Inquiring obstacles in the education of adult immigrants and refugees in Second Chance Schools: A case study from Greece

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Abstract

In the recent years, the refugee crisis has affected Greece to a great extent, mainly because of the country's geographical location. A large number of refugees and immigrants arrived in the country, while a number of them tried to join an educational process, in order to be included in the local communities. In the case of adults, the relevant institution in Greece that facilitates lifelong learning is the so-called Second Chance Schools. Second Chance Schools is an innovative institution targeted at individuals who, for their own reasons, have not completed compulsory education, thus giving them the opportunity to return to the education system and thereby combat the social exclusion that they are experiencing. This research enquires the obstacles that refugees and migrants have to cope with, during their studies at the Second Chance School of the city of Ioannina, Greece. The sample of our survey consists of ten adult refugees and immigrants and also four educators. The method chosen for the performance is qualitative, thus giving participants the opportunity to submit their views freely in relation to the questions they have been asked through semi-structured interviews. The data was then processed using the content analysis technique. This research aims to be useful in the future in the design of educational programs focusing on the group of adult refugees and immigrants.

Keywords: *immigrant, refugee, adult education, obstacles, second chance schools.*

Introduction

Because the phenomenon of large migration flows, mainly from Middle Eastern countries, has become more intense in recent years (Koutlas & Papakitsos, 2025b; Papadopoulou, 2017), it is necessary and useful to conduct some research on the education of adult refugees and immigrants in Second Chance Schools. Second Chance Schools is an innovative institution targeted at individuals who, for their own reasons, have not completed compulsory education, thus giving them the opportunity to return to the education system and thereby combat the social exclusion that they are experiencing (Koutlas & Papakitsos, 2025a; Vekris, 2010). It is necessary to design educational programs tailored exclusively to the needs and requirements of adult refugees and immigrants. Non-formal education programs can, under appropriate conditions, have a supportive effect on an adult immigrant or refugee, helping them to improve their social and economic situation (Demirdjian, 2012). Before designing an educational program, an investigation of the educational needs and requirements of the immigrant and refugee population must have been carried out (Koutlas, 2018).

In adult education programs, an important fact is that not everyone starts from the same starting point. Because each adult has their own unique characteristics, the educational process is influenced and adapted accordingly. In order for an educational program to be as effective and successful as possible, educational needs must be investigated and the program must be appropriately designed for the target group before it begins. Following this design and appropriate practices results in the creation of an educational program that is as compatible and tailored to adult learners as possible. The result of all this is the prospect of a successful adult education program with maximum participation by them. In the case where adult learners come from vulnerable population groups, then the program requires greater organization and more careful planning (Anagnou & Vergidis, 2008). As we mentioned earlier, these individuals have limited or no access to various social goods, compared to the rest of the population. For this reason, coordinated and organized efforts must be made to reach them.

Refugees and immigrants, who belong to vulnerable social groups, have various characteristics since they come from different places, with different experiences and habits, each of them, which is why they constitute a heterogeneous group. In addition to all this, various difficulties are added that they face daily, such as poverty, hunger and lack of social support (Burnett & Peel, 2016 in Koutlas, 2018). These parameters further complicate the efforts of social actors to deal with them more effectively. Furthermore, refugees and immigrants, due to the many problems they have to face daily, seem to be more interested in satisfying the so-called basic needs, such as biological needs, than other more complex ones, such as self-esteem. We cannot classify the need for education and learning anywhere in particular, since each person considers it to be of different importance. At this point, the important role of the adult educator emerges, who, with the right handling, can create in the learner the appropriate emotions and the necessary psychology and self-confidence, so that he/she realizes that through the educational process new horizons are opened and his/her standard of living can change (Athanasiou et al., 2014).

Our research attempts to record the obstacles faced by refugees and immigrants in the adult education programs of Second Chance Schools. However, in our research we focus only on the specific Second Chance School of the city of Ioannina, Greece, but we aspire to contribute knowledge and information for subsequent studies. We try to establish this through semi-structured interviews taken from the refugees and immigrants as well as from the school's teachers.

Background

Below is a brief report of corresponding studies on the obstacles in adult education. Most research and studies on the obstacles in adult education have been recorded mainly in foreign countries (with the USA dominating), which is due to the systematic involvement of researchers there. Some of these studies in Greece are, among others, by Vergidis (2003), on the subject of Second Chance Schools and the school paths and expectations of the trainees. The research data revealed that the students dropped out of school mainly due to personal perceptions and behaviors (such as immaturity, irresponsibility and excessive laxity from the family environment). Also related is the research by Lazos (2008 in Koutlas, 2018) on the subject of "The views of the trainees on the obstacles in second chance schools. The case of the Second Chance School of Pyrgos". From the study sample regarding the obstacles faced by the participants, these fall into the category of situational obstacles due to the economic, social and political factors prevailing in the Pyrgos area, Greece, while no learning outcomes related to the educational process emerged. In a study by Drakou (2008 in Koutlas, 2018), on a sample of 69 participants, the most important obstacles recorded in the participation of adults in educational activities were related to the cost of the program, the lack of free time due to increased obligations and additional obstacles related to the logistical infrastructure and the spaces where the programs are held.

In a specific survey by the European agency Cedefop (2004), limited time, professional and family obligations were recorded as obstacles at a high rate (27%) in many countries of the European Union. In a survey by the Hellenic National Statistical Service in 2007 (Koutlas, 2018), with a research topic on obstacles to adult education, the main ones were family obligations at a rate of 27.3%, the difficulty of following the program due to professional obligations at the same times (26.5%) and finally the educational cost at 14.9%. Also in a corresponding survey by the Greek Ministry of Education in 2010 (Koutlas, 2018), respondents reported as the main obstacles to participation the distance to the venue at a rate of 79%, professional obligations at a rate of 66%, family obligations at a rate of 63%, the case that a program does not cover their given needs at a rate of 60%, the opposition or lack of consent of the employer at 58% and the disagreement of the family at a rate of 50%.

Also, relevant research is that of Sipitanou & Platsidou in 2010 (Koutlas, 2018), on the topic: "Personal assessments of trainees in Second Chance Schools for their positive attitudes, abilities and difficulties". The sample consisted of 163 adult trainees, aged 19 to 68 years, who were students of the Second Chance Schools of Thessaloniki, Neapolis-Thessaloniki and Giannitsa. The obstacles recorded were at a cognitive level, such as difficulty following the lesson due to the fast flow of teaching and due to reduced processing speed and low educational level. At an emotional level, they felt alienated and isolated within the educational environment, which was an inhibitory factor in learning. Finally, there where personal reasons that do not allow them to devote enough time to learning. In 2011, Iliadou studied the obstacles that affect the participation of adults in the Second Chance School of Drama (Koutlas, 2018). The obstacles that emerged from the study were mainly internal and social, and secondarily functional. Some of

these are low self-esteem, previous unsuccessful school experience that acts as a deterrent, minimal personal time due to professional and social obligations, and obstacles that come from within the family and social environment.

In a study conducted in 2013 in Great Britain by Doyle & O'Toole (Koutlas, 2018), regarding the description of the profile of refugees over the age of 16, who had applied for asylum, the following obstacles were recorded, such as:

- Due to the different structure of a country's educational system, they are often confused about which program to follow.
- Many of these individuals have not received any education in their country, especially women.

In a corresponding study by Morrice (2014 in Koutlas, 2018) with refugees in London, it was found that a sample of 17% of the research population had the necessary qualifications to enter a university, while a percentage of 19% was found to have successfully completed their studies at a university in their country of origin. However, there is also a percentage of 19%, according to Kirk (2004 in Koutlas, 2018), who have no previous experience in a school environment. The lack of easy and adequate funding is a major problem in refugee education (Ipsos MORI, 2010 in Koutlas, 2018). They are not properly informed about the support they can receive. They face difficulties due to lack of access to logistical equipment, such as computers, writing material, etc.

As the president of the New York-based Institute of International Education, Allan Goodman (Horn, 2015 in Koutlas, 2018), having already helped 80 academics from Syria and another 150 students from Syria, working with 50 universities in America, Europe, Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan and Latin America, points out: "Even if a university offers a scholarship for tuition, these people need to find someone to provide them with transportation and living expenses in order to study [...] In addition, their parents may not be alive, these students may not have a birth certificate, they may not even have a passport. Unlike the case of the war in Iraq, where people were also uprooted from their country, there was a functioning government in Baghdad, from where one could obtain a passport and other necessary official documents. In the case of Syria, there is no such possibility."

In a similar study by Tragouda (2017 in Koutlas, 2018), on the topic of investigating the obstacles of Roma adults regarding their participation in the Second Chance School of Karditsa, the obstacles recorded are related to the categorization of Cross (1981), since both situational and predisposing obstacles were observed, while institutional obstacles were not observed. These were the commute to school, the inability to attend after the spring because they leave for professional reasons, they consider school too difficult to succeed, women have nowhere to leave their children and they are not supported by their social group.

Socially vulnerable groups are directly related to the term "social exclusion", since these individuals are considered to be more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. For Kontiadis & Katrougkalos (2005), the terms vulnerable or vulnerable social groups are characterized as vague and concepts that are not legally defined. According to Tsiakalos (2004), vulnerable social groups are those population groups that feel socially excluded in the society they live in. However, the term "social exclusion", although very popular, has not yet been adequately defined. As we mentioned previously, Second Chance Schools are a special institution with innovative characteristics and a distinct way of operating in relation to the operation of the typical school that contributes to combating the isolation of vulnerable social groups. The differences of the Second Chance School are evident in the way and method of teaching, since it is addressed to adults and thus follows adult education techniques. Also, the detailed curriculum of the Second Chance School courses is more flexible in relation to the typical school and is often adapted to the needs of the students. For these reasons, Second Chance Schools are an important option for vulnerable social groups in their effort to obtain an education and join training and education programs, strengthening their self-confidence and self-esteem and giving them hope and resources to improve their quality of life.

Refugees and immigrants are a special category of population that has joined the Greek area at a greater rate in recent years, as many of them have little or no educational experience from the homeland from which they have come. Also, the Greek educational system may not resemble the one they had attended in their country and this creates even greater challenges and difficulties for Second Chance School teachers. Their characteristics due to different culture and religion force them to experience social exclusion and this makes their study more interesting. Finally, because this phenomenon with refugees and immigrants in Second Chance Schools appeared relatively recently, it makes it more interesting to investigate.

Methodology

The main purpose of our work is to investigate through the participating refugees and immigrants of the Second Chance Schools the obstacles they face in this action that will probably not allow them to complete the duration of the program. Thus, the research question that this work aims to answer is the following: "What are the most important obstacles that refugees and immigrants face during their studies at the Second Chance School?"

Research on a topic can be done with two basic methods, the quantitative and the qualitative one. The quantitative method is more widespread, since it appeared first and until recently had the largest share in the work that had been done; its goal is to codify the information that we have collected and analyzed in the form of numbers (Creswell, 2011). Also, according to Creswell, although in the educational community there is greater familiarity with quantitative research methods, it seems that qualitative methods are gaining more and more ground, since there is now more information through articles and books and thus it is more easily understood compared to the past.

In our own research, however, we chose the qualitative method, in which the data are not translated into numbers but are analyzed as verbal sets to draw conclusions. When a phenomenon needs to be investigated due to the complexity of a situation, the most appropriate method is the qualitative method according to Creswell (2011), as in our case. Another main reason why we chose the qualitative method in our research was the small number of participants in the research (10 refugees and immigrants and four teachers), which would not be sufficient for a quantitative study. Also, because our sample is refugees and immigrants, it would not be certain whether they would understand the questions of the questionnaire and would be able to answer objectively, without perhaps the presence and assistance of the researcher. Therefore, we understand that if the qualitative method is more suitable for

participants in adult education, then it is much more so in a population group for which Greek is not their native language.

The topic we are studying is not simple, but rather complex and multidimensional, and to cover it effectively, perhaps one method is not sufficient. For this reason we used the technique of triangulation, combining it to extract better results. Triangulation is a method of combining many methods, theories, perspectives, or even researchers in the same research study, with the aim of enhancing the validity of the research data we extract. With this strategy, we contrast and compare different descriptions of the same situation, so that the researcher is able to understand and describe the topic he/she is studying more fully and avoid misinterpretations due to personal biases, limiting so the disadvantages created by the use of different methods. It is considered that the emergence of the same topic in data derived from different sources gives greater credibility to the research data (Maycut & Morehouse, 1994 in Koutlas, 2018).

Qualitative research is subject to negative criticism by many researchers, because it presents a major weakness and this is that due to the research methods they follow, they cannot confirm whether what the respondents tell them is true or not. This is a fact that is directly related to their validity and reliability. The reliability of a research has to do with the way we designed it, the method we followed, the quality of the data we collected and how from all of this we arrived at findings that are honest and worthy of further research. In order to ensure the greatest degree of reliability and validity, we chose to use qualitative research, which we considered would help us more in investigating the opinions of the respondents in depth. To set up the questionnaire, we studied various questionnaires from some research that has been carried out and followed elements from the theory (Carre, 2000). We then chose to use the technique of triangulation from two different data collection groups, the refugee-immigrant group and the teachers' group. Our aim was to compare the findings from the two groups and thus strengthen the validity of the research process. Another element of our research was the pilot interviews that were carried out in both groups, in order to identify if there were any points that needed correction, reformulation or further clarification (Creswell, 2011).

In relation to the ethical issues that may arise in a qualitative research, we made the utmost effort to observe all formal procedures. The participants in the research, refugees-immigrants as well as the teachers, were thoroughly informed about the purpose and manner in which the interview would be conducted. They were stressed that there would be absolute respect for the anonymity that we promised them and absolute confidentiality. We tried to make them feel as comfortable as possible and we stressed that at any point in the interview they felt troubled or stressed, they could ask to stop the interview or skip a question, if it caused them any discomfort. Also, when the researcher noticed that the respondent might be having difficulty somewhere, due to some non-verbal signs, expressions or attitudes, he would stop the interview or change the subject for a while, in order to feel more comfortable. Finally, the researcher showed absolute respect for the operation of the school, trying not to create any problems or disrupt the smooth operation of the school and not to expose the Principal and Deputy Principal for the trust and willingness they showed him.

Limitations
A significant limitation in our research arose during the interview process; this had to do with the understanding of the questions. As we previously analyzed, the sample of our qualitative research was refugees and immigrants, who in several cases seemed not to understand Greek to a satisfactory degree, and thus further explanations were often needed in our questions. Obviously, this unforeseen event may have influenced the results of our research, which might have been different, if the subject of the research spoke and understood the Greek language better. Thus, we might have had a more detailed view of the motivations and obstacles, faced by refugees and immigrants in Second Chance Schools.

Finally, regarding the transferability-generalizability of the research, that is, in what has to do with the results of the research, and mainly whether the conclusions we draw from it can be used in similar research or work, unfortunately due to the small sample this is not possible. As well as to demonstrate the validity and verifiability of the research, we describe the history of the study as it is, along with that of the respondents. For this reason, in the formal original documentation of the research results, we accurately record the respondents' answers in order to fully document the conclusions that arise.

Results & Discussion

In a survey conducted using the structured interview method, we ask the participant to answer specific questions, that is, a specified number of questions, in a specific order and always with predetermined content. In this particular survey as well, this procedure was followed, but because we had the possibility at any time to change the order of the questions, to add something complementary to the question or to ask a clarifying question, we could say that we practically conducted a semi-structured interview.

Obstacles to Participation
Initially, there where refugees and immigrants from four different countries: 5 from Albania, 3 from Afghanistan, 1 from Syria and 1 from Bulgaria. The ages of the trainees range from 19 to 52 years and the sample consisted of seven men and three women. Six of the trainees had children who were born in and outside Greece. Also, seven of the participants had stable employment during this time. Finally, the trainees have been in Greece from 7 to 26 years. Of the trainees, one had not attended school at all, three had attended primary school, of which two did not complete it, four had attended middle school but none of them completed it and one completed high school. The reasons why some did not continue or left early were social, economic and reasons for moving due to wars. The obstacles to participation are recorded below.

Writing or Reading the Language
In the question of the category of barriers that refugee and immigrant learners face during their studies, participants were asked to indicate which they have more difficulty with, writing the Greek language or reading and how much. Most learners, except for three, reported that it is more difficult for them to write Greek than to speak it, and this is because they spoke a little before coming to school. In addition, one learner reported that because he already knows several languages, he did not encounter any problems with Greek.

Operational Obstacles
In the following questions, learners are asked about the location of the school, their transportation, daily lessons and opening hours. In

particular, if any of these make it difficult for them to follow the school program. Now in relation to the first obstacle, 3 participants travel by public transport, one on foot, since it is not very far, and the rest by car. Two participants, who are also a married couple, reported that it is very difficult to travel to school, because they live in a village several kilometers from the city and the cost of gasoline is quite high. For this reason, they do not come to all the lessons. Also, a trainee, who lives a little outside the city, comes to the lesson only when her father is home to bring her by car, otherwise she cannot come because there is no public transport. In relation to the question regarding daily lessons, 3 participants stated that daily lessons are an obstacle for them because they are far away, they work and the travel costs are high. Finally, in relation to the question about whether the opening hours are an obstacle, only 3 participants would like the lesson to start 1-2 hours later, because they often miss the first hour due to work.

Problem of completing the course
When asked if the trainees believe that they will have a problem attending the two-year program, only one stated that if he was stopped from his job as an interpreter, then he would leave school and emigrate. The rest, except for three who are already in their 2nd year, all stated their intention and confidence to continue and complete the program of study.

Feeling of inferiority
When asked if they felt disadvantaged towards their classmates, only three trainees stated that they felt this way, mainly at the beginning, when they did not know the language well and in particular one trainee stated that she often fought with her classmates, because they resented when she constantly asked the teachers questions, since she had a lot of difficulty understanding. The rest stated that they have never felt disadvantaged and are friends with most of them and are loved.

Feeling of racism
When asked whether the trainees have experienced any kind of racism or prejudice towards them in the school environment, only 2 participants reported that in the first year they felt it strongly and fought many times, but now in the second year, when they know the language better and their classmates better, things are better. Another trainee is not sure, because it was not made clear, but in the first year he felt strange from some people and this bothered him. However, he later got over it, saying that not everyone can be good at school, as in society. All the rest reported that they have not felt the slightest bit at school, which is why everything is so good there. Only 2 participants wanted to highlight the racism they have experienced outside the school environment, when they lived in Athens, in relation to Ioannina where they have not felt anything similar.

Difficult subjects
When asked which subject they find most difficult, the trainees had different preferences. Four trainees stated that Mathematics is the most difficult for them. Another 3 stated that the language subject is difficult for them, two the History subject, one that is Physics and one that all subjects seem the same to him.

Combining school and work
When asked whether trainees who work face problems in combining school and work, and whether their children are also a problem, all those who are currently working stated that it is a bit difficult because they get tired, since they come straight from work and so sometimes they may lose some teaching hours. They have simply set it as a schedule, that in the morning there is work and then school and they are patient so that they can manage. As far as the children are concerned, their older siblings usually take care of them, since their husbands usually work. Also, one trainee, who is divorced, has taken the youngest of her three children to school several times.

Treatment by the social environment
When asked about how the trainees are treated by their relatives and friends, regarding their decision to re-enroll in school, everyone sees it very positively and applauds it. In 3 cases, friends and relatives have expressed their desire to enroll in the school as well from the next school year. In one trainee, his friends find it difficult to believe him and tell him well done for finding the courage, 20 years after dropping out of school, to enroll again now. In another trainee, his foster mother, not his biological mother, is very happy, the trainee reports. Finally, another trainee, whose wife is a teacher, is also very happy, she still cannot believe it.

Rejection by a teacher
When asked if they have ever felt rejection by a teacher, all trainees, except one, stated that all the teaching staff are excellent and treat them very well and they have absolutely no complaints. One trainee stated that he had felt it a little, in the past, but it was not that serious and he does not think about it, because he likes everyone.

Opinion on the course's style
When asked about how the course seems to the trainees and if they would like anything to change, all of them stated that the course is very enjoyable, except for two who said that it is too simple. Furthermore, none of them would like to change anything, because they are very happy and satisfied with the way it is done so far.

Differences in educational systems in other countries
When asked about the differences that trainees identify in their country's school compared to this one, most of them mention how much stricter things were in general at school, the whole mentality and the fear that prevailed for teachers, who often hit students when they didn't understand something. Thus, students were afraid to ask their questions and, in the end, they didn't learn. As one trainee characteristically states, the teacher was a tyrant who constantly hit and pulled her hair. Thus, she too studied only out of fear and, in the end, she couldn't retain anything. Only 2 trainees report that there are no major differences, only the way the lesson is taught.

Discrimination in relation to classmates
When asked whether they have felt that there is discrimination by teachers in relation to their classmates, all of them stated that they have not noticed any difference and that everyone feels equal. In addition, one refugee stated that his teachers treat him better than his Greek classmates.

Feeling of suspicion
When asked whether the refugee-immigrant trainees have felt that their classmates are distant or suspicious towards them, all, except one, stated that they have not noticed such a thing and that everyone is dear to each other and friends and such things do not happen. Only one trainee stated that they are suspicious and distant towards her, but she does not pay attention to them.

If they would like to change something
When asked if there is anything that bothers or concerns the trainees and they would like to change something, all trainees,

except one, stated that they have no problem and do not want anything to change in the way the school operates, which they like very much and are quite satisfied with. One trainee stated that although he has no problem, he would like the hours of the lessons to change and to have more hours of painting and English.

General comment

In the last question of this group, the trainees were asked if they would generally like to add anything in relation to their attendance at school. Their opinions were many and varied. Indicatively, the 1st participant states that everything is much better than he expected and wants to thank all the school staff for the time they have dedicated to them and the opportunity they have given them to get their high school diploma. The 2nd trainee states that whoever can go to school should do so and not let this opportunity go to waste. The 3rd participant suggests, although he acknowledges that it is difficult to implement, that they be divided into classes according to nationality, to make it easier to communicate and to ensure homogeneity. The 4th trainee suggests that there should be more hours of language lessons, at least for refugees. The 5th participant hopes that the school will continue its work and has recommended it to several of his acquaintances. The 6th trainee makes an important observation, which we also noticed during the research, that there is no advertising for the school and most of them have been informed by someone they know. He also states that the school should never stop its activities because society needs it very much. The 7th trainee states that he will miss the school very much and will visit it whenever he has time. Finally, the 8th participant suggests that there should be such a school all over the world, but in the way that the specific one they attend operates.

The teachers' view

The tool for teaching staff, which was used for the triangulation method, initially had four general questions of a demographic nature, such as whether they are permanent or hourly, which literacy they teach, how many years of teaching experience they have and whether they had previous experience with refugees and immigrants. In the second part of the interview, the questions regarded their view on the obstacles that refugee-immigrants face at school, as recorded below.

Difficulty of the courses

In the question to the teachers regarding the lesson they teach, how difficult it is and whether the trainees show interest, all the teachers stated, each for their own lesson, that there is a lot of interest from everyone. Specifically, the 1st teacher mentioned about her course, mathematics, that because it is a global language, it is easier for them to understand and externalize it. The 2nd teacher, whose course is purely advisory and there is no difficulty, says that there is a lot of interest from the trainees and they ask questions constantly, inside and outside the classroom. The 3rd teacher mentions about her course, English, that although they find it a little difficult, they show great interest. Also, more or less all the participants, because English is an international language, are not completely unfamiliar to them. Finally, the 4th teacher reports that there is great interest from the participants and some have a lot of difficulty and others less, depending on the level of each one and their previous school knowledge.

Most interesting subject

In the question to the teachers regarding which subject they believe is of interest to refugees and immigrants of their school, all of them mentioned Language Literacy first, through which they want to

immediately reach a satisfactory level of communication. Also, the 1st teacher reported that they are also very interested in Mathematics and Informatics, in order to learn to use a computer and find a job. In addition, they show great interest in the English language. Finally, the 3rd teacher reports that after language, the trainees show great interest in Mathematics and Social Literacy.

Obstacles

In the question to the teachers regarding what they believe are the obstacles that refugees-immigrants face in following the program, three teachers had the same opinion, that their main obstacle is their work. In particular, most of them, because they do not have a stable job or fixed working hours, come to class tired and late. They also often miss the first few hours of the class. The 2nd teacher said that the most important problem they have is that they have acquired a lot of empirical information and have learned the language of the "immigrant", simply orally, which is difficult to correct. Also, because some have been away from the school environment for several years, they face difficulty in re-engaging in an educational process.

Which difficult subject

In the question to the teachers regarding which subject they believe is most difficult for refugee-immigrant students, only the English teacher stated that science subjects are difficult for them. The rest believe that their linguistic literacy is the most difficult subject, since it is not their mother tongue and there is no basis or background to easily master it. The 2nd teacher also makes an observation regarding the age of the students and states that in the computer science subject, the older the student is, the more difficult it is to understand it. Finally, the teachers also consider mathematics to be a difficult subject for the students, and not only for the refugee-immigrant students but for all the students of the school.

Phenomena of racism

In the question regarding whether teachers have noticed signs of racism or prejudice towards refugee-immigrant students in the school environment, three of them stated that there is both prejudice and racism. However, it is important that it is not overt, it is latent, they do not let it show and there are isolated moments when these acts are exaggerated. The example of the 3rd teacher, organizing the school festival for a celebration, had organized a small theatrical performance that would be performed the previous day at school. In this theatrical performance, she suggested that 2 refugees hold the Greek Flag and while this was later applauded, some students expressed their complaints and annoyance to another teacher and their opposition, saying that only Greeks should hold the Greek Flag. This upset the particular teacher very much, because she believed that there would be no problem. Only the 4th teacher said that she had not noticed anything.

If they express themselves freely

In the question to the teachers regarding whether the trainees express their questions or if they are embarrassed, the answer was that they are generally embarrassed. Because refugees and immigrants do not know the language well, they do not want to be exposed to the entire class and the other pupils, which is why they avoid showing that they have not understood something. As the 2nd teacher characteristically states, there are many times when the trainees try to find him during the break, to express their questions to him. In addition, the 1st teacher states that, at the beginning when the trainees do not know the language at all, they do not ask

at all, but as they learn it, they gain self-confidence and begin to express their questions.

Problems with classmates

In the question to the teachers, whether they have observed problems in the classroom between refugees and immigrants and their classmates, due to a different religion or cultural background, only one teacher reported that this happens. The 2nd teacher reported that there are often intense disagreements and tensions, which are mainly due to the Greeks who are usually more opinionated and loud-mouthed. However, the remaining teachers reported that nothing has been observed that would show them that this problem exists.

Role of the teacher

In the question to the teachers regarding whether the teacher can play a role in the students' learning, everyone agreed that their presence is very important and catalytic. Indicatively, the 1st teacher reported that the teacher can encourage them, understand them and show them love. The 2nd teacher stated that the role of the teacher is to encourage, support and teach the principles of equality and equity regardless of gender and race.

Special training for teachers

In the question to the teachers whether they believe that they should have some special training in relation to vulnerable social groups, all teachers essentially stated that it is needed and very much so. Indicatively, the 1st teacher stated that it is needed very much, even in the way of handling vulnerable social groups, because, as she stated, she has caught herself saying things that she later regretted and which may have hurt some people, not intentionally, but unfortunately it happened. The 2nd teacher states that training is needed in essence and not obtaining certificates and attestations, because contact with these groups hides specificities that the teacher must be aware of, in order to be prepared to function properly and prevent a "difficult" situation. The 3rd teacher states that it is absolutely necessary, because she hears from colleagues many untimely, invalid and inappropriate comments regarding her contact with vulnerable groups. Finally, the 4th teacher, who is the only one who has attended seminars for vulnerable groups, states that it is good for teachers who come to work in a Second Chance School and know in advance that it is very likely that they will have people belonging to vulnerable groups, to be trained accordingly so that they can deal with them more effectively. She also expresses her opinion that this should have been mandatory by the institution itself.

Student cooperation

In the question to the teachers, regarding whether they have noticed that other students help refugees and immigrants when they do not understand something, all the teachers reported that they have noticed many times that Greek students help them and explain things to them, especially those who are in the 2nd year and have been together for a long time, even when they do not know the language well. As the 2nd teacher also mentions, many times the refugees seem to understand something, but in reality this is not the case, but they do not express a question to the teacher and so the person next to them often takes on this role.

Suggestions for vulnerable social groups

In the question to the teachers about their suggestions for vulnerable social groups and their attendance at school, the following were expressed. The 1st teacher suggests more hours of language literacy and also to give more incentives to this group.

Characteristically, she states that as much as it may sound excessive, there should be a financial incentive for those who will enroll in school or that their attendance be made mandatory, so that they can work in our country. The 2nd teacher suggests accelerated language training programs before they join the class or if they join it for a period of time. Essentially, she suggests remedial classes in the two most basic, for her, subjects, language and numerical literacy. The 3rd teacher suggests that in all Second Chance Schools, vulnerable groups should be a priority and that they be hierarchically preferred before others. Finally, the 4th teacher suggests that they should come to school after first acquiring a basic knowledge and use of the Greek language, because otherwise it is very difficult for them and for the teachers.

Operation proposals

In the question to the teachers regarding the changes they propose in the operation of the Second Chance School, the three teachers, who incidentally are not permanent, asked that the school be reinforced with permanent staff. If this is not possible, at least their recruitment should be done in a timely manner, that is, at the beginning of the school year, so that they can investigate the educational needs and ensure the smooth operation of the class. A typical example was given by the 1st teacher who was hired at the end of the school-year, in May, to teach just for 2 months, and the evaluation she submitted was not objective. The 2nd teacher also emphasized the long delay in paying hourly staff. Finally, the 4th teacher focuses exclusively on the ministry, which does not hire contract teachers on time, which leads to the uneven conduct and completion of the curriculum.

Problems in the school

In the final question posed to the teachers regarding the most important problems they face in the school, the three hourly teachers again expressed the same opinions. In particular, they mentioned the problems of the institution, such as the understaffing of permanent and hourly staff, the long delay in starting their contracts, underfunding, the lack of funds and the long delay in paying them. As the 1st teacher characteristically states, she has been unpaid for a few months and tries to do her job as best as possible, but somehow when you are not paid, you stop being so efficient. Finally, the third teacher mentions as the biggest problem the many absences of the trainees and the low attendance, which is due to the fact that most of them work.

Analysis of findings using the triangulation method

From the collection, analysis and processing of our research data from refugee and immigrant trainees and the comparison, using the triangulation method, with the data obtained from the school teachers, regarding the research question on the obstacles faced by trainees during their studies, the following data emerged.

In the obstacles stated by the students in relation to the teachers, there were similarities in the following:

- Both sides agree that the Greek language and especially its writing is particularly difficult for them.
- Both sides agree that the combination of work and school causes them great fatigue. In addition, due to work, the lack of time is an insurmountable obstacle, which leads to many absences from classes.
- Both sides agree that the working hours, especially for those who work, make it difficult for them, especially during the first 2 hours of class.

- Both sides agree that traveling to school is difficult, especially in winter, because some either cannot travel or live far away.
- Both sides agree that there are phenomena of racism and prejudice in the school environment, which, however, do not reach extreme situations.

From what the participants in the interviews stated regarding the obstacles they face in their education, we see that:

They confirm Cross's (1981) classic typology of obstacles to adult participation in learning and in particular the categories:

- Situational, which are obstacles that concern a specific period of time, such as lack of time and money, which many of our trainees also face, such as those who work late but also the unemployed who do not have money for transportation.
- Institutional, which are obstacles that discourage adults from the educational process, such as opening hours, where our participants also mentioned and told that they would like the lesson to start 1-2 hours later.
- Predispositional, which are obstacles that characterize the trainee's attitude towards learning. In our case, learners do not express their questions when they do not understand something and do not have sufficient theoretical background.

Therefore, a suggestion that was also mentioned by some teachers is that there should be a "preparatory" Greek language training section, before they are integrated into the classroom with the rest pupils. This is because they have a lot of difficulty at first and friction with their classmates is created, due to frequent questions and interruptions of the lesson.

Conclusion

In closing this research, we must emphasize the importance of the institution of the Second Chance School, which can be very useful in the effort to integrate refugees and immigrants, through adult education, into Greek society. Furthermore, because the staff of the Second Chance School may not have the appropriate training to properly deal with these vulnerable social groups, it would be good for the educational authorities to deal with the issue. There should be systematic preparation of teachers, with the aim of acquiring intercultural skills, knowing how to properly motivate and teach more effectively in the classroom, so that they too do not lose the motivation for proper teaching and have greater self-confidence and knowledge of what they should do. For this reason, some agencies should cooperate for the further training of teachers, under the supervision of the Greek Institute of Educational Policy, which already has a platform in operation for the education of immigrants and refugees.

Also, as we observe daily, the hospitality structures receive refugees daily from countries mainly in the Middle East, there should be a more organized plan, so that they are informed about the existence of these schools and thus through it some people can get to know the Greek way of life more quickly. Finally, the problems of understaffing and underfunding of the Second Chance Schools should be overcome, so that they can carry out their work under the best conditions.

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