facilitating communication between schools and families, addressing experiences of exclusion or marginalization, and advocating for inclusive policies and practices. Despite this potential, the effectiveness of social work interventions in diverse contexts is frequently constrained by insufficient institutional support, limited training in multicultural competence, and broader systemic inequalities that extend beyond the school environment (Griffith & Smith, 2019).

3.4 Professional Collaboration and Organizational Constraints

Effective school social work is inherently collaborative, relying on sustained partnerships among educators, administrators, families, and community agencies. However, achieving meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration remains a persistent challenge. Organizational hierarchies, time constraints, and differing professional cultures can hinder communication and shared decision-making, reducing opportunities for coordinated intervention (Slade, Griffith, & Johnson, 2016).

In many educational settings, social workers are positioned on the periphery of core instructional planning and policy discussions, limiting their ability to contribute to preventive and whole-school initiatives. When social work is viewed as supplementary rather than integral to educational practice, its impact on student success is diminished. This marginalization reflects broader tensions within education systems that prioritize measurable academic outcomes over holistic development and well-being (Au, 2011).

3.5 Policy Frameworks, Funding, and Professional Sustainability

At the systemic level, inconsistencies in educational policy and funding models significantly influence the availability and effectiveness of school social work services. In many countries, the presence of social workers in schools depends on temporary programs, external funding, or local initiatives rather than stable national frameworks. This variability leads to unequal access to support services and reinforces existing educational inequalities (Huxtable & Blyth, 2002).

Furthermore, the emotional demands associated with working in high-need educational environments place social workers at increased risk of professional burnout. Exposure to trauma, heavy case-loads, and limited institutional recognition can undermine practitioners' well-being and long-term effectiveness (Kim & Stoner, 2008). Addressing these challenges is essential not only for supporting social workers themselves but also for ensuring the continuity and quality of services provided to students.

4. SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Responding effectively to the challenges outlined in the previous section requires a comprehensive, multi-layered approach that situates school social work as a core component of educational systems. Solutions must extend beyond isolated interventions and address student success through coordinated actions at the individual, school, community, and policy levels. Central to this approach is the recognition that educational achievement, emotional well-being, and social inclusion are inseparable and must be supported through integrated practices.

At the individual level, school social workers contribute to student success through targeted, evidence-based interventions that address emotional distress, behavioral difficulties, and psychosocial risk factors. Individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, and trauma-informed practices have been shown to improve students' emotional regulation, coping strategies, and engagement with learning (Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2009; Weist et al., 2012). These interventions are particularly effective when implemented early, emphasizing prevention rather than remediation. Early identification of risk factors—such as chronic absenteeism, social withdrawal, or behavioral changes—allows social workers to intervene before difficulties escalate into long-term academic failure or school dropout.

Family engagement constitutes another critical area of intervention. Research consistently highlights the importance of family–school partnerships in promoting positive educational outcomes, particularly for students from disadvantaged or marginalized backgrounds (Hill & Tyson, 2009). School

social workers serve as key facilitators in strengthening these partnerships by supporting communication between families and schools, addressing barriers to parental involvement, and connecting families with community-based resources. By adopting a strengths-based perspective, social workers help families navigate educational systems while recognizing and valuing their existing capacities and cultural knowledge (Constable, 2016).

At the school level, one of the most effective strategies involves embedding social work within whole-school frameworks that promote inclusive and supportive learning environments. Whole-school approaches to social-emotional learning, positive behavior support, and restorative practices have demonstrated significant benefits for both academic achievement and student well-being (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Social workers play a central role in designing, implementing, and evaluating these initiatives, ensuring that they are responsive to the needs of diverse student populations. Their involvement in school leadership teams and decision-making processes helps integrate social and emotional considerations into institutional priorities.

Strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration represents a further key recommendation. Effective school social work depends on sustained cooperation among educators, school psychologists, counselors, administrators, and external service providers. Structured collaboration models—such as regular interdisciplinary meetings, shared intervention plans, and joint professional development—enhance coordination and reduce service fragmentation (Lawson et al., 2015). When social workers are recognized as equal partners within educational teams, their expertise contributes not only to individual student support but also to broader organizational development and problem-solving.

Community engagement is equally essential to addressing the complex social factors that influence student success. Schools are embedded within communities that can either support or constrain educational outcomes. Social workers act as bridges between schools and community organizations, facilitating access to healthcare, mental health services, social welfare programs, and youth development initiatives (Bryan & Henry, 2012). These partnerships expand the support networks available to students and families and reinforce the role of schools as hubs of community well-being. Community-based collaboration is particularly important in contexts marked by poverty, migration, or social exclusion, where external resources are critical to mitigating educational disadvantage.

At the policy level, the sustainability and effectiveness of school social work depend on clear role definitions, stable funding, and supportive legislative frameworks. Research indicates that educational systems with well-defined policies for school social work demonstrate more consistent service delivery and stronger outcomes for students (Allen-Meares et al., 2013). Policymakers are encouraged to formally recognize social workers as essential members of school staff, ensure manageable caseloads, and provide ongoing professional development opportunities. Investment in supervision and practitioner well-being is also crucial, as high levels of occupational stress and burnout can undermine service quality and continuity (Kim & Stoner, 2008).

Finally, professional preparation and continuous training are vital for enhancing the impact of school social work. Ongoing education in areas such as trauma-informed practice, multicultural competence, and data-informed decision-making equips social workers to respond effectively to evolving student needs (Griffith & Smith, 2019). Training initiatives that involve both social workers and educators can further strengthen shared understanding and collaborative capacity within schools.

In sum, effective solutions for enhancing student success through school social work require coordinated efforts across multiple levels of the educational system. By integrating individual support, whole-school initiatives, community partnerships, and supportive policy frameworks, social work can function as a transformative force that promotes equity, inclusion, and holistic student development.

5. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The evolving role of social workers in educational contexts presents a wide range of opportunities for future research, particularly as schools continue to confront increasingly complex social, emotional, and structural challenges. While existing literature provides substantial evidence regarding the positive impact of school social work on student well-being and academic engagement, significant gaps remain in understanding how these practices can be optimized, sustained, and adapted across diverse educational systems and sociocultural contexts.

One important direction for future research concerns the systematic evaluation of school social work models and intervention frameworks. Although numerous studies document positive outcomes associated with individual programs or localized initiatives, there is a need for large-scale, longitudinal research that examines the long-term effects of integrated social work services on student trajectories. Such research should explore not only academic indicators, such as achievement and retention, but also broader outcomes related to emotional resilience, social competence, civic engagement, and post-school transitions. Longitudinal designs would allow researchers to assess whether early social work interventions produce lasting benefits that extend into adolescence and adulthood.

Comparative and cross-national research represents another critical area for further investigation. The organization, professional status, and scope of school social work vary considerably across countries, reflecting differences in educational policy, welfare systems, and cultural attitudes toward social support. Comparative studies could illuminate how different policy frameworks influence the effectiveness of social work in schools and identify best practices that may be transferable across contexts. Such research would be particularly valuable in informing policy development in educational systems where school social work is still emerging or remains underdeveloped.

Future research should also focus on the integration of social work within multi-tiered systems of support and inclusive education frameworks. Increasingly, schools are adopting tiered intervention models that combine universal prevention, targeted support, and intensive individualized services. Investigating how social workers contribute to each tier—and how their role complements that of teachers, psychologists, and other professionals—could enhance understanding of effective interdisciplinary practice. Particular attention should be given to the role of social workers in supporting students with disabilities, learning difficulties, and complex psychosocial needs within inclusive educational settings.

The intersection of school social work and digital technologies constitutes an emerging area of inquiry. Advances in digital communication, data systems, and tele-support services have the potential to expand the reach and efficiency of social work interventions, particularly in underserved or remote communities. Future studies could examine the ethical, practical, and professional implications of digital social work practices in schools, including issues related to confidentiality, accessibility, and practitioner training. Research in this area may also explore how data-informed decision-making can support early identification of risk factors and enhance the coordination of support services.

Another promising direction involves examining the role of social workers in addressing systemic inequities through advocacy and policy engagement. While much of the existing research focuses on direct practice with students and families, less attention has been paid to the ways in which school social workers influence institutional policies and contribute to broader educational reform. Future studies could investigate how social workers engage in advocacy at the school, district, and national levels, and how such efforts impact resource allocation, disciplinary practices, and equity-focused initiatives.

Professional development and workforce sustainability also warrant greater scholarly attention. High levels of stress, emotional labor, and role ambiguity continue to affect school social workers' well-being and retention. Future research should explore effective supervision models, organizational

supports, and professional learning opportunities that promote resilience and reduce burnout. Understanding the conditions under which social workers thrive professionally is essential for ensuring the long-term viability of school-based social work services.

Finally, participatory and practitioner-led research approaches offer valuable opportunities for advancing the field. Engaging social workers, educators, students, and families as active contributors to research can generate context-sensitive knowledge and strengthen the relevance of findings for practice. Such approaches align with the values of empowerment and collaboration that underpin both education and social work, reinforcing the ethical foundations of the field.

In conclusion, future research on school social work should adopt interdisciplinary, longitudinal, and equity-focused perspectives that reflect the complexity of contemporary educational environments. By addressing these research gaps, scholars and practitioners can contribute to the development of more effective, sustainable, and socially just educational systems in which all students are supported to reach their full potential.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to examine the role of social workers in enhancing student success by bridging the gap between classroom learning and the broader social and community contexts that shape students' lives. Through a comprehensive theoretical and empirical discussion, it has been demonstrated that education cannot be understood—or effectively practiced—as an isolated academic process. Rather, student success emerges from the interaction of cognitive development, emotional well-being, social relationships, family circumstances, and structural conditions that extend far beyond school walls.

One of the central arguments advanced throughout this chapter is that academic achievement is deeply intertwined with students' social and emotional experiences. Poverty, mental health challenges, family instability, cultural marginalization, and unequal access to resources consistently undermine students' capacity to engage with learning. The literature reviewed in this chapter confirms that these factors are not peripheral concerns but fundamental determinants of educational outcomes. Within this context, school social workers play a crucial role in identifying, addressing, and mitigating barriers that impede students' participation and success in education.

By operating at the intersection of education and social services, social workers expand the traditional boundaries of schooling. Their work extends beyond individual counseling and crisis intervention to include family engagement, community collaboration, advocacy, and institutional development. This multifaceted role enables social workers to respond to students' needs in a holistic manner, recognizing that effective support must encompass both immediate psychosocial assistance and long-term structural change. The chapter has shown that when social work is meaningfully integrated into school systems, students benefit not only academically but also in terms of emotional resilience, social competence, and sense of belonging.

Another key conclusion concerns the importance of collaboration and interdisciplinary practice. Schools are complex organizations in which no single professional group can address the full range of challenges faced by students. Social workers contribute distinct expertise in psychosocial assessment, systems thinking, and community engagement, complementing the instructional focus of teachers and the diagnostic roles of other support professionals. However, the effectiveness of this collaboration depends on organizational structures that value shared responsibility, clear role definitions, and inclusive decision-making processes. When social workers are marginalized or confined to reactive roles, their potential impact is significantly diminished.

The analysis also highlights persistent tensions and contradictions within educational systems that shape the practice of school social work. Performance-driven accountability frameworks, limited funding, and fragmented policy support often constrain efforts to promote holistic education. These structural limitations underscore the need for stronger policy commitments that recognize social work as an essential component of educational provision rather than an optional or temporary service. Investment in stable funding, professional development, and practitioner well-being is critical to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of school-based social work.

Importantly, this chapter emphasizes that the contribution of social workers extends beyond individual schools to the broader pursuit of social justice and educational equity. Through advocacy and systemic intervention, social workers challenge practices and policies that reproduce inequality, exclusion, and marginalization. By giving voice to students and families who are often overlooked within educational decision-making processes, they help reshape schools as spaces of inclusion, empathy, and democratic participation. In doing so, social work aligns education with its broader social mission: to empower individuals and strengthen communities.

In synthesizing the evidence and arguments presented, it becomes clear that the success of students cannot be fully understood through academic metrics alone. A comprehensive conception of student success must account for emotional well-being, social relationships, and the capacity to navigate complex life circumstances. School social workers play a pivotal role in advancing this broader vision of education by connecting classroom experiences with community realities and by ensuring that learning environments respond to the diverse needs of all students.

In conclusion, integrating social work into educational systems represents a strategic and ethical commitment to holistic, inclusive, and equitable education. Far from being a supplementary service, school social work constitutes a transformative approach that enhances student success while strengthening the social fabric of schools and communities alike. As educational systems continue to confront widening inequalities and growing psychosocial challenges, the role of social workers will remain indispensable in shaping schools that support not only academic achievement but also human development, dignity, and social responsibility.

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Part III
Society, Equity and Educational
Communities

16. Supporting the Whole Child: Integrating Social Work into the Educational System Holistic Approaches to Student Well-Being and Equity School Communities

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Abstract: This chapter explores the integration of social work into the educational system as a key strategy for supporting the whole child and promoting holistic, equitable, and inclusive learning environments. Drawing on ecological and holistic education frameworks, the chapter examines how students' academic success is deeply interconnected with their emotional well-being, social relationships, family contexts, and broader structural conditions. The analysis highlights the multifaceted role of school social workers in addressing psychosocial barriers to learning, strengthening family–school partnerships, and facilitating collaboration between schools and community services. Particular attention is given to systemic and institutional challenges, including policy constraints, professional boundaries, and performance-driven educational models that may limit holistic approaches. The chapter further discusses evidence-based solutions and strategic recommendations for embedding social work within school systems, as well as future research directions aimed at enhancing sustainability, equity, and interdisciplinary practice. Overall, the chapter argues that integrating social work into education is essential for fostering student well-being, educational equity, and long-term developmental outcomes.

Keywords: school social work, educational policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary educational systems are increasingly challenged to respond to the complex and multifaceted needs of students in rapidly changing social contexts. While academic achievement has traditionally been positioned as the primary goal of schooling, growing evidence suggests that learning is profoundly shaped by students' emotional well-being, social relationships, family environments, and broader structural conditions. As a result, education is no longer understood solely as a process of knowledge transmission but as a holistic endeavor that must support the development of the “whole child”—academically, emotionally, socially, and psychologically.

The concept of educating the whole child reflects a shift away from narrowly defined performance-driven models toward approaches that recognize the interdependence between learning and well-being. Research consistently demonstrates that students who experience emotional distress, social exclusion, family instability, or unmet basic needs are less able to engage meaningfully in educational processes, regardless of instructional quality (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Durlak et al., 2011). These realities have intensified calls for integrated support systems within schools that address not only academic outcomes but also the social determinants of learning. Within this evolving educational landscape, social work has emerged as a critical profession capable of bridging the gap between schools, families, and communities. School social workers bring specialized expertise in psychosocial assessment, counseling, advocacy, and systems-level intervention, enabling them to identify and

address barriers that impede students' educational participation. Their role extends beyond individual casework to include family engagement, coordination of community resources, crisis response, and collaboration with educators to promote inclusive and supportive school climates (Allen-Meares, 2015; Kelly et al., 2016).

The integration of social work into educational systems is particularly significant in contexts marked by socioeconomic inequality, cultural diversity, and increasing mental health concerns among children and adolescents. Issues such as poverty, family conflict, abuse, discrimination, and digital exclusion intersect with schooling in ways that profoundly influence students' capacity to learn and thrive (Evans & Kim, 2013; Reardon, 2011). In response, schools are increasingly expected to function as sites of care, prevention, and early intervention—roles for which traditional instructional models alone are insufficient.

This chapter examines the integration of social work into the educational system as a foundational strategy for supporting the whole child. Drawing on theoretical perspectives and empirical research, it explores how social workers contribute to holistic education by strengthening connections among students, families, schools, and communities. The chapter further analyzes the challenges associated with systemic integration, including institutional constraints, professional boundaries, and policy limitations, while highlighting the transformative potential of collaborative and preventive practices. The objectives of this chapter are threefold: first, to establish a theoretical framework for understanding holistic education and the role of social work within it; second, to critically examine the key challenges and tensions associated with integrating social work into schools; and third, to propose evidence-based approaches and future directions that support equitable, inclusive, and sustainable educational systems.

2. BACKGROUND

The notion of supporting the whole child is grounded in a holistic understanding of human development that emphasizes the interconnectedness of cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental dimensions of learning. One of the most influential theoretical foundations informing this perspective is ecological systems theory, which conceptualizes development as the product of dynamic interactions between individuals and multiple layers of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). From this viewpoint, students' educational experiences are shaped not only by classroom instruction but also by family relationships, peer networks, community conditions, institutional practices, and broader social policies.

Holistic education frameworks build on this ecological perspective by asserting that effective schooling must address students' emotional security, social belonging, and psychological well-being alongside academic learning. Empirical research supports this position, demonstrating that social-emotional competencies—such as self-regulation, empathy, and relationship skills—are strongly associated with improved academic performance, reduced behavioral problems, and long-term positive life outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Consequently, educational success is increasingly defined as a multidimensional construct that encompasses both achievement and well-being.

Within this framework, social work occupies a unique and strategically important position in educational settings. School social work is a specialized field of practice that focuses on addressing the social and emotional barriers that interfere with students' learning and development. Social workers in schools engage in a wide range of activities, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, family support, needs assessment, and referral to community-based services. Importantly, their work is informed by principles of social justice, empowerment, and respect for diversity, positioning them as advocates for vulnerable and marginalized student populations (Allen-Meares, Montgomery, & Kim, 2013).

The integration of social work into education responds directly to the growing recognition that many challenges affecting students originate outside the classroom. Socioeconomic disadvantage, housing insecurity, exposure to violence, family conflict, and mental health difficulties are among the factors most

strongly associated with academic disengagement and school dropout (Sirin, 2005; Merikangas et al., 2010). Social workers are trained to address these issues through both direct intervention and systemic coordination, working collaboratively with families, educators, and community agencies to create supportive networks around students.

Research further indicates that schools that adopt integrated support models—combining instructional practices with social and emotional services—are better equipped to promote inclusive and equitable learning environments. In such models, social workers function as key mediators who facilitate communication between home and school, address absenteeism and behavioral concerns, and support teachers in managing classroom diversity (Kelly et al., 2010). These collaborative practices contribute to the development of school climates characterized by safety, empathy, and mutual respect, which are essential conditions for effective learning.

At the policy level, the emphasis on whole-child education aligns with broader educational reforms that recognize learning as a socially situated process influenced by structural inequalities. International and national policy frameworks increasingly stress the importance of interprofessional collaboration, early intervention, and preventive approaches within schools (UNESCO, 2021). The integration of social work into educational systems reflects this shift by embedding social support services within everyday school practice rather than treating them as external or supplementary resources.

Despite its demonstrated benefits, the systemic integration of social work into education remains uneven across contexts. Variations in policy support, funding, professional recognition, and training opportunities continue to shape the scope and effectiveness of school social work services (Huxtable & Blyth, 2002). These disparities underscore the need for sustained institutional commitment and clear policy frameworks that recognize social work as an essential component of holistic education.

In sum, the background literature establishes a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding the role of social work in supporting the whole child. By addressing the social, emotional, and environmental dimensions of learning, social workers contribute to educational systems that are more responsive, inclusive, and equitable. This foundation provides the basis for a deeper examination of the key challenges, tensions, and possibilities associated with integrating social work into the educational system, which are explored in the sections that follow.

3. MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

The central focus of this chapter is the examination of how integrating social work into the educational system enables schools to support the whole child in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. While holistic education is increasingly promoted in educational discourse, its practical implementation often remains fragmented. Social work offers a coherent framework through which schools can address the interconnected academic, emotional, social, and environmental dimensions of student development. However, the realization of this potential is shaped by a range of social, institutional, and policy-related challenges that must be critically examined.

Education systems worldwide are increasingly confronted with student populations whose needs extend far beyond academic instruction. Learning difficulties, emotional distress, behavioral challenges, and social exclusion frequently coexist and reinforce one another, particularly among students from disadvantaged or marginalized backgrounds. In this context, social workers are positioned as key professionals capable of identifying and addressing these overlapping challenges through holistic and systemic interventions. Nevertheless, the integration of social work into schools raises important questions regarding scope of practice, institutional responsibility, and the balance between individual support and systemic change.

3.1 Social and Emotional Dimensions of Learning

One of the core dimensions of supporting the whole child concerns the recognition that emotional and social well-being are foundational to effective learning. Research consistently demonstrates that students' capacity to concentrate, regulate emotions, and engage in meaningful relationships is closely linked to their academic performance and long-term educational trajectories (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Emotional distress, chronic stress, and unresolved trauma can significantly impair cognitive functioning, motivation, and school engagement.

Social workers play a critical role in addressing these dimensions by providing psychosocial support within educational settings. Through individual and group interventions, they help students develop coping strategies, emotional regulation skills, and resilience in the face of adversity. Their work is particularly important for students who experience ongoing stressors related to poverty, family conflict, abuse, or discrimination, as these factors often manifest in behavioral difficulties or academic disengagement. By addressing emotional needs alongside academic demands, social work contributes to learning environments in which students feel safe, supported, and capable of participating fully in school life.

At the same time, integrating social-emotional support into schools raises questions about role clarity and institutional priorities. In systems where academic performance is narrowly defined through standardized testing, emotional and social dimensions of learning may be undervalued or treated as secondary concerns. This tension can limit the effectiveness of social work interventions and reinforce fragmented approaches to student support.

3.2 Barriers to Supporting the Whole Child

Despite growing recognition of holistic education, numerous barriers continue to impede efforts to support the whole child within schools. Socioeconomic inequality remains one of the most significant obstacles. Students living in poverty are disproportionately exposed to factors such as food insecurity, housing instability, limited access to healthcare, and neighborhood violence, all of which negatively affect their educational participation and achievement (Sirin, 2005; Evans & Kim, 2013). These conditions place additional demands on schools, which are often expected to compensate for broader social inequalities without adequate resources or support.

Family-related challenges further complicate efforts to support students holistically. Family conflict, parental unemployment, migration-related stress, and limited parental engagement can hinder communication between home and school and contribute to absenteeism or behavioral problems. Social workers frequently act as mediators in these situations, working to strengthen family-school relationships and connect families with community services. However, the effectiveness of these efforts depends on institutional structures that allow sufficient time, flexibility, and authority for social workers to engage meaningfully with families.

Cultural and linguistic diversity also presents both opportunities and challenges for holistic education. Students from migrant or minority backgrounds may face barriers related to language, cultural misunderstanding, or discrimination, which can undermine their sense of belonging and academic confidence. Social workers are often called upon to address these issues through culturally responsive practices and advocacy for inclusive policies. Nevertheless, insufficient training, limited institutional support, and broader societal inequalities can constrain their capacity to promote equity effectively.

3.3 Institutional and Systemic Challenges

Beyond individual and family-level barriers, institutional and systemic factors play a decisive role in shaping the integration of social work into education. In many contexts, social work services in schools are introduced through short-term projects, external funding, or pilot programs rather than through stable, system-wide policies. This lack of institutionalization results in uneven access to support services and reinforces disparities between schools and regions (Huxtable & Blyth, 2002).

Professional boundaries and organizational cultures further influence the effectiveness of social work in schools. While interdisciplinary collaboration is widely promoted as a best practice, differences in professional training, status, and expectations can hinder cooperation between social workers, teachers, and administrators. Social workers may be marginalized from decision-making processes or confined to reactive roles focused on crisis management rather than prevention and whole-school development. Such marginalization limits their ability to contribute to systemic change and undermines the holistic vision of education.

Policy frameworks that prioritize accountability and performance metrics also shape the conditions under which social work operates. When educational success is narrowly defined in terms of test scores and measurable outputs, holistic approaches that emphasize well-being, inclusion, and long-term development may receive limited institutional support. This creates a structural tension between the goals of whole-child education and the realities of policy-driven school systems. This emphasis on accountability and standardized performance indicators has been widely criticized for narrowing the educational agenda and marginalizing holistic approaches that prioritize students' social and emotional development (Au, 2011).

3.4 Social Justice, Equity, and the Role of Advocacy

A defining feature of social work within education is its commitment to social justice and equity. Supporting the whole child necessarily involves addressing the structural inequalities that shape students' life chances and educational opportunities. Social workers contribute to this effort not only through direct support but also through advocacy aimed at transforming institutional practices and policies that disadvantage vulnerable populations.

Advocacy may involve challenging discriminatory disciplinary practices, promoting inclusive education for students with disabilities, or advocating for additional resources in under-resourced schools. By bringing attention to the social determinants of learning, social workers help reframe educational challenges as collective responsibilities rather than individual failures. This perspective aligns holistic education with broader efforts to create equitable and inclusive school systems that recognize diversity as a strength rather than a deficit.

Taken together, these dimensions illustrate that integrating social work into the educational system is both necessary and complex. Supporting the whole child requires coordinated efforts across individual, institutional, and systemic levels, as well as a willingness to confront the social inequalities that shape educational experiences. The following section builds on this analysis by exploring evidence-based solutions and recommendations aimed at strengthening the role of social work in promoting holistic, inclusive, and equitable education.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the complex challenges associated with supporting the whole child requires coordinated and sustained interventions that operate across multiple levels of the educational system. Isolated or

short-term initiatives are insufficient to respond to the structural and psychosocial factors that shape students' educational experiences. Instead, effective solutions must integrate social work into the core functions of schools, positioning it as a central mechanism for promoting well-being, equity, and inclusive learning environments.

At the individual level, one of the most important recommendations involves strengthening preventive and early-intervention practices. School social workers are uniquely equipped to identify early signs of emotional distress, behavioral difficulties, and social disengagement that may interfere with learning. Evidence indicates that timely psychosocial interventions can significantly reduce the escalation of problems and improve both academic engagement and emotional regulation (Franklin et al., 2009; Durlak et al., 2011). Preventive approaches shift the focus from crisis response to proactive support, enabling schools to address students' needs before they manifest as chronic academic or behavioral difficulties.

Family engagement represents a second critical area for intervention. Supporting the whole child necessitates strong and reciprocal relationships between schools and families, particularly in contexts marked by socioeconomic disadvantage or cultural diversity. Social workers play a central role in fostering these relationships by facilitating communication, addressing barriers to parental involvement, and connecting families with community-based resources (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Strengthening family-school partnerships contributes to improved attendance, enhanced student motivation, and more consistent support across home and school environments. Importantly, effective family engagement strategies must be culturally responsive and grounded in respect for families' values, experiences, and strengths.

At the school level, whole-school approaches constitute a key recommendation for embedding holistic support within everyday educational practice. Programs that integrate social-emotional learning, positive behavior support, and restorative practices have been shown to improve school climate, reduce disciplinary exclusions, and enhance academic outcomes (Taylor et al., 2017). Social workers are well positioned to lead or co-design these initiatives due to their expertise in group processes, trauma-informed practice, and systems-level intervention. Their involvement in school leadership teams ensures that policies and practices reflect a holistic understanding of student development rather than narrowly defined performance indicators.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential for the effective integration of social work into schools. Structured collaboration models—such as regular case conferences, shared intervention planning, and joint professional development—enhance coordination among educators, social workers, psychologists, and administrators (Slade et al., 2016). When collaboration is institutionalized rather than dependent on individual relationships, schools are better equipped to respond consistently to students' complex needs. Clear role definitions and shared accountability further support effective teamwork and reduce professional fragmentation.

Community-based partnerships represent another vital component of comprehensive support for the whole child. Schools are embedded within broader community contexts that significantly influence students' well-being and learning opportunities. Social workers act as critical connectors between schools and external agencies, facilitating access to mental health services, social welfare programs, and youth development initiatives (Lawson, 2013). These partnerships extend the support network available to students and families, particularly in under-resourced communities where schools may serve as primary points of access to social services.

At the policy level, sustainable integration of social work into education requires clear legislative frameworks, stable funding, and institutional recognition of social workers as essential members of

school staff. Policies that define manageable caseloads, support ongoing professional development, and promote interprofessional collaboration enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of school social work services (Allen-Meares et al., 2013). Without such frameworks, social work interventions risk remaining fragmented, unevenly distributed, and vulnerable to funding fluctuations.

Finally, attention must be given to the professional well-being and preparation of school social workers. High emotional demands, exposure to trauma, and role ambiguity contribute to elevated risks of burnout and turnover, undermining service continuity and quality (Kim & Stoner, 2008). Investment in supervision, peer support, and continuous training—particularly in areas such as trauma-informed care, multicultural competence, and data-informed practice—is essential for sustaining effective social work practice within schools.

In summary, supporting the whole child through the integration of social work into education requires a comprehensive strategy that combines preventive interventions, family engagement, whole-school approaches, community partnerships, and supportive policy frameworks. When social work is embedded as a core function of educational systems, schools are better positioned to promote student well-being, academic engagement, and equitable outcomes. The following section outlines future research directions aimed at strengthening the evidence base and guiding the continued development of holistic, inclusive educational practices.

4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The integration of social work into educational systems as a means of supporting the whole child remains an evolving field that warrants further systematic investigation. Although existing research provides strong evidence regarding the positive impact of school social work on student well-being and engagement, significant gaps persist in understanding how these practices can be optimized, scaled, and sustained across diverse educational contexts. Future research is therefore essential for strengthening the theoretical foundations, empirical evidence base, and policy relevance of holistic education models.

One important direction for future research involves the longitudinal examination of school social work interventions. Much of the current literature relies on cross-sectional designs or short-term evaluations that capture immediate outcomes but fail to assess long-term effects on students' academic trajectories, emotional development, and life outcomes. Longitudinal studies would allow researchers to explore whether early psychosocial interventions contribute to sustained improvements in educational attainment, mental health, and social integration over time. Such research is particularly relevant for understanding the cumulative impact of preventive and whole-school approaches.

Comparative research across educational systems and national contexts represents another critical area for investigation. The structure, scope, and professional recognition of school social work vary widely depending on policy frameworks, welfare regimes, and cultural norms. Cross-national studies could provide valuable insights into how different institutional arrangements shape the effectiveness of social work in schools and identify best practices that may be transferable across settings. Comparative research would also help clarify how contextual factors—such as socioeconomic inequality, migration patterns, and governance structures—influence the implementation of holistic education initiatives.

Future research should also focus on the role of social workers within inclusive education frameworks. As schools increasingly adopt inclusive models aimed at supporting students with disabilities, learning difficulties, and complex psychosocial needs, there is a growing need to examine how social

work contributes to multidisciplinary support systems. Research could explore how social workers collaborate with teachers, special educators, and mental health professionals to design and implement individualized and universal interventions that promote participation and equity within inclusive classrooms.

The intersection of school social work and digital innovation constitutes an emerging and under-explored research area. Advances in digital technologies, data systems, and remote service delivery have the potential to expand access to psychosocial support, particularly in underserved or geographically isolated communities. Future studies could investigate the ethical, practical, and professional implications of digital social work practices in educational settings, including issues related to confidentiality, data protection, and practitioner training. Research in this area may also examine how data-informed approaches can support early identification of risk factors and enhance coordination among support services.

Another promising avenue for future research concerns the advocacy role of social workers within educational systems. While direct practice with students and families has been widely studied, less attention has been given to how social workers influence institutional policies and contribute to systemic change. Future research could examine the strategies social workers use to advocate for equitable resource allocation, inclusive disciplinary practices, and supportive school climates, as well as the outcomes of such advocacy efforts at the school and policy levels.

Finally, future studies should address issues related to workforce sustainability and professional well-being. High caseloads, emotional labor, and role ambiguity continue to pose challenges for school social workers, with implications for service quality and retention. Research focusing on supervision models, organizational supports, and professional development pathways would contribute to a deeper understanding of the conditions necessary for sustaining effective and ethical practice in educational settings.

In summary, future research on supporting the whole child through school social work should adopt interdisciplinary, longitudinal, and equity-oriented perspectives. By addressing these research directions, scholars and practitioners can contribute to the development of more coherent, evidence-based, and socially responsive educational systems that place student well-being at the center of educational practice

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the integration of social work into the educational system as a central strategy for supporting the whole child and promoting holistic, equitable, and inclusive educational outcomes. Moving beyond narrow academic conceptions of student success, the analysis highlighted the complex interplay between learning, emotional well-being, social relationships, family contexts, and structural conditions. Within this multidimensional framework, social work emerges as a critical profession capable of bridging gaps between schools, families, and communities while addressing the social determinants that shape students' educational experiences.

The discussion demonstrated that supporting the whole child requires more than isolated interventions or reactive responses to crisis. Instead, it demands coordinated and sustained efforts that embed psychosocial support within the everyday functioning of schools. Social workers contribute to this effort by addressing emotional and behavioral challenges, strengthening family–school relationships, facilitating access to community resources, and promoting inclusive school climates. Their holistic and systems-oriented approach enables schools to respond more effectively to the diverse and inter-

secting needs of contemporary student populations.

At the same time, the chapter underscored the institutional and systemic challenges that continue to constrain the integration of social work into education. Inconsistent policy frameworks, fragmented funding structures, performance-driven accountability models, and unclear professional boundaries often limit the scope and sustainability of social work practice in schools. These constraints highlight the need for stronger institutional commitment and policy alignment that recognize social work as an essential component of educational provision rather than a supplementary or peripheral service.

A key contribution of this chapter lies in its emphasis on equity and social justice as foundational principles of whole-child education. By addressing socioeconomic inequality, cultural marginalization, and unequal access to resources, social workers play a vital role in challenging practices that reproduce educational disadvantage. Through advocacy and systemic intervention, they help reframe student difficulties as collective responsibilities shaped by broader social conditions, thereby promoting more inclusive and responsive educational systems.

The chapter also highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and community partnerships in sustaining holistic support for students. Schools that function as collaborative hubs—bringing together educators, social workers, families, and community agencies—are better positioned to create supportive environments in which students can thrive academically and personally. Social workers' expertise in coordination and relationship-building is central to the success of these collaborative models.

In conclusion, integrating social work into the educational system represents a strategic and ethical response to the complex challenges facing contemporary education. Supporting the whole child requires educational systems that value well-being alongside achievement, prevention alongside remediation, and equity alongside accountability. Social work provides a critical lens and set of practices through which these priorities can be realized. As schools continue to navigate increasing social complexity and inequality, the sustained integration of social work will remain essential to building educational environments that foster not only academic success but also human development, dignity, and social inclusion.

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17. La diáspora venezolana, violencia y aporofobia

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Abstract: This contribution analyzes the contemporary Venezuelan diaspora, framing it as a forced migration phenomenon driven by systemic violence—political, institutional, and criminal—and a profound socio-economic collapse. Historically, Venezuela was a prominent host country for European immigrants during the 20th century; however, this trend has reversed into a desperate exodus. Through a qualitative and documentary methodology, the study examines the conceptual terminology of this displacement (exile, brain drain, diaspora) and introduces the framework of aporophobia—the rejection of the poor—as a key element in understanding the hostility faced by migrants in host countries. The research further explores the “ethnic reconfiguration” of Venezuelans abroad, analyzing how individuals who never perceived themselves as an ethnic group are now forced to redefine their identity under national labels and stereotypes. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, such as women facing systemic exploitation and qualified professionals (the “brain drain”) whose skills are often ignored due to institutional barriers and social prejudice. Ultimately, the article argues that the Venezuelan diaspora is not merely a statistical crisis but a struggle for the recognition of fundamental human rights and a transition from prejudice to the recognition of the migrant as a valuable cultural and intellectual interlocutor.

Keywords: Venezuelan diaspora, aporophobia, social exclusion.

Ahí te acogían, y ahí estaba tu noche.
Tú venías, venías con tu vida y tus recuerdos,
Con tu voz y tus pequeños papeles amarillos,
Con tu alegría y tus angustias,
Pero nadie sabía de dónde venías
(*Mi padre el inmigrante*, VICENTE GERBASI)

1. INTRODUCCIÓN, OBJETIVOS DEL ESTUDIO, MARCO TEÓRICO Y METODOLOGÍA

Este estudio aborda el fenómeno de la diáspora venezolana contemporánea analizando los factores determinantes que la han provocado, las terminologías utilizadas para describirla, y los desafíos sociológicos y de identidad que enfrentan los migrantes en los países receptores. El texto enmarca la salida actual de millones de venezolanos en un contexto histórico de Venezuela como país receptor de grandes oleadas migratorias europeas (españoles, italianos, portugueses) a lo largo del siglo XX, destacando la contribución cultural y económica de aquellos inmigrantes.

El estudio subraya que, a diferencia de la inmigración previa, la emigración venezolana reciente es un movimiento desesperado, forzado, no solo por la crisis económica (escasez de alimentos, medicinas y servicios básicos) sino, crucialmente, por la violencia indetenible (criminal, política e institucional), que se ha convertido en un factor determinante.

1.1 Objetivos del estudio

El objetivo de esta comunicación es analizar la complejidad del fenómeno migratorio venezolano actual a través de varios ejes temáticos fundamentales: Análisis Terminológico: se examinan las acepciones de términos clave utilizados para nombrar el fenómeno ('exilio', 'fuga de cerebros', 'pérdida académica', 'migración', 'diáspora'), reconociendo que todos se emplean para describir la salida forzada del país. Caracterización del rechazo: se introduce y aplica el concepto de *aporofobia* para analizar el rechazo y la hostilidad que sufren los migrantes, entendiéndolo como el odio no al extranjero en sí (*xenofobia*), sino al extranjero que es pobre o carece de recursos. Factores de desplazamiento: se establece y documenta el papel de la violencia (policial, comunal, política, narcotráfico) como causa primordial, complementaria a la crisis económica, de la migración. Por último, se analiza el impacto en la identidad y grupos vulnerables. Se explora la reconfiguración de la etnicidad del venezolano en el exterior y el drama particular de grupos vulnerables, como las mujeres (víctimas de violencia de género, abuso y explotación en el tránsito) y el talento calificado (académicos y científicos que no logran validar sus saberes).

1.2 Marco teórico

El estudio se sustenta en tres pilares teóricos principales, apoyados por la revisión de una amplia bibliografía existente sobre la diáspora venezolana: Aporofobia: Este concepto (acuñado por Adela Cortina) se utiliza como el marco principal para comprender la discriminación que sufren los migrantes. Argumenta que la principal barrera ideológica no es el origen nacional, sino la condición de pobreza asociada al migrante. Etnicidad y reconfiguración étnica: A partir de los planteamientos de Enrique Alí González Ordosgoitti, el marco teórico aborda cómo los venezolanos se ven obligados a "sentirse etnia" por primera vez fuera de su país. Este proceso, que implica una reconfiguración étnica violenta y simbólica, lleva al migrante a preguntarse y redefinir qué lo identifica como venezolano. Derechos humanos: Implícitamente, la salida masiva es enmarcada como la búsqueda de la materialización de derechos fundamentales, citando la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos (Artículos 6, 13 y 15) sobre el derecho al reconocimiento de la personalidad jurídica, a la libre circulación y a una nacionalidad.

1.3 Metodología

La metodología es eminentemente cualitativa y documental. Consiste en la revisión exhaustiva y la síntesis de una extensa bibliografía académica, incluyendo actas de congresos, monografías y artículos especializados sobre la diáspora venezolana (como los trabajos de Alexandra Álvarez Muro, José Manuel Martínez y Tomás Páez). El método se basa en el análisis crítico de conceptos sociológicos (aporofobia, etnicidad), datos de agencias internacionales (ACNUR) y testimonios que ilustran la crisis (como el caso de las colas de gasolina y la violencia de género), a fin de construir un argumento coherente sobre las causas y consecuencias de esta migración forzada.

2. LA TERMINOLOGÍA Y EL ESTADO DE LA CUESTIÓN

'Exilio', 'fuga de cerebros', 'pérdida académica', 'migración' y 'diáspora' son las palabras clave que articulan esta comunicación. Aunque estos términos poseen diferentes matices y acepciones, se emplean aquí para describir un fenómeno común: la salida del propio país en condiciones forzadas.

Este análisis no es un esfuerzo aislado; se inscribe en una línea de investigación que hemos desarrollado en diversos foros académicos. Ya en 2014, el volumen *Esilio, destirro, migrazione* —que

recogió las actas de la III Jornada Siciliana de Estudios Hispánicos del Mediterráneo— abordaba estas categorías. Asimismo, hemos dedicado dos congresos internacionales al fenómeno migratorio venezolano. Del primero, celebrado en 2020, surgió la obra *Venezuela, tensiones, conflictos y paz*, cuya primera sección se dedica íntegramente al análisis de la diáspora.

Posteriormente, en mayo de 2021, la VIII Jornada Siciliana dio lugar al volumen *Personajes, discursos y frases célebres* (publicado en la serie *Miscellanea Mediterranee* por Aracne Editore). En dicha obra se compila un conjunto de investigaciones procedentes de prestigiosas universidades que examinan la migración desde múltiples ángulos. En este contexto, resulta fundamental mencionar el ensayo de la profesora Alexandra Álvarez Muro (2021) sobre el rechazo y la discriminación del migrante venezolano, así como la monografía coordinada por José Manuel Martínez, *Diáspora de talentos venezolanos: Características de una migración de alta calificación* (2021). Este último trabajo es crucial, pues no solo visibiliza las competencias de los profesionales emigrados, sino que busca mejorar sus condiciones de inserción laboral en los campos de la ciencia y la tecnología.

Existe una vasta bibliografía sobre el tema que sirve de sustento a este estudio, y a la cual haremos referencia para profundizar en los desafíos que esta movilidad humana impone a la sociedad contemporánea.

3. EL VUELO INVERSO DE LOS PÁJAROS: CONTEXTO HISTÓRICO

Cuando el frío invierno llegaba a Europa y Asia, miles de aves se marchaban hacia el nuevo continente sin saber que era nuevo. Así quedó registrado en el Diario de a bordo de Cristóbal Colón quien, el martes 9 de octubre de 1492, anotó una frase que Guillermo Cabrera Infante calificaría siglos después como una de las más bellas de la literatura americana: “Toda la noche oyeron pasar pájaros”. Aquellos pájaros eran la premonición poética de un mundo que estaba allí, antes de que el ojo humano lo confirmara.

América ha sido, desde entonces, un escenario de soñar y despertar, un continente abierto a la llegada de quienes buscaban esperanza. En el siglo XX, Venezuela se convirtió en el destino predilecto de una gran oleada de españoles, italianos y portugueses que huían de las penurias de las guerras mundiales. Entre 1939 y 1940, la inmigración aumentó de forma espontánea; llegaban agricultores, profesionales y obreros especializados que realizaron esfuerzos inolvidables en la industria y la agricultura, creando empresas sólidas y urbanizaciones que insinuaban la modernidad del país.

Esta migración generó un puente cultural sin precedentes. Se adoptaron comidas, creencias y saberes que enriquecieron la matriz cultural venezolana. De aquellas familias surgieron intelectuales y creadores que dejaron una huella profunda: Pedro Grases, Juan David García Bacca, Manuel García Pelayo, Juan Nuño y Victoria De Stefano, entre tantos otros. Incluso de la raíz italiana nacieron presidentes como Raúl Leoni y Jaime Lusinchi, y poetas universales como Vicente Gerbasi. La gastronomía nacional se transformó con la llegada de la paella, el espagueti y la feijoada, integrando sabores europeos al paladar caribeño.

Incluso figuras históricas como Agustín Codazzi, geógrafo de la nación y soldado de Bolívar, simbolizan este vínculo al haber fundado la Colonia Tovar con inmigrantes de la Selva Negra. Venezuela era, por definición, el hogar del que llegaba.

Sin embargo, con el recrudecimiento de la violencia —primero por la Guerra Fría y luego por el impacto del narcotráfico y la descomposición institucional— la migración comenzó a moverse desesperadamente. En Venezuela, la violencia se convirtió en una herramienta política que, sumada a una crisis económica que empujó a millones a la miseria, originó las primeras oleadas de emigrantes hacia el exterior.

Hoy, ante el asedio, el proceso se ha invertido. El venezolano, sintiendo aún tibias las presencias de sus abuelos europeos y rodeado de los sabores que ellos trajeron, emprende su propio viaje. Ante la tragedia, resulta lógico preguntarse: ¿hacia dónde más podrían enfilarse sus vidas estos nuevos emigrantes sino hacia aquellas tierras que una vez acogió el país de sus padres?

4. UN NEOLOGISMO ‘APOROFOBIA’

Es una palabra nueva que surge para definir la pobreza representada, ahora, por los emigrados que viven en condiciones de pobreza, aunque muchos no lo eran en su país.

El 7 de marzo del año 2000, Adela Cortina publicó un texto en el diario *El País*, de España. En ese artículo proponía a la Real Academia Española el neologismo “aporofobia” para su posible incorporación en el Diccionario de la lengua española. Proponía que la palabra figurara con una caracterización como la siguiente: “Dícese del odio, repugnancia u hostilidad ante el pobre, el sin recursos, el desamparado”. Y añadía por más señas que en ese ilustrativo paréntesis que siempre sigue al vocablo podría decir: (Del gr. *á-poros*, pobre, y *fobéo*, espantarse).

La pobreza siempre ha existido, asociada a personas sin recursos económicos, muchas veces sin vivienda propia o sin una vivienda apropiada. En América Latina se piensa inmediatamente en pobreza habitando barrios de hechuras improvisadas, comunidades enmarcadas la mayoría de las veces en áreas donde se tornan cotidianos el flujo de aguas negras y el amontonamiento de basura; carencia de recursos para la higiene; costumbres de obligatoria supervivencia. Violencia cotidiana. Poco acceso a instituciones de salud, de educación. Dificultades para la obtención de empleos.

Esas personas generan rechazo porque los prejuicios han ido marcando características creadas, inventadas. Incluso, se registran constantes agresiones psicológicas y físicas contra las personas afectadas por la pobreza. Como si perdieran fácilmente sus derechos ante los demás ciudadanos. Ante las autoridades.

Los prejuicios que circulan son muchos: “Los pobres no tienen profesión”, “parecen sucios”, “parecen delincuentes”, “parecen enfermos”. A ellos, los define el hambre, y no armonizan con el ambiente de clase media”.

Sin embargo, ahora, en Europa, los inmigrantes también se les califica como gente pobre. Los inmigrantes y los migrantes: parecen pobres y tienen esas características.

La pobreza es como una mano extendida pidiendo. Es una molestia. A veces afean las calles y avenidas de las ciudades. Duermen en aceras cuando no tienen alojamiento. La pobreza amenaza con alterar los espacios cotidianos.

A ese odio y desprecio, o “xenofobia” se añade ahora la “aporofobia”. No se odia solo al extranjero, sino también al pobre migrante. Diego Batistesa (2017), estudia el fenómeno con mucha atención en su obra *Aporofobia: el muro ideológico del tercer milenio*, y sostiene que el muro funciona como una representación simbólica de los obstáculos que separan realidades distintas, cuyas identidades se ven confinadas por barreras tanto físicas como ideológicas. En este sentido, el autor precisa que la “aporofobia” no consiste en un rechazo al extranjero por su origen nacional, sino por su carencia de recursos. De este modo, la exclusión social se activa únicamente cuando la extranjería coincide con la precariedad económica, sugiriendo que la riqueza anula la percepción de “ajenidad”, mientras que la pobreza convierte al migrante en un sujeto no deseado.

La aporofobia no toca el tema de la pobreza cultural, que en muchas ocasiones afecta a quienes prefieren creer que saber. Mientras la aporofobia se centra en el rechazo a quien no tiene dinero (pobreza material), existe otra forma de pobreza que suele pasar desapercibida: la pobreza de espíritu o cultur-

al. Esta no tiene que ver con la cuenta bancaria, sino con la actitud ante el conocimiento. El rechazo al venezolano (y no solamente) en el exterior no es solo un problema del migrante, sino una deficiencia intelectual del que rechaza. Quien se queda en el prejuicio (creencia) y no se abre a conocer la riqueza que el migrante aporta (saber), es el verdadero portador de una pobreza incurable.

La aporofobia trasciende la mera hostilidad socioeconómica para convertirse en una patología de la comunicación. Al “preferir creer que saber”, el sujeto aporóforo anula la acción comunicativa (aquella búsqueda de entendimiento mutuo que Habermas (1981) sitúa como base de la civilización) y la sustituye por una acción estratégica de exclusión. Esta “pobreza de espíritu” es el muro invisible que impide reconocer en el migrante venezolano no a un competidor por los recursos, sino a un interlocutor válido con una riqueza cultural y profesional que queda invisibilizada bajo el estigma de la carencia. Así, el rechazo al pobre revela una paradoja ética: la sociedad que expulsa al migrante por su falta de medios económicos termina exhibiendo su propia indigencia intelectual al renunciar al conocimiento y refugiarse en el dogma del prejuicio.

5. EL FLUJO LATINOAMERICANO Y LA EXCEPCIÓN VENEZOLANA

En el libro-foro *Nuevas migraciones latinoamericanas a Europa: Balances y desafíos*, de Isabel Yépez del Castillo y Gioconda Herrera (2007), se afirma que “los primeros flujos de inmigración latinoamericana estrictamente económica tendieron a pasar relativamente desapercibidos”. No obstante, desde finales de los noventa, el volumen y la velocidad del flujo han resultado sorprendentes. Inicialmente destacaron ecuatorianos y argentinos, producto de las debacles financieras de 1999 y 2001; luego se unió Colombia con su perfil de emigración forzada por la violencia.

Gabriel García Márquez alertó sobre esta situación regional en 2003, afirmando que millones de colombianos huían de las “desgracias nativas” sin más armas que su ingenio, demostrando que la imaginación es la virtud que salva al migrante de morir de hambre. Sin embargo, en Venezuela, el abandono del país responde a motivos que desafían la lógica: en la nación con las reservas probadas de petróleo más grandes del planeta, la falta de gasolina obligó a los ciudadanos a vivir en sus autos durante semanas para poder surtirse, pareciendo personajes del cuento de Julio Cortázar, *La autopista del sur*.

A esta crisis energética se sumaron la falta de medicamentos, alimentos, luz, agua y dinero en efectivo. Este colapso económico derivó en huelgas, enfrentamientos y una violencia que afectó de manera desproporcionada a los grupos más desprotegidos.

En este contexto, en el año 2022, el director regional de ACNUR para las Américas, José Samaniego, señalaba que el continente afrontaba una situación de desplazamiento sin precedentes que afectaba de manera particular a millones de mujeres y niñas. Como víctimas de violencia y explotación, muchas se veían obligadas a huir de sus hogares; sin embargo, el recorrido en busca de seguridad las colocaba en situaciones igualmente peligrosas. Su llegada al lugar de destino les deparaba —y les depara aún hoy— pobreza extrema y xenofobia.

Esta realidad evidencia que el desplazamiento forzado femenino no es solo una transición geográfica, sino una exposición a una vulnerabilidad sistémica donde la violencia se entrelaza con la aporofobia. Al llegar, estas mujeres se enfrentan a una doble invisibilización: se las reduce a su carencia material y se las victimiza mediante prejuicios que ignoran su resiliencia. Superar esta tragedia exige una respuesta que reconozca que la seguridad de una nación se mide por su capacidad de proteger a los más vulnerables, transformando el estigma en una política de reconocimiento pleno de la dignidad humana.

6. LA VIOLENCIA COMO FACTOR DETERMINANTE

El paisaje cotidiano se configuraba a través del miedo: miedo político, policial y comunal; terror ante los uniformes militares y sospecha ante el paso de motos o camionetas negras. Cuando el sistema otorgaba “luz verde” a colectivos armados y grupos delictivos para amedrentar a la población, la inseguridad se multiplicaba. Los atracos, secuestros y homicidios se justificaban bajo una supuesta “lucha de clases”, convirtiendo al *lumpen* en el terror diario de quienes viajaban en los autobuses, allí donde la pobreza es más vulnerable.

El deterioro institucional marcó el inicio de esta violencia política. Al desconocerse la propiedad privada, las instituciones fundamentales —la Contraloría, el Banco Central, Petróleos de Venezuela y el Ministerio de Sanidad— dejaron de responder a las necesidades ciudadanas. Recorrer las calles desde el inicio del siglo XXI era jugar a la lotería de la muerte; el hambre se tornó en una agresión y pasó a ser, finalmente, un auxiliar de la muerte.

Esta tragedia es la que genera el drama del desplazamiento forzado. Cuando escasean los alimentos, el salario mínimo se diluye y los hospitales entran en coma, el ciudadano habita un país donde no posee nada y puede perder lo único que le queda: la vida.

El viaje forzado —ver el mundo “a juro”— resulta revelador. Esta experiencia de exilio, aunque cruda, hace posible una toma de conciencia fundamental: la comprensión de que una sociedad solo es viable cuando existen instituciones que cumplen su función apegada a la ley y a los Derechos Humanos. Es en este punto donde el migrante constata el valor de la civilidad frente a la barbarie que lo expulsó.

7. EL CERCO UNIVERSITARIO

Científicos y profesionales universitarios de diversas disciplinas forman parte de la diáspora venezolana; sin embargo, lamentablemente, muchos no logran el reconocimiento de sus títulos ni de sus saberes. Se ven obligados a desempeñar labores que desaprovechan recursos intelectuales valiosos. Incluso antes de partir, estando aún en Venezuela, ya abundaban ingenieros, médicos, arquitectos y periodistas que trabajaban como taxistas o en el comercio informal debido a la crisis.

Tomás Páez (2021), en su estudio sobre las diásporas calificadas, denuncia lo que constituía una imposición altamente negativa contra las universidades. Sostiene que la migración calificada, más que buscar nuevas oportunidades intelectuales o económicas —como solía ocurrir en el pasado—, era forzada a desplazarse como consecuencia de la creciente inseguridad y del permanente asedio ideológico, político y económico que estaba sufriendo el país.

Esta descapitalización intelectual de Venezuela, manifestada en la denominada “diáspora de talentos”, representa una paradoja trágica del mundo moderno. Mientras el país de origen perdía el motor de su reconstrucción debido al asedio institucional, los países receptores, dominados en ocasiones por una ceguera aporófoba, desaprovechaban este caudal de conocimiento al condenar a los profesionales a la informalidad. Aquel “cerco” no solo rodeaba a las universidades venezolanas, sino que se extendía hasta las fronteras exteriores, donde el prejuicio impedía ver el título académico detrás del rostro de la necesidad. En última instancia, la verdadera “fuga de cerebros” no era solo el viaje físico del profesional, sino la incapacidad de la sociedad receptora para “saber” valorar el recurso humano que recibía, prefiriendo “creer” en el estereotipo del migrante descalificado.

8. EL PRIMER PAÍS

¿Qué trae, qué lleva, cuántas costumbres y regiones representa el venezolano en su terrible andar y desandar como migrante?

Desde la infancia se comienza a crear el país propio: se aprende un idioma y se nombran las cosas en esa lengua. Se miran los paisajes y los espacios que parecen encerrar placeres particulares: mi río, mis árboles, mi cielo, mi selva, mi ciudad, mi mar, mi madre, mi padre, mi familia. El habitante crea desde su niñez el país que desea mirar, oler, respirar; el país que prueba en los sabores de sus comidas y sus frutos; el país que tiene historias y música, inteligencia y símbolos propios.

Sin embargo, cuando una persona ya no puede caminar libremente en su territorio natural, ni olerlo, probarlo o escucharlo, es porque se lo han arrebatado de manera violenta. Entonces debe vivir el drama de marcharse sin saber lo que sus sentidos encontrarán. El migrante tiene que aprender en qué situaciones sus costumbres y su cultura le servirán para acomodarse y lograr escuchar, mirar, probar, tocar y oler sin parecer un “invitado de piedra”, o peor aún, un ser inferior merecedor de jaulas.

Maysoun Chehab (2020) ha señalado que “pertenecer, tal y como lo define el diccionario Webster, es tener un lugar propio, apropiado o adecuado. Es estar asociado naturalmente a algo y encajar en un grupo”. Para el venezolano, ese “encajar” se ha vuelto una lucha contra la corriente, un intento por reconstruir el primer país en tierras extrañas donde, a menudo, la aporofobia intenta negarle ese lugar propio.

9. LA ETNICIDAD Y EL RECONOCIMIENTO

Estamos en presencia de una reconfiguración étnica de Venezuela (González Ordosgoitti: 2023). Este proceso, violento tanto en lo físico como en lo simbólico, ha obligado a la población a repensar y reconstruir los componentes de su identidad en un tiempo récord. La presión aculturadora y la demonización de sus símbolos principales han intentado pulverizar las condiciones materiales y espirituales del ciudadano.

La mayoría de los venezolanos nunca se había sentido parte de una “etnia” mientras vivía en su país; carecían de la experiencia social de ser analizados no como individuos particulares, sino como miembros de un grupo nacional etiquetado. Esta primera experiencia de “sentirse etnia” se produce fuera de las fronteras, en contextos donde los grupos se organizan y son juzgados con base en su pertenencia nacional.

En los países receptores, el migrante debe descubrir su nueva situación y definir estrategias de resistencia o asimilación. Esta reflexión personal es dramática y plantea preguntas acuciantes: ¿Qué me define ahora como venezolano? ¿Cuál es el futuro de mi descendencia? ¿Cuán similar soy a los venezolanos que se quedaron?

A pesar de este conflicto, surge un optimismo valedero. En esta etapa, muchos se han visto expuestos a retos inéditos que han ampliado su visión del mundo. Al desenvolverse en ambientes poco familiares, su suerte ha pasado a depender de un espíritu de iniciativa que ha enriquecido su bagaje de herramientas. Si la necesidad es la madre de la inventiva, el emprendimiento se perfila como uno de los activos más valiosos adquiridos en el exilio. Estos migrantes son ahora portadores de valores y conocimientos que podrían coadyuvar en una futura recuperación del país, aunque el paso del tiempo sin cambios políticos reduzca las probabilidades del regreso.

Sin embargo, frente a la jerga de la “dentidad” y las clasificaciones étnicas, surge una crítica necesaria. En otros tiempos se tipificaban las razas hasta que se comprendió que esa idea no explicaba nada; ahora se opera con etnias e identidades como si tuvieran un fundamento científico irrefutable. Un examen crítico demuestra que no existe una concepción coherente de “etnia”, de la misma forma que la genética de poblaciones desestimó la noción de raza. El peligro reside en que estas etiquetas —muchas veces alimentadas por la aporofobia— terminan siendo una filosofía del autoengaño que oculta la verdadera humanidad del individuo bajo el sello de un grupo.

10. CONCLUSIÓN: DEL PREJUICIO AL RECONOCIMIENTO

La diáspora venezolana no es un fenómeno meramente estadístico, sino una crisis de identidad y derechos que interpela la conciencia regional. Como hemos visto, el desplazamiento forzado —impulsado por una violencia que se volvió sistémica— obliga al migrante a enfrentarse a la pérdida de su “primer país” y a una reconfiguración étnica donde, por primera vez, deja de ser un individuo para convertirse en una etiqueta nacional.

La tragedia se agrava cuando, en el destino, el migrante choca contra el muro de la aporofobia. Este rechazo, que oculta una profunda “pobreza de espíritu” en la sociedad receptora, invisibiliza el saber del académico, la resiliencia de la mujer y la humanidad del trabajador, reduciéndolos simplemente a su carencia material. Superar este cerco exige transitar de la “creencia” (el prejuicio) al “saber” (el reconocimiento del otro como un interlocutor válido).

Con documentación o sin ella, cruzando selvas o aeropuertos, los venezolanos intentan materializar con su andar los principios de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos. Al reclamar el derecho al reconocimiento de su personalidad jurídica (Art. 6), a circular libremente y elegir su residencia (Art. 13), a no ser privados arbitrariamente de su nacionalidad (Art. 15), el migrante no solo busca sobrevivir; busca recuperar el lugar en el mundo que la violencia le arrebató. La verdadera integración solo será posible cuando la sociedad receptora comprenda que el migrante no es un competidor por los recursos, sino un motor de cultura y conocimiento que, como los pájaros que Colón oyó pasar, anuncia la llegada de una nueva y necesaria humanidad compartida.

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Educational Leadership, Inclusion and Social Transformation / Liderazgo educativo, inclusión y transformación social

Educational Leadership, Inclusion and Social Transformation constitutes an interdisciplinary contribution to the study of contemporary educational challenges, addressing in an integrated manner the relationships between educational leadership, inclusion, governance, and social transformation. Structured around three major thematic sections—educational leadership and governance; teaching, inclusion, and educational practice; and society, equity, and educational communities—the volume offers a broad and coherent perspective on the processes shaping contemporary educational systems from institutional, pedagogical, and socio-community viewpoints.

The first section examines educational leadership in relation to public administration, the professionalisation of leadership teams, teacher evaluation, organisational innovation, and special education policies. The chapters included in this section highlight the importance of specialised training, evidence-based management, and leadership capacity as key factors in the development of effective and inclusive educational systems.

The second section focuses on teaching and inclusive practices, bringing together contributions related to inclusive literacy, the education of people with disabilities, special education, classroom management, English as a lingua franca, social robotics, teacher resilience, and school social work. This section emphasises the importance of pedagogical innovation, accessibility, and institutional support in responding to student diversity and enhancing the well-being of education professionals.

The third section broadens the analysis to encompass the social dimensions of education, exploring issues of equity, student well-being, the integration of social work within educational settings, and the impact of complex social phenomena such as migration, violence, and aporophobia.

Overall, the volume identifies leadership, inclusion, innovation, professionalisation, accessibility, social justice, and educational well-being as its principal cross-cutting themes. Its main contribution lies in offering a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective that connects educational research, institutional analysis, and a commitment to equity, highlighting the transformative potential of education in contemporary societies.

La obra *Liderazgo educativo, inclusión y transformación social* constituye una aportación interdisciplinar al estudio de los desafíos contemporáneos de la educación, abordando de manera integrada las relaciones entre liderazgo educativo, inclusión, gobernanza y transformación social. Estructurada en tres grandes bloques temáticos —liderazgo y gobernanza educativa; enseñanza, inclusión y práctica educativa; y sociedad, equidad y comunidades educativas—, la publicación ofrece una visión amplia y articulada de los procesos que configuran los sistemas educativos actuales desde perspectivas institucionales, pedagógicas y sociocomunitarias.

La primera parte analiza el liderazgo educativo en conexión con la administración pública, la profesionalización de los equipos directivos, la evaluación docente, la innovación organizativa y las políticas de educación especial. Los capítulos reunidos en esta sección destacan la relevancia de la formación especializada, la gestión basada en la evidencia y la capacidad de liderazgo como factores clave para el desarrollo de sistemas educativos eficaces e inclusivos.

La segunda parte se centra en la enseñanza y las prácticas inclusivas, incorporando contribuciones relacionadas con la alfabetización inclusiva, la educación de personas con discapacidad, la educación especial, la gestión del aula, el inglés como lengua franca, la robótica social, la resiliencia docente y el trabajo social escolar. Este bloque pone de manifiesto la importancia de la innovación pedagógica, la accesibilidad y el apoyo institucional para responder a la diversidad del alumnado y fortalecer el bienestar de los profesionales de la educación.

La tercera parte amplía el análisis hacia las dimensiones sociales de la educación, profundizando en la equidad, el bienestar estudiantil, la integración del trabajo social en los centros educativos y el impacto de fenómenos sociales complejos, como las migraciones, la violencia y la aporofobia.

En conjunto, la obra identifica como ejes transversales el liderazgo, la inclusión, la innovación, la profesionalización, la accesibilidad, la justicia social y el bienestar educativo. Su principal contribución radica en ofrecer una perspectiva comparativa e interdisciplinar que vincula investigación educativa, análisis institucional y compromiso con la equidad, resaltando el potencial transformador de la educación en las sociedades contemporáneas.