Teaching refugee children in Reception (School) Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP) or Non-governmental organisations (NGOs): teachers' challenges in Greece

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Abstract

This paper aims to present the challenges teachers face when working in Reception (School) Facilities for Refugee Education (Δομές Υποδοχής και Εκπαίδευσης Προσφύγων, ΔΥΕΠ/DYEP) or Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Greece and it proposes possible solutions. These challenges have an impact on three main levels: communicative, practical and psychological levels. Active involvement of parents, proper preparation of teachers and the use of children's mother tongue are some of the possible solutions proposed in this qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews. Nine (9) teachers participated and enriched the paper with their views. The interviews, among others, highlighted severe obstacles arising from cultural diversity in the classroom, the language barrier and the lack of valuable textbooks. Additionally, the role of NGOs was emphasised, noting that while they should be complementary, they often fill gaps and address difficulties that DYEP classes cannot.

Keywords: Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP), teachers' difficulties, language education.

Introduction

The refugee crisis is more relevant today than ever, as millions of people are trying to start their lives anew by leaving their home countries. According to UNHCR figures, 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide had been recorded by the end of 2020; 6.7 million people are from the Syrian Arab Republic, while over 3.0 million are in Turkey (Tsaousidis 2019). Greece's geographical connection with other European countries makes it one of the most crucial host countries (Giannakopoulou 2019). Education is integral to children's smooth adaptation to new circumstances, which can foster children's autonomy and competence (UNICEF, 2017). Reception (school-based) structures for refugee education (DYEPs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are two of the primary sources of education for these children.

The first way of providing education to refugee children coming to Greece is through the Reception (School) Facilities for the Education of Refugees (DYEP). The smooth integration of these children into society and their familiarity with the Greek language were two of the main objectives in improving their psychology and helping them learn the principles and values necessary for their lives. These departments operate either within the school units in areas

where there are nearby accommodation centres or as branches of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools within the accommodation centers and run with 10-20 pupils.

Refugee children coming to Greece can also be educated through the non-formal education provided by NGOs. They are an intermediary way for citizens to communicate with the state and institutions and aim to defend the needs and rights of citizens, especially those who belong to social groups that need support and assistance (Zapantioti 2013). They also support and help refugee children who are left out of education for bureaucratic and personal reasons.

On the other hand, the role of the teacher is an integral part of education in the context of formal, non-formal or informal education. Teachers have a multidimensional and vital role in preparing refugee children's integration into the host country, with all that this implies. Of course, the safety and proper socialization of pupils is one of the most important objectives that teachers have. Respect and acceptance of diversity are also essential features of the lessons. The new reality requires teachers to be able to cope with challenging situations, always prioritising children's well-being (Mogli, Kalbeni, and Stergiou 2019). A healthy and fair environment is essential for effective learning (Paraskevopoulou and Manesis 2021). Students' experiences are a critical element of the educational process, so teachers must be able to use the positive ones by trying to support children to overcome everything they have gone through (Rodgers 2009). The use of children's native language (Cummins 1979, 2001; Daly and Limbrick 2020; Palaiologou 2019), as well as the attempt to communicate between teachers and children's parents (where possible) (Bergset 2017; Koukopoulou 2020; Palaiologou 2019), helps support children and facilitate smoother lesson delivery.

Moreover, the influence of teachers on students is undeniable. This should always be positive, and teachers should serve as appropriate role models (Kovinthan 2016). Finally, adequate teacher training, patience, flexibility, advisory skills, and professional awareness are additional key characteristics that will ensure their effective work in and out of the classroom, dealing with all possible difficulties that may arise (Ntouskas 2006).

Teaching children with a refugee background is an urgent need, a necessary prerequisite for a decent living for these children. Naturally, the demands and difficulties that arise are numerous and of particular importance during the teaching process. Children's past experiences, situations such as violence, loss, exploitation and death, shape the children's present character and can often make the educational process difficult. Firstly, children's psyche is negatively affected, and they often display aggressive behaviours, disorientation, and difficulty in socialising or concentrating (Apatziadou 2018; Khansa and Bahous 2021; Papadatou et al. 2018; Wofford and Tibi 2018). The teacher is required to help the child while maintaining the smooth flow of the lesson, which can be particularly challenging (Kirova 2019; Manesis and Angelopoulou 2017). The second and perhaps most important difficulty that teachers face is communication with their students from different cultural backgrounds. The majority of children does not know Greek, often not even English. The absence of interpreters is evident in many cases, and this does not facilitate the effective integration of children in the host country. Sometimes body language is the only solution, as every teacher can't know all the pupils' languages. Difficulty in understanding, insecurity, lack of confidence and shame are some of the adverse effects on students (Bora 2010; Mason and Orcutt n.d.; Stathopoulou and Dassi 2020). The absence of valuable textbooks further magnifies the problem (Tziona, Palaiologou, and Dinas 2018). Many of those available are inadequate, as refugees who want to learn Greek have entirely different language needs.

A broader logistical infrastructure is also needed to support the course further. Often, teachers prepare their materials to fill in the gaps in the books. This requires more fatigue and time (Manesis 2020; Papapostolou, Manoli, and Mouti 2020). Also, teachers cannot work effectively without state support (Androusou and Iakovou 2020; Papapostolou, Manoli, and Mouti 2020). Another difficulty worth mentioning is the lack of proper training and guidance

for teachers. The knowledge they have and use in a classroom with only children of Greek origin is considered insufficient. A teacher who teaches in a multicultural classroom must be able to reach the children, understand their real needs and help them both practically and psychologically.

Methodology

The main reason for the author's involvement with this topic was the necessity to highlight the needs of teachers working with refugee children. Accordingly, the study was guided by three research questions:

What are the primary challenges that educators face? What difficulties make it tough or even impossible for them to be effective as teachers when teaching refugee children in (School) Facilities for Refugee Education or in NGOs in Greece?

- What are the consequences of these challenges on a communicative, practical, and psychological level? How do these difficulties affect the effectiveness of language learning, and what are the specific consequences that arise on communicative, practical and psychological levels?
- What could be done to overcome these challenges? What actions could be taken to help solve the problems in order to ensure the effectiveness of language teaching and ensure smoother integration and socialisation of these children in society?

The researcher was based on the constructivist worldview, which aims to search for the meaning of things in the world (Vygotsky 1978; Creswell 2014). Therefore, qualitative research was chosen and contributed to an in-depth survey full of detailed findings about the difficulties teachers face when teaching refugee children in DYEPs or NGOs in north-western Greece from September to November 2021.

To collect the necessary data, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews prearranged in advance in the form of a questionnaire containing 20 questions (3 general questions, the rest based on the three research questions). Thematic categories are linked to interview questions for transparency. The correspondence between the interview questions and the thematic categories and vice versa is analyzed in Table 1:

Table 1: Correspondence between thematic categories and interview questions 1–20

Thematic category & subcategory	*Interview questions*
Results from the general questions	4, 15, 17
Challenges teachers face (Research question 1)	1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12
Inappropriate educational material	1, 2
Insufficient technical infrastructure	3
The problem of language	5
Children's previous school experience	5, 9
Coexistence of different cultures in the classroom	8
Behavioral problems	9
Children's previous life experiences	9, 10
Major difficulty	12
Consequences of these challenges? (Research question 2)	2, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15
Communicative level	5, 12
Practical level	2, 9, 12
Psychological level	11, 15
How to overcome these challenges? (Research question 3)	6, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19
Use of mother tongue	6
Problem- solving on an individual or group level	13
Communication with the parents of the children	14

Government support	16
Requirements teachers should have	18
Teachers' training	19
Final teachers' comments	20

Participants were fully informed before the interview about the purpose of the research and the importance of their contribution. Informed consent was obtained from all of them and the interview data were anonymised. The interview questions were both closed and open-ended, structured so that the interview could be structured (Adams 2015). A pilot test was conducted by the researcher, so that she could familiarize herself with the interview process and be as ready as possible to change the flow of the process, depending on the answers of the participants. A supportive atmosphere between the participants was created in order to establish trust and openness (Creswell 2014). Interviews were conducted individually, in separate spaces, to allow participants to express themselves freely. The questions referred to the daily difficulties of the teachers, always trying to find possible solutions through them. The researcher took permission, recorded the interviews, and took some written notes. The interviews were conducted in Greek. In order to "provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study," the data collected were then analysed using the method of content analysis (Downe-Wamboldt 1992, 314, as quoted in Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1278).

The participants who took part in this study were five (5) men and four (4) women. Six (6) teachers work at NGOs, and three (3) work in different DYEPs (Table 4). Their age range is between 24 and 50 years old (Table 2). All of them have worked for at least one year with refugees in the past. Apart from primary school teachers and language teachers, mathematicians and other subject-specific teachers were selected for the survey and -as they responded- they know at least one additional language besides their mother tongue (Table 3). The age range of their students is from 4 to 18 years old and most of them come from Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan (Table 4).

Table 2: Teachers' profile: Personal information

Teacher	*Gender**	*Age***	*Nationality****
Teacher 1	Female	24	Spanish
Teacher 2	Male	31	Greek
Teacher 3	Female	50	Greek
Teacher 4	Female	28	Greek
Teacher 5	Male	26	Greek
Teacher 6	Male	48	Greek
Teacher 7	Female	33	Greek
Teacher 8	Male	29	Greek
Teacher 9	Male	33	Greek

Table 3: Teachers' profile: Educational background

Teacher	*Studies in**	*Known languages***	*Experience in education/*** refugee education (in years)*****
Teacher 1	Primary Education	Greek, Spanish, English, Basque	2 / 1
Teacher 2	Primary Education	Greek, English	7 / 5

Teacher 3	Greek Literature, English Literature	Greek, English, French	25 / 1
Teacher 4	Greek Literature	Greek, English, German	6 / 2
Teacher 5	Greek Literature	Greek, English	3 / 2
Teacher 6	Physics	Greek, English	22 / 3
Teacher 7	Greek Literature	Greek, English, French	10 / 2
Teacher 8	Mathematics	Greek, English	6 / 2
Teacher 9	Mathematics	Greek, English	10 / 1

Table 4: Teachers' profile: Information about teachers' current employment

Teacher	*Institution**	*Age of students (in years)*	*Students' countries of origin*
Teacher 1	NGO	17	Afghanistan
Teacher 2	NGO	3–18	Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Ghana, Morocco, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria
Teacher 3	DYEP	11–16	Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria
Teacher 4	DYEP	12–18	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria
Teacher 5	NGO	15–18	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria
Teacher 6	DYEP	15–18	Afghanistan, Albania, Pakistan, Syria
Teacher 7	NGO	5–18	Afghanistan, Congo, Senegal, Somalia, Syria
Teacher 8	NGO	4–18	Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Congo, Morocco, Syria
Teacher 9	NGO	12–17	Afghanistan, Gambia, Pakistan, Syria

Researcher reflexivity

The researcher completed an internship at an NGO during the Postgraduate Programme LRM. The internship provided contextual insights into NGO provision and highlighted possible differences or similarities between NGO and DYEP settings; these reflections informed interpretation but are presented as contextual observations rather than primary empirical evidence.

Results

The results obtained from the individual interviews of the nine teachers form the most important part of this article. The following section includes a sample of teachers' responses, together with tables to help organise and better understand the information.

Challenges teachers face

The teacher interviews revealed the following key challenges that they often face in their daily classroom work: 1) Inappropriate educational material, 2) Insufficient technical infrastructure, 3) Language barrier, 4) Previous school experiences, 5) Coexistence of different cultures in the classroom, 6) Children's behavioral problems, 7) Previous experiences/traumas, and 8) language and lack of interpreters, students' concentration difficulties (Table 5).

Table 5: Teachers' responses related to research question 1

Challenges teachers face	*Teachers' responses (T=Teacher)*
1) Inappropriate educational material	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T7, T8, T9 (8 of 9)
2) Insufficient technical infrastructure	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 (5 of 9)
3) Language barrier	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T7, T8, T9 (8 of 9)
4) Previous school experiences	T1, T3, T4 (3 of 9)
5) Coexistence of different cultures in the classroom	T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8 (7 of 9)
6) Children's behavioural problems	T1, T2, T3, T7 (4 of 9)
7) Previous experiences/traumas	T4, T7, T8 (3 of 9)
8) Primary difficulty: a) language and lack of interpreters, b) students' difficulties in concentration	 T1, T3, T4, T7, T8 (5 of 9) T2, T5, T6 (4 of 9)

Teachers reported a number of recurring challenges in their daily practice. One of the most common concerns was the lack of suitable teaching materials**.** Although they often combined textbooks from NGOs with digital tools such as *Kahoot* or the *Click* series, participants emphasised that existing resources were not fully adapted to refugee learners' needs. As one teacher noted, *"*Unfortunately, n*one of them is 100% suitable for this population"* (T2). This reliance on fragmented resources reflects the absence of a consistent state-provided curriculum tailored to multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

Another significant issue was the insufficient technical infrastructure**.** In many cases, the blackboard is the only available tool, while access to computers or projectors is extremely limited. Teachers in DYEP settings in particular felt disadvantaged compared to NGO programs, which were often better equipped.

The language barrier emerged as the most critical challenge, mentioned by nearly all participants. Without interpreters and with students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, communication was frequently slow and ineffective. One teacher explained: *"There is no common language code and no interpreter… it is impossible for a teacher to know so many languages"* (T4). This situation often hindered lesson progress and contributed to students' lack of confidence.

Teachers also highlighted difficulties stemming from students' previous educational experiences**.** Many refugee children had never attended school before, which made classroom routines unfamiliar and integration harder. In multicultural classes, conflicts related to religion, culture, or gender roles were also common, although one participant stressed that such tensions were reduced when children lived together in structured accommodation.

Finally, participants pointed to behavioural and psychological challenges**,** including fear, isolation, and aggression, often linked to traumatic past experiences. As one teacher observed, *"The journey itself is something violent, a violent event"* (T7), underscoring the deep impact of displacement on children's behaviour.

Overall, while teachers mentioned a range of obstacles-including concentration difficulties and the frequent mobility of students-the insufficient technical infrastructure, the language barrier, and the absence of interpreters, combined with the coexistence of different cultures in the classroom, were consistently described as the most critical factors undermining effective teaching and learning.

Consequences of these challenges?

Problems such as those mentioned above are bound to have consequences in the educational process. The second research question concerns information about consequences at the communicative, practical and psychological levels according to teachers' responses (Table 6).

Table 6: Teachers' responses related to research question 2

Level	*Consequences of the challenges teachers face*	*Teachers' responses (T=Teacher)*
Communicative level	Difficult communication in the lessons	T3, T4, T9 (3 of 9)
	Many delays	T3, T4 (2 of 9)
	No guaranteed effectiveness of the lessons	T4 (1 of 9)
	Problems with children's socialisation	T3 (1 of 9)
	"Use" of other students as interpreters	T9 (1 of 9)
Practical level	No healthy classroom environment	T3, T7 (2 of 9)
	Difficult adaptation of children in the lessons	T3 (1 of 9)
	Modification or creation of educational material	T2, T4, T7, T9 (4 of 9)
	Lack of lesson continuity	T1, T2, T4, T6 (4 of 9)
Psychological level	Confusion	T1, T2, T4, T8 (4 of 9)
	Inadequacy	T1, T3, T4, T8 (4 of 9)
	Isolation	T4 (1 of 9)
	Nonparticipation	T4 (1 of 9)
	Lack of self-confidence	T1, T3, T4 (3 of 9)

It can be concluded that communication and socialisation in the classroom are heavily constrained by the great variety of languages spoken by students. Teachers often rely on peer translation, which, although occasionally helpful, tends to slow down lessons and does not always lead to effective learning. Consequently, achieving positive learning outcomes can be difficult as is referred:

"The class is progressing very slowly; if there were one or two interpreters, it would be easier." (T3)

The interviews also highlight practical challenges in classroom management. Inadequate teaching materials, limited lesson time, and frequent student movement create discontinuities in learning. Moreover, children's difficulties in adapting to classroom rules, combined with verbal and physical conflicts, increase the complexity of teaching. One teacher explained: *"The preparation is quite big; the amount of work has increased a lot because we are talking about students with very specific needs." (T4)*

From a psychological perspective, teachers report that children frequently experience frustration, resignation, and a desire to disengage from lessons. Unequal treatment by teachers further exacerbates discouragement and hinders motivation. One teacher mentioned: *"Unfortunately, they get frustrated very easily; they feel they can't cope and often want to give up." (T4)*

It is important to note that these findings are based on a small sample of teachers and may not be generalizable to all educational contexts. Nevertheless, they provide valuable insights into the challenges faced in multilingual classrooms and highlight the need for targeted

pedagogical strategies and adequate support to enhance both learning outcomes and student well-being.

How to overcome these challenges?

The last part concerns the third research question, about the possible solutions to the above problems. Six possible solutions to the above issues emerged from the interviews. The teachers came up with both individual and group/state actions, such as the use of the mother tongue, problem-solving at individual and group levels, communication with the children's parents, government support, skills that teachers should have and teachers' training (Table 7).

Table 7: Teachers' responses related to research question 3

How to overcome these challenges?	*Teachers' responses (T=Teachers)*
Use of mother tongue	T3, T4, T9 (3 of 9)
Problem-solving on an individual or group level	T3, T4, T7, T8, T9 (5 of 9)
Communication with the parents of the children	T2, T4, T7 (3 of 9)
Government support (appropriate educational material, interpreters, timely teacher placement, faster asylum case management)	T1, T3, T7 (3 of 9)
Skills teachers should have (patience/adaptability, teachers' willingness to engage with children)	T1, T2, T3, T8 (4 of 9)
Teachers' training	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9 (9 of 9)

Teachers' responses highlighted the significance of using the mother tongue in supporting children's psychological well-being and learning outcomes. Allowing and encouraging students to use their first language was reported to facilitate communication, build trust, and enhance engagement in lessons, as one participant responded: *"Yes, because they feel more comfortable… they are more consistent in the lessons." (T9)*

Regarding the question of problem solving on an individual or group level, teachers emphasized that effective solutions require action at both fronts. On the individual level, personal study and continuous adaptation of teaching practices were seen as vital: *"Each teacher must study and devote personal time to prepare a well-rounded lesson."* (T4). At the group level, participants stressed the crucial role of the Ministry of Education in ensuring stable school attendance and institutional support, noting that *"The participation of children in general in formal education, not to be refused to go to school. It will do them good to be there with other children so they will start speaking the language on their own."* (T9).

Another important element mentioned by teachers was communication with parents, where possible, since many students are unaccompanied minors. Such collaboration can encourage children, create common goals, and provide teachers with valuable information about the child's life: *"It helps a lot in terms of formality. Because there is also a control from the side of the family, in those children who have families of course."* (T2).

Teachers also stressed the necessity of additional state support. Timely placement of teachers, provision of educational materials, recruitment of interpreters, and expedited management of asylum procedures were considered critical to improve learning conditions: *"…early placement of teachers for children in schools… the asylum procedures would be important to be faster so that children are not 'in the air,* in one thing that 'I don't want to learn Greek, because I will leave from here" (T7).

Personal qualities of teachers, such as patience, flexibility, and the ability to relate meaningfully to students, were consistently highlighted as crucial for managing the challenges of multilingual and refugee classrooms. As a teacher responded: *"To be very adaptable and basically to have patience, perseverance, adaptability." (T8)*

Finally, participants emphasised the importance of continuous professional development. Targeted training can equip teachers to approach students from diverse cultural backgrounds effectively and address the complex needs of refugee students: *"Continuous training is needed. Regarding refugees, better training is needed in ways of reaching, not communicating, reaching people."* (T2)

These findings, while insightful, are based on a small sample of teachers and should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, they provide important implications for educational policy and practice, highlighting areas where institutional support, teacher training, and pedagogical adaptation are essential to improve both learning outcomes and students' psychological well-being.

Discussion

Regarding the challenges teachers face, the lack of appropriate teaching materials and the lack of technical infrastructure are two inextricably linked difficulties, among the most important, according to their responses. Many teachers rely on NGO textbooks which are often considered more effective. However, as Tziona, Palaiologou, and Dinas (2018) note, although the textbooks of the DYEP departments are targeted at beginning learners, they do not address the specific needs present in the classrooms. Furthermore, audiovisual materials seem to facilitate the process a lot and according to Rodgers (2009), various methods such as the auditory language method are often preferred by teachers. Finally, regarding the lack of technical infrastructure and other materials, greater shortcomings were expressed by teachers of DYEP departments who often do not have access to computers or markers. These views are also confirmed by Manesis' study (2020) emphasizing that the flow of lessons sometimes becomes too difficult for all those present in a classroom. Another difficulty mentioned was the language barrier and many times the lack of a common language code and the absence of interpreters make communication in the classroom impossible, creating long delays. According to the Save the Children report (Mason and Orcutt n.d.), learning the host country's language is essential. On the other hand, this process is often not easy, and as a result, students need extracurricular support.

Another important problem reported by teachers is the lack of previous school experience of children. Furthermore, many of the children have zero educational background, and as a result, they do not even know the basic functioning of a classroom. Wofford and Tibi (2018) report that children from Syria often do not have access to education, because of the war. Additionally, according to Cummins (1979), the existence of several mother tongues in a classroom makes learning even more difficult as the two languages support each other. Manesis and Angelopoulou (2017) note that physical or verbal violence can also occur in a classroom, as well as socialisation problems and racist attitudes, due to the presence of children from different cultural backgrounds; this can only be solved by promoting the importance of diversity.

Moreover, behavioral problems such as fear, isolation and even violence as well as children's traumatic experiences are the final interlinked challenges mentioned in their interviews. The majority of teachers stressed that these past experiences affect children's daily life in general and therefore, their behavior during lessons; this is consistent with Murray's view that "the high prevalence of psychosocial problems experienced by refugee children affects their ability to concentrate and learn as well as interact with their peers" (Murray 2019, 9, as quoted in Stathopoulou and Dassi 2020, 62). Finally, according to Apatziadou (2018) many children find it difficult to adapt to the host country due to different kinds of exploitation, fear and stress.

Regarding the communicative level, the interviewees responded that delays in lessons and their non-guaranteed effectiveness are a fact, as communication between teachers and students is often difficult or even impossible. In addition, according to the research analysed by Kirova (2019), difficulty in socialisation and lack of self-confidence are also important consequences. Finally, the interviewees noted that the absence of interpreters leads teachers to solutions such as relying on other students as mediators to be able to ensure at least minimal understanding in the classroom. Similar solutions are mentioned in Manesis' study (2020), too.

According to the teachers' responses, practical problems -such as the misbehaviour of children and their inability to adapt to the classroom- can be mentioned as a result of the absence of a nice atmosphere in the classroom. Papapostolou, Manoli, and Mouti (2020) note that teachers are asked to create their own educational material as the one provided by the Ministry of Education is not always effective. Additional problems, such as the lack of continuity in lessons, create a great feeling of uncertainty among children (Androusou and Iakovou 2020).

Another key issue concerns the psychological difficulties faced by refugee children, which strongly affect their learning. According to interviewees, confusion, inadequacy, isolation, and nonparticipation in lessons, due to lack of self-confidence, are factors that often lead to negative performance in lessons and inability to socialize. Reference to similar situations such as isolation and confusion among children is also made by Khansa and Bahous (2021). Furthermore, according to Wofford and Tibi (2018), literacy is of paramount importance to make children more willing to participate in the integration phase and thus in the host country language learning lessons. Finally, similar information on the psychological state of children- both during and after the refugee journey- is provided by the Greek non-profit organization for the care of children and families facing illness and death, "Merimna," and sheds light on the causes of these behaviors (Papadatou et al., 2018).

Possible solutions to the above problems emerged from the interviews. In more detail, the children's mother tongue is mentioned as the first one as it helps both the communication and psychology of the children. Similarly, children's cultural retention, self-confidence and academic progress are enhanced by using the language they already know, according to Daly and Limbrick (2020). An important example is a case study conducted in a primary school in Thessaloniki, Greece, that highlighted the positive contribution of bilingual materials to children (Palaiologou 2019). Moreover, according to Cummins (2001, 5), "to reject a child's language in school is to reject the child" which makes it necessary to respect the language and culture of each student. The second possible solution involved better teacher training and support from the Ministry of Education, which will be discussed in more detail below. Moreover, more active parental involvement in their children's educational process is considered by teachers necessary to address basic problems and set common goals such as the joy of children. This cannot be realised in cases of NGOs where children are unaccompanied. Bergset (2017) and Koukopoulou (2020) stress the need for positive parental involvement. Going back to state support is perhaps the most important solution, especially for DYEPs in which teachers often feel lonely and helpless. Better organisation, effective books, interpreters, timely assignment of teachers to classes and faster processing of asylum cases are teachers' key demands. The above problems are also mentioned by the Greek Ombudsman (2021), according to which there are many delays in holding classes due to a lack of vacancies or space and the inability to transport children to schools. Finally, the positive characteristics of an effective teacher, such as flexibility, adaptability, patience as well as the willingness to get to know their students better, combined with better training, will lead to positive results in the classroom, as the teachers responded. Similarly, according to research by Marouli (2017) and Mogli, Kalbeni, and Stergiou (2019), many teachers feel inadequate and unable to deal with problems in the classroom. In order to be able to create a climate without

prejudice and stereotypes but with love and respect, teachers need to be better trained and for their own convenience, but most importantly to be able to support their students.

Issues that arose from the internship of the researcher

To enrich the discussion, some concerns from the researcher's internship within this postgraduate program are noted. The NGO, where the internship took place, appeared well organized with strong support from volunteers and interns, unlike DYEP teachers who often lack sufficient state backing. The NGO primarily works with unaccompanied minor boys; the researcher worked with two students, a 16-year-old student from Syria and a 17-year-old student from Afghanistan. The NGO offered well-equipped classrooms, multilingual books, and even an interpreter (not needed here due to the children's good English). Volunteers and trainees played a crucial role, contrasting with the DYEP teachers' limited support. The students' expressed wish to continue lessons beyond compulsory hours raised questions about the boundaries between formal and non-formal education in Greece. While these observations cannot represent the full picture, they highlight how NGOs often compensate for gaps in formal refugee education.

Conclusions and suggestions for further research

The need for millions of people, including children, to leave their homes and seek a safer life is currently affecting many countries in Europe and beyond, including Greece. The education of these people is becoming an undeniable necessity. In Greece, NGOs and DYEP departments are involved in the education of refugee children. This task becomes particularly challenging every day for teachers who face many challenges. The language, the children's culture, their previous school experience, and issues such as the lack of appropriate textbooks and other infrastructure are some of the most important problems presented. The consequences of these problems relate to children's communication, practice and psychology. Some of the proposed solutions include using children's mother tongue, parental involvement and state support, which in many cases do not exist. Therefore, future research on the difficulties, the creation of additional educational material, such as books for specific groups of students and their needs, as well as the role of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, but also formal and non-formal education, is deemed necessary.

This study -conducted within the framework of a Postgraduate Programme (Stork, 2022)- faced certain limitations. Some interviews had to be conducted via Skype due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the researcher prioritised participants' comfort and safety over face-to-face contact. Another limitation was the relatively small sample, comprising nine teachers, and restricted to the north-western region of Greece. While adequate for exploring the research questions, a larger sample could have offered richer insights. Finally, the limited number of participants made any percentage-based evaluation of responses unnecessary, particularly given the mix of closed and open-ended questions.

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