Erasmus+ KA3 Teachers4Europe:
Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture
(2018 - 2021)

e-Conference Proceedings

Promoting EU values in a time of social distancing
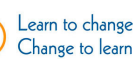
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6 - 7 June 2020

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Table of Contents

Preface

The Erasmus KA3+ program entitled "Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture" (2018-2021) recognizes education as an important vehicle for the promotion of principles and values encompassed in the EU democratic culture. The extensive Teachers4Europe network of 1,200 teachers from European countries and beyond is committed to spreading the European values to colleagues, students and the society, acting thus as inspiring social and cultural agents.

Due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, educational systems are highly affected, working on and promoting significant changes as a respond to new challenges at all levels. In this context, the Coordinating Team of the T4E Program organized the international e-Conference entitled "Promoting European values in a time of social distancing", which took place on Saturday, June 6 and Sunday, June 7, 2020. The focal topics of the e-Conference were onsite and online education, innovative methods and approaches, and new methodological tools, as regards the teaching of European values at schools under the demanding circumstances of social distancing.

In this Volume, 27 papers were selected to be published, including good practices already implemented at schools by Ambassadors and Teachers4Europe. The particular action is considered to have been an excellent opportunity for a constructive and creative dialogue on issues of common interest and concern, as to educational methods and tools in the time of Covid-19. We do hope the Volume will add value in addressing the tough but exciting challenges posed by this pandemic.

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PART I: Teaching of EU values

1.1. Teaching of EU values via reflection situations

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Abstract

We present a good practice based on the innovative Pedagogical Method "Reflection Situations". The Theoretical Framework is based on experiential learning, collaborative learning and project method and of course "reflection situations" (in French: situation – problèmes). The purpose is to take advantage of this Method in teaching of EU values. We present eight examples of "reflection situations" whose central ideas are concerning EU values such as: democracy, active citizenship, acceptance, tolerance, understanding diversity, solidarity, the right to health, individual responsibility and social consciousness. These ideas must primarily be experienced by students, through appropriate experiential reflection situations. The titles of the eight examples of "reflection situations" we propose, are: "Abstention", "Italian and English students and fish eating", "An immigrant to a psychologist", "Greek and French children and their habits", "Islamic headscarf", "Has been there global solidarity?", "Corona virus and Political Systems" and "Health System". We designed these examples for our T4E training needs. They could also be used by other Ambassadors T4E or by the T4E for their students' learning needs. In the conclusions, the value and utility of the Pedagogical Method "Reflection Situations" is emerged, in the field of innovation and enrichment of traditional teaching via the T4E project.

Keywords: reflection situations, situation - problèmes, EU values, active citizenship, T4E project, innovation.

Introduction

In this paper we present a good practice or creative suggestion based on the innovative Pedagogical Method "Reflection Situations". We use this term as our own free translation of the French term found in the References: "Situation – Problèmes".

I first heard about the Pedagogical Method of "Situation – Problèmes" (Reflection Situations) in October 2005, when I had participated as a school counselor, in the context of the European Educational Program SOCRATES - Action COMENIUS, in a training visit to Palermo-Italy, for a week. The training was conducted in French and its subject matter was: "The teaching of Citizen Education with the method of 'Situation – Problèmes'". Gérard de Vecchi - French researcher and teacher trainer - was in charge of this program.

He is currently an Assistant Professor at the University Institute of Teacher Training (IUFM) in Creteil (Vecchi 2003).

The purpose is to take advantage of this Method in teaching of EU values and in teaching of active citizenship. We present eight (8) examples of "reflection situations" whose central ideas are concerning EU values such as: democracy, active citizenship, acceptance, tolerance, understanding diversity, solidarity, the right to health, individual responsibility and social consciousness. These ideas must primarily be experienced by students, through appropriate experiential reflection situations.

We devised and designed these examples for our T4E training needs. They could also be used by other Ambassadors T4E or by the T4E for their students' learning needs. We got inspired for the themes of our reflection situations by reading articles in newspapers, watching TV discussions during the quarantine period for coronovirus and the last one for the health system was inspired by some thoughts that Mrs. Asderaki expressed.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is mainly based on the innovative Pedagogical Method "Reflection Situations" – our free translation of the French term found in References: "Situation – Problèmes" (Dalongeville & Huber 2000; Meirieu 1987). We find in References the following definition (Partoune 2002): The situation-problem is a concrete task to be accomplished under certain conditions which presuppose that people overcome a certain number of unavoidable obstacles to get there. The situation-problem is always a fiction under control. The situation-problem is one of the tools of a pedagogy based on the self-construction of knowledge.

It is an activity consisting in the conception of a task intended to make be discovered solutions to a problem, by the student himself. The resolution of this problem should allow the student to acquire and validate new learning. A problem situation has two essential components (De Ketele 2013):

- A contextualized situation: The problem to be solved is always part of an environment on which it depends and which must be taken into account. The proposed situation corresponds to a real situation requiring the use of prior knowledge.

- A complex task: Solving the problem requires not the simple application of knowledge or know-how, but the recourse to a whole process, to a set of knowledge and know-how, to a series of activities and or manipulations.

Like other tools, a problem situation is generally a step in a knowledge-constructing process (Jonnaert & Vander Borght 1999; Perrenoud 1997; Roegiers 2000). A problem situation is proposed:

- at the start of the process, as a motivation phase for an educational project

- at the heart of the process: research launch phase, experimentation phase, knowledge acquisition phase, knowledge structuring phase, concept or theory construction phase

- at the end of the process, as an evaluation phase: favoring integrative problem situations, making it possible to assess the acquisition of macro-competences.

Vecchi and Carmona-Magnaldi (2015), are wondering: Couldn't there be a type of pedagogy that would give more meaning to learning, which would bring students into another approach allowing them to build their own knowledge by living in the class in a different state of mind? This is the challenge launched through a detailed analysis of how to conceive and lead to real problem situations.

The present study is also based on the project method and the experiential learning. The origin of the project method is found in Pragmatism and in the movement for 'progressive education' whose main spokesperson is Dewey (1916). The project method was spread by Dewey and Kilpatrick (1925) who defined it as a hearty purposeful act. The project method has many possibilities which one discovers as a project develops (Frey 1994). It includes interdisciplinarity, 'open' learning situations, group work, experiential learning in authentic settings of everyday life and the opening of school into society. Novick (1996) points out that the role of the teacher in project work is a departure from the role of the teacher who merely examines students, towards a teacher who is a collaborator in the context of group co-investigation. The central educational concept associated with Kilpatrick was, "We learn what we live." He often elaborated on this idea in such ways as: "We learn what we live and then live what we learned" (Beineke 1998). The renewed interest in the project method is based on newer studies on learning which favour an holistic approach in dealing with the curriculum as well as on globalization and the changes that fast-paced technological development has brought about. The goal of a project is to learn about a topic rather than to seek correct answers to questions posed by a teacher (Katz & Chard 1999). Advocates of the project approach do not suggest that project work would constitute the whole curriculum; they consider it to be complementary. The main component of a project is the interdisciplinary, experiential-communicative method (Chrissafides 1996) through thematic interconnection.

Finally, our study - suggestion is based on the collaborative teaching. Collaborative teaching ensures, in all categories of students, the improvement of the ability to learn in the academic field, the cultivation and maturation of social skills, the development of positive elements in the personality and the change of attitudes and behavior. One of the many collaborative learning methods is project method. Beyond the transfer of knowledge, this kind of teaching and learning helps students to develop abilities in collaboration and problem solving (Matsagouras 2000; Trilianos 2003).

Creative problem solving requires independent research from students. The teacher just coordinates... Creative problem solving teaches children how to learn. Students learn by working in groups and looking for solutions to real-life problems. The main idea of the method is to teach children to use their skills to acquire knowledge and not to act as recipients of ready-made knowledge. Using this method in the lessons, the students realize learning as discovery of knowledge. Their critical thinking is developing inside and outside the school. Also, when members of the group do their homework collectively, they save time and develop social and verbal skills. According to study findings (Johnson & Johnson 1989; Kapsalis 2008), collaborative teaching and learning tends to perform better than competitive, individualized school curricula. Particularly for low-achieving students, it is argued that under certain circumstances, they get higher than expected performance, when working in small heterogeneous (in terms of performance) groups, due to verbal

interactions, which include procedural and conceptual, successive explanations (Tanos 1987, Vygotsky 1988). Collaborative teaching upgrades the quality and quantity of students' active participation, a fact that maximizes school learning (Bloom 1980; Kossivaki 2003).

Methodology

Experiential activity: The T4E trainees discuss in groups for given case studies– reflection situations and sharing conclusions are emerging (this methodology concerns mainly the onsite teaching, but it could be easily adapted for online teaching).

Workshop: Small group activity: "reflection situation e.g. on an EU value". The trainees (T4E teachers and in long-term their students) are divided into 4-5 mixed groups of 4-5 persons. We distribute to each group a worksheet with a different reflection situation (Actually a Case Study or a Dialogue with a dilemma situation with lots of possible answers) and we give: ten (10) minutes for critical thinking, discussion and recording of the various answers and another five (5) minutes for composing the different views of the group into a multimodal text - poster.

At the end, a representative of each group presents to the other groups, the reflection situation of his group and the composition of the different views of his group.

The "reflection situations" we propose

Following are the eight examples of "reflection situations" we propose:

- **Abstention**

European Parliament Elections 2019: Abstention, Biggest 'Opponent'…

European Parliament Elections are mobilizing less and less. On average in the European Union more than one voter in two doesn't participate in the electorate, a particularly large abstention mainly in the eastern countries, which also affects the founding countries. The founding countries are not inviolable: Except Belgium and Luxembourg, the founding countries of the Union are also seeing their abstention rates increase. In France and the Netherlands, the rate went from about 40% in 1979 to about 60% in 2014. This rate increased from 14% to 43% in Italy and from 34% to 50% in Germany. The erosion of participation is not only about the European elections, but also about the national elections (Source: APE-BE newspaper "Proto Thema").

43% abstain from European elections (in Greece)

The abstention in the European elections amounts to 43.08%, with 53.48% of the votes recorded, according to the results of the Ministry of Interior (Source: APE-BE newspaper 'Ta Nea').

THOUKYDIDOU (II 34-46): "O PERIKLEOUS EPITAFIOS LOGOS" (in 430 BC)

Edáfio 40 (Section 40)

...«ἔν τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια, καὶ ἑτέροις πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γνῶναι»

"We, too, take care of our private affairs and public affairs, and while everyone takes care of their jobs, this does not prevent us from worrying for politics as well."

«μόνοι γὰρ τόν τε μηδὲν τῶν δε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ᾽ ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν»

"Those who are not interested in politics, only we consider them to be, not only indifferent, but also useless."

- **Italian and English students and fish eating**

(Italian students, through a European Erasmus program, hosted English students and fish were served in their meal).

English students (with dissatisfaction): They should make sure that our fish are served without the head and tail, since they know that we do not eat whole fish, as they served us.

Italian students: After coming to our country as guests, they have to do what we do and adapt to our habits.

- **An immigrant to a psychologist**

Psychologist (in Greece): Please tell me, apart from the difficult socio-economic conditions you are experiencing, is there anything else that concerns you?

Muslim immigrant: My husband almost every day, beats me and abuses our children

Psychologist: Why don't you report him to the police?

Muslim immigrant: I can't do that. The rules and traditions of my family require me to obey my husband and not expose him. If I reported him to the police, even my parents and the whole local community where I live, they would turn against me.

Psychologist: Listen, my lady. Here you have come, you must above all obey the laws of the host country and beating your spouse or abusing your children is an illegal act, without exception.

- **Greek and French children and their habits**

(Through the European Erasmus program, French students hosted Greek students and vice versa).

French mothers (who hosted Greek students) on the phone: These Greek children have no knowledge of health education or good manners. They go to the bathroom and throw the used toilet paper in the basket, instead of in the basin, causing the place to get dirty.

Greek mothers (who hosted French students) on the phone: These French children have no good manners at all. They go to the bathroom and throw the used toilet paper in the basin, instead of the basket, as a result of which the sewer is in danger of clogging.

- **Islamic headscarf**

Yiannis: I read that in France and other countries, measures have been taken that will prohibit female students from wearing the Islamic headscarf.

Maria: Then it should be equally forbidden to wear a cross...

Aissé: A general ban on the headscarf would be wronged and those girls who voluntarily decided to wear the headscarf as a symbol of their religion.

Yiannis: I am in favor of banning headscarves in schools. The issue is not religious but social, as it concerns issues of gender equality.

Maria: I believe that since the constitution defends the right to self-determination and free expression of citizens, such a ban, in many countries like Greece, would be unconstitutional.

- **Has been there global solidarity in the treatment of corona virus?**

"Dialogue (virtual) from a TV show on Greek television…"

Presenter: One would expect that in dealing with the pandemic of corona virus there would be global solidarity, co-operation and collective action of the various nation states.

Journalist (invited to the panel): There have been some examples of solidarity, such as the case when Chinese and Russian scientists went to Italy for helping.

Doctor (invited to the panel): Unfortunately, in general, the international community turned out to be inferior to the circumstances in terms of solidarity. Each nation state implemented its own strategy, without a global - collective plan to deal with the pandemic. A sad example of states competition was that one state was trying to bid to get the last minute batch of medical supplies ordered from another state that had even paid a down payment for these supplies.

Presenter: That is, your death, my life, as we say in Greece.

Doctor: This is exactly. This lack of solidarity and the escalation of competition should be of particular concern to us. What roles do play global associations such as the U.N., the W.H.O., the European Union etc.?

- **Corona virus and Political Systems**

"Dialogue (virtual) from a TV show on Greek television on the subject of covid-19"

Presenter: We find that in European countries, such as Italy, Spain, England, citizens do not fully comply with the health control measures taken by governments due to corona virus. They are still crowded in cafes, squares, playgrounds, beaches…

Author (invited to the panel): What should concern us, is that in countries like China, with more authoritarian regimes, where unruly citizens who fell ill and circulated in public were arrested immediately, the corona virus epidemic began to be controlled and the cases are declining. In contrast, in Western Europe, where we have a democracy, citizens still do not comply and corona virus cases are on the rise. Maybe in the end, the Republic is a "weak" polity or maybe the government of the Republic, in order to be secured and be functional, needs responsible citizens who have knowledge of their rights, but mainly of their obligations, which they respect with a sense of individual responsibility and social consciousness. We, in Greece, who are proud as a country of birth of the Republic, the above questions must be of particular concern to us.

Journalist (invited to the panel): On the other hand, in China, due to the authoritarian regime and censorship, they initially hid the criticality of the situation and took five weeks to take the appropriate measures. We have another example in our neighboring country. I recently read a related article by Alain Franchon in "Le Monde" entitled "Corona virus and Political Systems".

- **Health System**

Dimitris: I get angry when I hear that in a country with financial problems like Greece, many people ask for completely free health care for the uninsured or for refugees and immigrants. I support financially the Greek Health System and all of us, the insured and taxed Greek citizens and it should be compensatory, only for us…

Fotini: I do not agree, for example, viruses, such as coronavirus, do not know for insurance contributions and nationalities, they infect uninsured or even refugees and immigrants, who in turn transmit the virus to the insured and to the natives and vice versa…

Conclusions

The Erasmus+ KA3 "Teachers4Europe: Setting up an Agora for Democratic Culture" (2018-2021) Program, is oriented to the production of creative work and the promotion of the European ideas in education. One of its priorities among others is the teaching of EU values in school settings. We are convinced that ideas cannot be taught theoretically. EU values are related to beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking, so they should be experienced mainly, by students but also by teachers. We propose EU values to be experienced through appropriate experiential reflection situations.

Concerning teachers' perceptions, Chapman (2008) states that change of beliefs is linked to achievement of change and that beliefs can be changed or transformed when they prove unjustified and then alternative beliefs replace the old ones. According to Chapman, just telling teachers to reflect doesn't lead to reflection. It is better for them to be involved in a conscious, active process of re-examining their way of thinking and thus renew their knowledge of the teaching practice. This requires learning situations in which they can experience challenges, tensions or conflicts. We argue that appropriate experiential reflection situations can work as such learning situations.

We devised and designed eight examples of "reflection situations" for our T4E training needs. They could also be used by other Ambassadors T4E for the training needs of their own teams. These problem – reflection situations could also be used by the T4E for their students' learning needs, once they have been adapted to their students' age and cognitive background and interests, according to the principles of differentiated teaching and learning (Tomlinson 1999). Certainly, these examples of our own, could serve as a trigger for colleagues to create many other similar or even better "problem – reflection situations" and in the end to put them all together in a "problem – reflection situations Repository", that each of us could use as good practices…

We can conclude that the "reflection - problem situations" offer us an innovative methodological approach and appropriate techniques and tools for experiential teaching of EU values via the T4E project.

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1.2. 'Learning about EU Values'

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Abstract

Democracy is not static and permanent; it must be constantly cultivated, strengthened and maintained. Education is always considered as the 'antidote' against the democratic values crisis and the nationalistic and racist trends. That is why it is closely and directly linked to the cultivation of democratic values. Therefore we chose them as our theme for our project 'Learning about EU values'. Our target group is 22 6th grade students of primary school. Its duration is estimated to be 3 months and it will involve Drama, Greek Language, History, Mathematics, Art, Social and Political Education and ICT. The teaching methods that will be applied are, cooperative, experiential and exploratory learning, project work and dramatization. At the end of the program we expect that students will: a) comprehend and recognize EU values b) embrace and express beliefs and attitudes that reflect democratic values and c) perform democratic behaviours. The project is unfolding in three phases. Phase A: 'What are the values?' During this phase the children will explore the concept of EU values by researching and gathering information. After that they will present key features of the value they represent and a short story that reflects it. Phase B: 'Values in action'. Specific historical events will give the opportunity to practice basic democratic procedures and rights through activities such as voting etc. At the cognitive level the children will be involved in statistical data processing. Finally in phase C: 'Values cannot be taken for granted' the students will process a short theatical play, based on the book 'The animal farm' by George Orwell. The scenario will be the field where students will try to locate EU values, how they are applied or not or even how they can be misrepresented by certain personal interests. This phase will be used also as the evaluation part of our project.

Keywords: Values, Democracy, Rights, Citizenship Education

Introduction

School and education were always fields of political culture while at the same time they operate in terms of inclusion in specific value frameworks (Dragona & Fragoudaki 1997, p. 25; Giroux 1997, p. 218, 596; Golia 2011, p. 189-190). They were always the fields where societies in sociopolitical crisis were trying to handle and confront this crisis (Karakatsani 2004, p.35; Veugelers 2007, p. 106). They are considered as the 'antidote' against the democratic values crisis, the political ignorance, apathy, cynicism, alienation and the nationalistic and racist trends that are located empowered in Greek and European context (Brennan 1981, p. 13; Karakatsani 2004, p. 35; Veugelers 2007, p. 106; Osler 2009, p. 1; Birdwell et al. 2013). Because democracy is not a fixed and immutable framework, in order to survive it needs a conscious ethic and the ability to reinvent itself (Dimitriadis &

McCarthy 2003, p. 134). It must be constantly supported, cultivated and maintained, while at the same time it must shape society itself. It is a process that is strengthened, organized and directly linked to the development of values and rules and needs citizens who will be socially autonomous and aware (Veugelers 2007, p. 110).

Therefore EU democratic values were chosen as our basic theme for our project 'Learning about EU values', in order to provide our students knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are necessary for them in order to function efficiently and harmonically as European citizens in a globalised environment.

Values have always been at the heart of education both in theory and practical activities (Halstead 1996, p. 11). Especially priority is given to the learning and consolidation by students of the values that characterize modern political systems such as freedom, equality of rights, social justice etc (Givalos 2005, p. 315). They are in the centre of numerous educational approaches and trends such as Moral development Education and Values cultivation (Tate 2000, p. 69; Figueroa 2004, p. 226; Karakatsani, 2004, p. 153; Luchtenberg 2004, p. 261), Democratic Education (Veugelers 2007, p. 110), Education for Human Rights and Citizens Rights (Karakatsani, 2004, p. 167-171), Citizenship Education etc. But we must also have in mind that values are always taught at school deliberately or not (Kohn 1997, p. 7).

The concept of values was always popular but hard to define because it was surrounded by vagueness and fluidity. There is much disagreement about them and over the years countless definitions have been given. The variety of definitions is equivalent to the variety of the scientific fields that dealt with values. Their nature, classification and role in people's lives are in the spotlight for many academics from various scientific fields. Philosophers, theologians, sociologists and educators have been and continue to be concerned with the concept of values. Especially the last ones have to deal with an additional problem, "what value should I teach and how?" (Matsagouras 2004, p. 116).

Values could be referring to the things but also they can provide us with reasons for action (Dunlop 1996, p. 76). According to Halstead (1996, p. 13) the term values is used to "refer to principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision making or the evaluation of beliefs or action and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity". Parsons (1991, in Christodoulou 2012, p. 31) adds the factor of society and defines values as a set of categories that express ideal and therefore desirable ways and conditions of existence, thought and action in a given society. According to that it is understandable that every society has its own set of values and its own evaluation system of desirable behaviours of its members. Desirable is a key word for the value orientation, it describes society's evaluation of proper conceptions, ideas and behaviours and it also differentiates values from attitudes. These desirable ways are so 'deeply rooted' in the society that their violation is very possible to create negative emotions in the person such as guilt, regrets or feelings of failure (Georgas 1990, p.124-125).

The wider the number of criteria and definitions, the wider the list and the categorization of values. So there is a variety of values categories such as spiritual values, moral values, social values, economical values, democratic values, environmental values, liberal values etc. (Halstead 1996, p. 16-17; Matsagouras 2004, p. 116). This plethora leads to some

reasonable questions for the education, as it was mentioned above, 'what value should I teach and how'. There are many teaching approaches and trends over the years that are trying to answer these questions. From our side and criteria following the corresponding theoretical framework we made our own choice and its presentation follows below.

Our educational approach

Our project is structured according to theoretical framework of democratic Citizenship Education. Citizenship Education (CE) is emphatically suggested as a formation mean of future citizens. The main axes of democratic CE are to: a) provide students with knowledge for concepts, institutions, functions, cultural social and economical areas of democracy b) develop academic skills such as describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate opinions and situations c) develop attitudes, which are necessary in order to function efficiently and harmonically in a globalised environment d) promote virtues and basic elements of democracy (respect of values, dignity, rights, principles and practices) e) develop participation empowered by critical thinking and communication skills (Giddens 2000, p.21; Tate 2000, p.72; Karakatsani 2004, p. 178; Givalos 2005, p. 25). Learning about values, that are essential for the modern political systems, is a priority for the CE (Givalos 2005, p. 315).

An effective CE project should have the following characteristics: a) It should be not passive but active. According to Dewey (1963, p.28) only active learning can help students to develop democratic methods and democratic habits. Teachers should offer to their students the experience of active engagement in different roles of active citizenship (Dyrfjord et al 2004, p.4) b) the topics should be chosen by the direct social environment and they have to give the opportunity to transform in different kinds of social expression (games, art, stories, conversation etc.) c) teachers should also choose stories that highlight issues and concepts of social justice and organization, revolution, power, beliefs, responsibility and develop active citizenship by offering chances for dialogue and critical awareness (Cooper 1995, p. 12-13; Phillips 2010, p. 221). These will give them the opportunity to realize that democratic values and rights are not a given fact and that their power and weakness should be explored and discussed in order to find possible ways to improve (Figueroa 2004, p. 232) d) drama and role playing could be used as an educational technique because it can play a crucial role in teaching values (Berghammer 1985, p. 2; Gervais 2006, p.; Ulubey & Gozutok 2015, p. 90; Papageorgiou 2018). Students have already developed a set of values without being aware of it from their families, friends, teachers etc. Academic reports and research (Berghammer 1985; Gervais 2006; Ulubey & Gozutok 2015; Papageorgiou 2018) show that dramatic techniques help them: a) to discover, realize, understand, and approach these values through different perspectives b) to cultivate recognition and tolerance for different values and c) to create commitment to democratic values.

Methodology of the project

The methodology of our project is based on the following theoretical framework. The basic teaching principles for democratic citizenship education are reflecting in three teaching approaches: **learning about democracy, learning through democracy and learning for democracy.** So its basic learning aims are to provide students with knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and values for democracy (Gollob & Krapf 2008, p.8).

Academics and researchers suggest that in order to achieve these aims teachers should apply and combine teaching methods such as: projects, concept analyses, interactive learning, collaborative learning, exploratory learning, and experiential learning combined with teaching and mentoring, practicing and demonstration (Karakatsani 2004, p. 148; Oulton et al. 2004, p. 506; Nikolaou 2009, p.311, 313; Gollob & Krapf 2008, p.8). Extremely effective could also be the application of teaching practices such as role playing, simulations, story analysis, research, text interpretation and dialogue because they can develop political skills and thought, additionally they give liveliness and pleasure to children at the same time (Rogers 1988, p. 116; Karakatsani 2004, p.148). It is also important that students practice finding and utilizing sources of information so that they have accurate and up to date knowledge that will help them make the right and effective decisions (Rogers 1988, p. 116; Oulton et al. 2004, p. 506). We tried to apply the above teaching methods and practices in order to have the best results for our students.

Identity of the project

Our target group is 22 students in 6th grade of the 17th Primary School of Evosmos Thessaloniki. The duration of the project is approximately 3 months. The school subjects that are involved are: Greek Language, History, Geography, Mathematics, Social and Political Education and ICT.

Materials & Resources

The materials that can be used are: computer, projector, internet connection, map of EU and Europe as continent, school text books of History and Geography of grade 6, whiteboard, markers, A4 size white paper, colored paper, colored pencils, scissors, and glue. Our resources are: EU official website, an adaptation of the book 'Animal Farm' of George Orwell, Compassito, Activities: 'A Constitution for our team', 'Every vote counts', Education for Democratic Citizenship & Human Rights, Book III, 'We live democratically', Activities: 'Good law bad law, what makes a good law' 'Who is responsible'.

Aims of the project

The aims of our project are to:

- Provide a general knowledge of EU and EU values

- Develop awareness and comprehension of concepts such as Values, Rights, Democracy, Constitution

- Cultivate awareness of the importance and necessity of the European Union values

So in the end of our project we expect that the students will be able to:

a) Comprehend and recognize democratic European Union values in everyday life

b) Perform democratic behaviors

c) Embrace and express beliefs and attitudes that reflect the European Union values.

Implementation of the project

According to the needs of our theme, we followed and reshaped the basic teaching principles and approaches for democratic citizenship education that were mentioned above in: **learning about values, learning through values and learning for values**. This triplet is reflected in the structure of our project which also unfolds in three phases.

Phase 1: 'What are the values?'

The subject of Geography gives us the opportunity to make an introduction to our project. The school text book presents the continent of Europe and provides us with valuable general knowledge about it. The students focus on the European Union. Each one picks a European Union member country to present in class. The presentations must contain information and photographs of the flag, the language, the population, the capital city, important personalities, historic monuments etc of each member country. The end of the presentations follows a construction of a big poster of the European Union flag. The stars of the member countries will be small harmonica books with this information written on them. The poster will be exposed on a school wall so we can share the knowledge we have gained about European Union member countries with the other students in our school.

Our next step is to focus on the concept of EU values. The students explore the concept of values in general. They gather information about what values are, what their characteristics are, why they are important in our lives. They bring their information in class and present them. We discuss, we share ideas, opinions, thoughts and beliefs about them.

The teacher mentions the European values (Human dignity, Freedom, Democracy, Equality, Rule of Law, Human Rights) and focuses on the students' interest in them. The class is divided in 6 groups (each one for every European Union value). Each group has to present in class the basic elements of the value it represents (definition, key features, importance etc) and dramatize a short story (fiction or real) that reflects it. These stories will be gathered in a small book entitled 'Stories for values' and it will be placed in the school library so that they can be read and enjoyed by the other students of the school.

Phase 2: 'Values in action'

In History we learn about the Greek Revolution for our Independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1821. Important historical facts emerge and give us the opportunity to deal with democratic concepts and functions such as National Assemblies, Constitution, Voting, Laws and Rights. At the same time these concepts are taught in the lesson of Social and Political Education. We decide to make our Class Constitution. So the class makes a list with the rights that should have in school. After that every student votes for or against these rights secretly using the poll application on the e-me educational platform. During the lesson of Mathematics students use their election results to create statistical charts using the Microsoft Office Excel program. Finally they make a poster where they write their class Constitution according to the results of their elections.

Phase 3: 'Values cannot be taken for granted'

During this phase the students will work on a short theatrical play, based on the book 'Animal farm' by George Orwell. This book was chosen because it highlights the

importance of democratic values. It also clearly shows how easily they can be trampled on and how important it is to be an active citizen.

Initially the teacher presents the book to the class and the students share with each other characters/ roles of the book and then they have to:

- Present this character to the class by drawing his/her picture with words (that is a special and funny drawing technique) that describe him or her.

- find points in the play where European Union values are evident

- find points in the play where European Union values are being violated

- find the causes for this violation

- find alternative ways to avoid this violation

- in the end of the project they perform the play to the school and to the parents. Alternatively, they choose scenes they like from the play and create their own comic using Toony Tool application.

Discussion & Suggestions

We believe that this project creates the right conditions for the students in order to be aware and comprehend complex concepts such as values, rights and democracy in active, exploratory and fun ways. During the implementation of the project students showed intense interest and willingness to participate. This attitude suggests that the issue of values concerns them and the activities of the program have managed to involve them effectively. Thus, the evaluation of the project is very positive as we believe that its goals have been achieved to a large extent. Through the discussions and the projects produced by the students it was realized that the children understood to a satisfactory degree the values, and most importantly, they realized their importance in our lives. In addition the project had a positive effect on other areas such as: the cooperation and positive interaction between students b) improved presentation, expressing, debating and reflection skills c) developed academic and cognitive skills (critical thinking, data processing, text and concept analysis etc. It also gave them the opportunity to understand the fragile nature of these concepts and the responsibility of all of us to maintain and implement them in our lives. The difficulties of the project included: a) the dealing with controversial issues or opinions that may arose b) the noise especially during the class discussions and c) the difficulty of time management as it could easily get away with discussions. In a future implementation of the program we would recommend that teachers need to have practiced their students in dialogue and active listening and to be alert in order to deal with controversial issues or opinions that may arise.

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1.3. Promoting Democratic Values through Rhetoric in 5th Grade Elementary School Children

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Abstract

The development of democratic values is a key priority of the values of the European Union both through educational strategies at the political level as well as through curricula at the school level. On this basis, we propose the following action as a good practice in order to develop democratic values and strengthen cooperation and communication skills among students.

Keywords: rhetoric, democratic values, climate change

1. EU CHALLENGE: My school welcomes children from a well-known Greek voluntary (non-profit organization). This organization aims to defend children's rights and tackle their daily problems. Through rhetoric students a) express their views through arguments, as well as their feelings, respecting at the same time the opinion of others, b) practice to active listening, dialogue, confrontation of arguments aimed at solving problems, c) cultivate attitudes against social exclusion and discrimination and emphasize on the cultivation of democratic values. For this reason: «Promoting Democratic Values through Rhetoric and emphasis on negotiation, exchanging arguments» is a necessity.

2. IDENTITY OF THE PROJECT: This program took place at a Greek public primary school in Marousi, a suburb of Athens. The program partners were my pupils, 10-year-old children, attending the 5th Grade Elementary School. The duration of this project was three months from January to March. Due to the pandemic situation, the schools closed on March 10 in Greece. But the program continued through the eclass platform (asynchronous from distance learning) and later through the webex platform (synchronous from distance learning). On the eclass platform was created a course-file called ''Philanagnosia-Europe and me'' where students could play enjoyable activities and games from the learning corner of the European Union and other European organizations. The program continued and after the schools were opened on June 1 to 26, 2020.

3. AIMS of this action are: a) to promote Democratic Values through Rhetoric and emphasize on negotiation and exchanging arguments, b) to cultivate the ability to communicate within a framework of mutual understanding, c) to strengthen students' self-confidence by presenting a topic to other groups in class, d) to develop critical thinking by solving problems, e) emphasis on negotiation, exchanging arguments, cultivating cooperation and collaborative skills, f) learning of active listening, g) enhancing empathy skills and h) raising awareness of various issues of social discrimination.

In this project many school subjects were involved, such as History, Greek language, Geography, Science, English as a foreign language, Arts and Crafts, New Technologies.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT.

Preparation: Room design, arrangement of desks for students to work in groups. Check that the computer, the dashboard and the internet are working. Collection of all the necessary material eg pens, pencils, table markers, scissors, erasers, A4 paper.

Connection to previous knowledge: From September 15 to December 15, 2019, the 5th grade students read in the classroom and then discussed and exchanged ideas, thoughts and expressed feelings about two of the books of the author Maria Aggelidou. Specifically: 1. Aggelidou, Maria (2015), Byzantium in six colors: the red one, Athens: Metaixmio. 2. Aggelidou, Maria (2017), Byzantium in six colors: the white one, Athens: Metaixmio.

After reading these two books, we invited the author to our class (see Picture 1). She visited us, talked to the students, exchanged ideas and thoughts about events mentioned in the books and more generally about values such as justice, solidarity, cooperation, respect for the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of people.

Picture 1: https://blogs.sch.gr/16dimamarous/page/3/
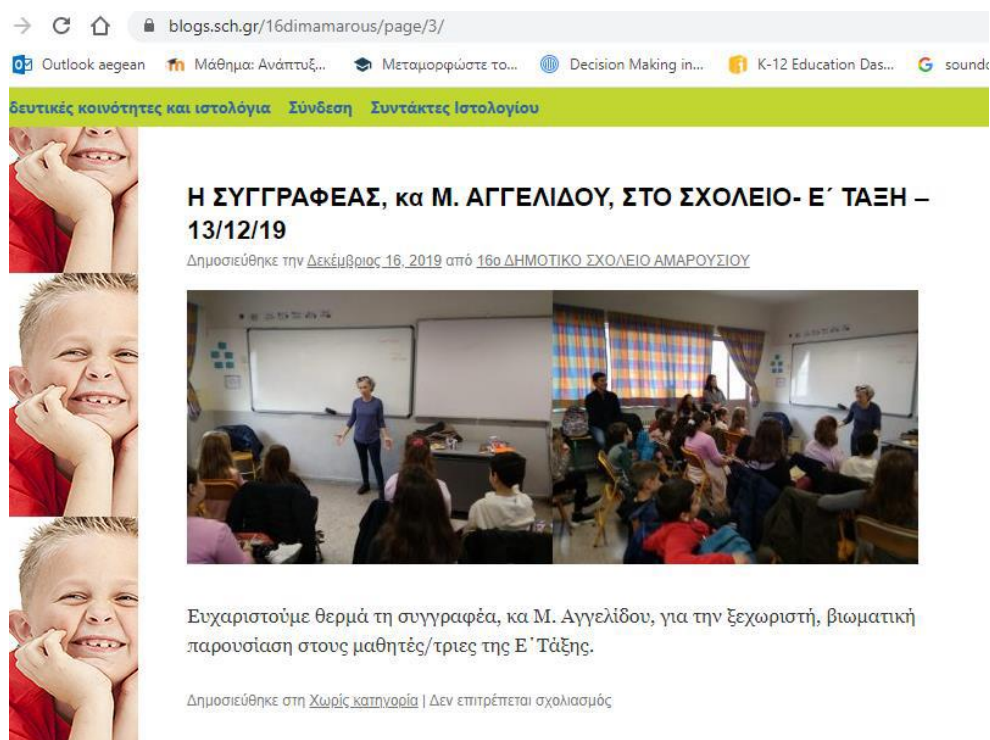
This action entitled "Teachers4Europe: Promoting Democratic Values through Rhetoric in 5th Grade Elementary School Children" is presented in the following five steps while the students are working in groups.

STEP 1. Rhetoric in Ancient Greece: Presentation in class of a short video of the ancient agora (see Picture 2), where the ancient Greeks exchanged ideas and made decisions.

Picture 2: Ancient Agora

After that, the teacher presents, in a simple and understandable way, the idea of rhetoric and refers to two important teachers and orators, Aristotle (see Picture 3) and

Plato (see Picture 4).
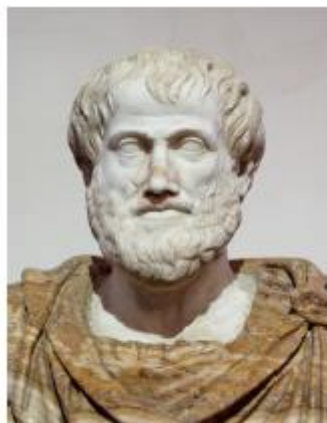
Picture 3: Aristotle
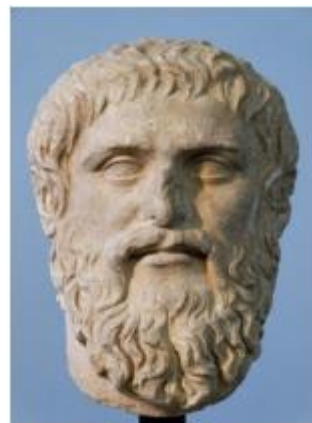
Picture 4: Plato

STEP 2. Students are practicing in rhetorical techniques: Students are divided into 4 groups. Each group has five members. All members have with them the book The Byzantium in six colors: red. They are given a specific sentence from the book. Each member practice within their groups in reading, in the correct posture (body language), in eye contact with the public, in clear articulation and expression of their speech, in the

correct rendering of the meaning of the text, in emotional contact with the audience and in active listening.

STEP 3. Exploring Europe and discussing about climate change: Students are at the classroom of New Technologies (ICT), working in pairs and playing games about Europe and climate change: 1. "Let's explore Europe!" (see Picture 5). This is a board game. Students type the link https://europa.eu/learning-corner/lets-explore-europe_el… and the fun begins. 2. A climate change quiz (see Picture 6), students enter the link https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/quiz/index.html select the Greek language and are transferred to the quiz! Each student becomes a hero for the protection of the environment. 3. A climate-themed board game (see Picture 7), students type the link https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/citizens/youth/board_en.pdf and have fun.

Picture 5   Picture 6   Picture 7

STEP 4. Climate change discussion: On the occasion of the above introductory games, a discussion is started on what climate is, climate change and the consequences of climate change on our planet. Each group discusses this major problem, the ideas of the students are highlighted and the effects of climate change in Greece and other countries are recorded. Each group searches the internet for information. Each group shares activities with its members. Within a set time, students collect information on the topic they have undertaken (see Picture 8).
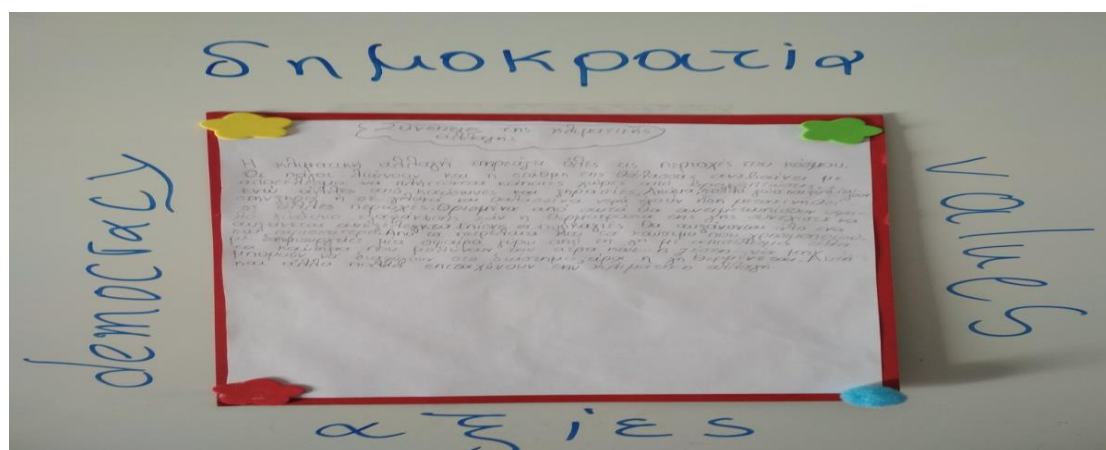
Picture 8

STEP 5. Discussion on the consequences of climate change on the environment: The students are located, with the help of new technologies, to the place of the Ancient Agora in Athens and discuss the topic: "The consequences of climate change on the environment" (see Picture 9). The members of each group propose solutions to the problems mentioned. In the end, the students vote for the most suitable solutions for their country. The results of

their vote are recorded in order to be announced to the rest of the school and consequently to the political leadership of their country.

Picture 9

5. CHALLENGE after quarantine.

After the quarantine and the opening of the schools, everyday school life had changed. My class was divided alphabetically into two groups of ten pupils.

In order to have a plenary session of the class, we used the webex platform (see Picture 10). The teacher had prepared two activities of reflection and evaluation of students work. The first activity was a google form in which students' work was collected in a questionnaire (see Picture 11). Initially, the teacher and the students read the google form questions and there were given explanations. At the same time, the teacher showed them the place of the form where there were no answers yet. The teacher uploaded the link of the google form to the chat and within 10 minutes the students answered the questions. Finally, the students saw their answers in the form of pie charts and analyzed the data (see Picture 12).
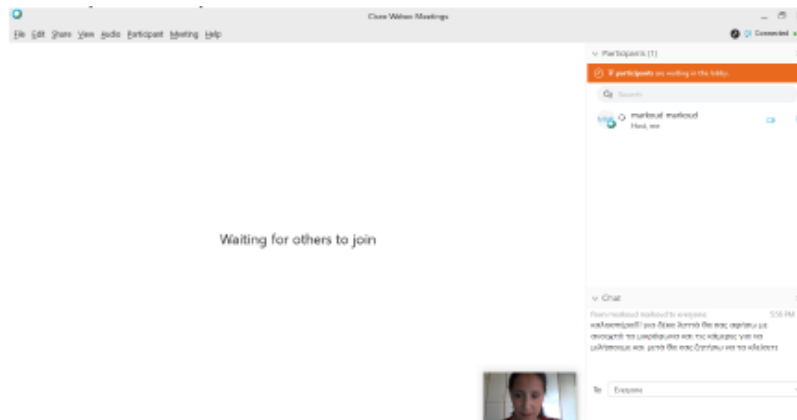
Picture 10
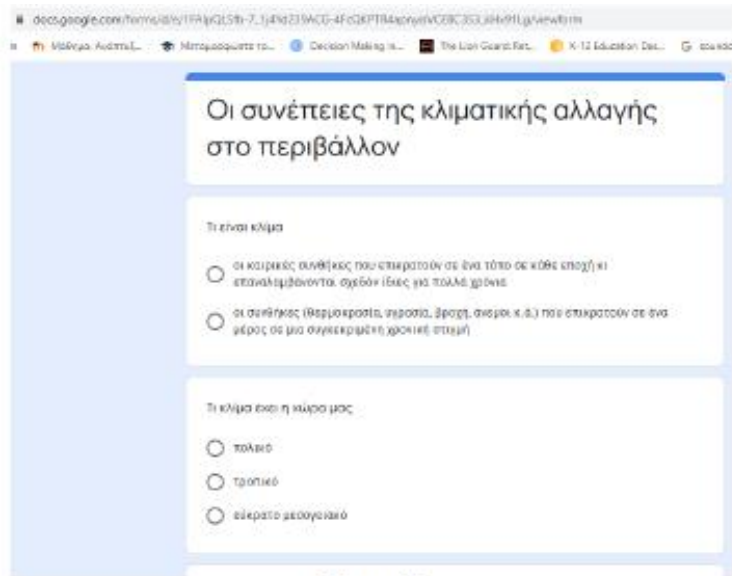
Picture 11
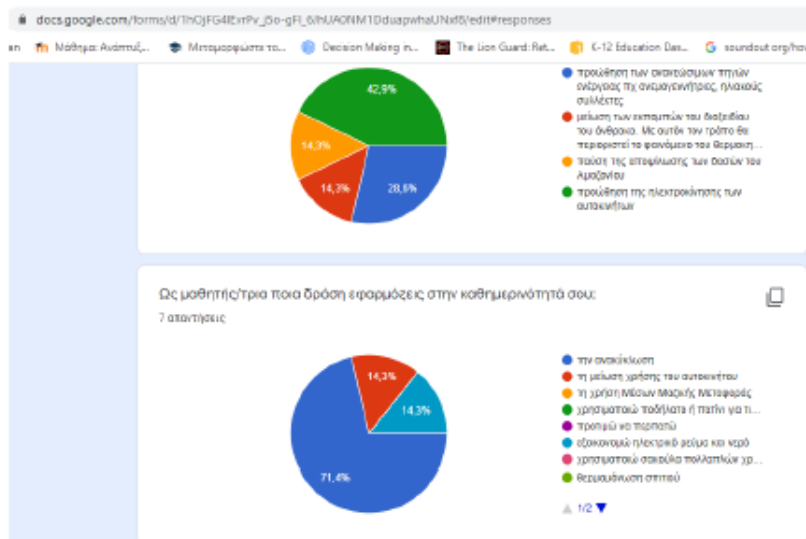
Picture 12

The second activity was a kahoot! Game (see Picture 13). This is an interactive multi-choice quiz game. All students played at the same time putting their name. At the end, the winners were announced by the application. These two activities excited my students as they all had the opportunity to be together, to see each other but also to have fun playing together, and to see their work in the form of a questionnaire.
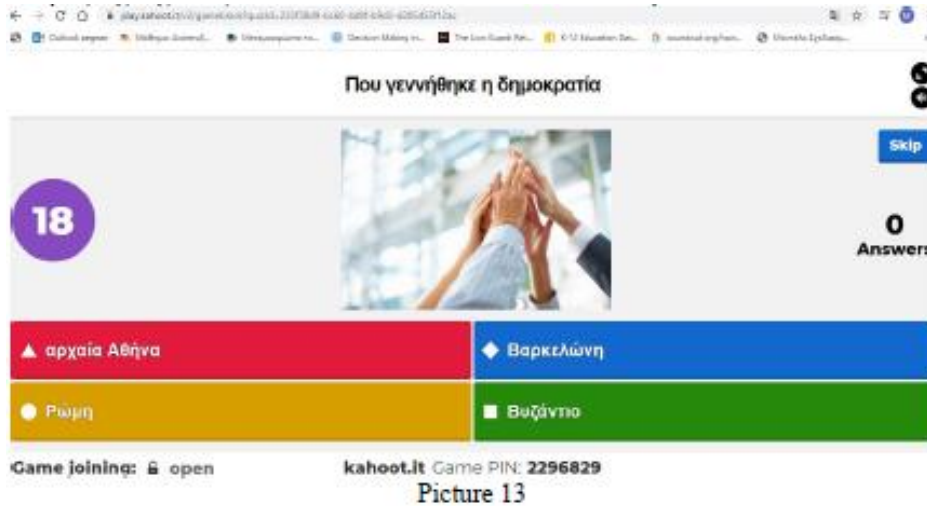
Picture 13

After these activities my students had the idea to write two letters. One to the school principal and the other to the teachers and students of the school, in order to present the results of their work (see Picture 14).

Picture 14

With these letters, students aim to inform the school unit about their concerns for the major problem of climate change, to propose actions to help tackle climate change but also to motivate other students in their school to adopt good environmental practices. They want their voice to be heard, to express from their own point of view, their thoughts and concerns about the serious problem of climate change, which is a matter for all of us. After reflection on what has been achieved, learners feel happy and satisfied, enhancing their self-esteem and motivated to claim their rights and express their feelings and point of view. At the end of this project the students created their own works of art (see Picture 15).

Picture 15

It worth mentioned that with the help of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), the Publications Office of the European Union send to all of my students a youth magazine for climate change in Greek https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/youth/docs/youth_magazine_el.pdf as well as other brochures in order to inform students about Europe, to raise awareness about their European identity and to encourage them to actively participate in actions promoting solidarity and democracy.

In conclusion:

"Students are tomorrow's European citizens. Active citizens who are informed are aware and actively participate in the political life of their country." (see Picture 16).

Picture 16: Acropolis

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https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/youth/docs/youth_magazine_el.pdf   [August, 2020]

1.4. Teaching European Union fundamental values through Natural and Environmental disasters in the Teachers4Europe program framework

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Abstract

Recent European Union surveys have shown most people's strong support for the Union. Nevertheless, there is a significant percentage (27%) of the Europeans who have negative views on it. Promoting European Union fundamental values and citizenship education is a way to alter these opinions. Towards this direction, a project was conducted in the 6th Junior High School of Iraklio Attica (Greece) from February 2020 until June 2020, in the framework of the "Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic Culture (T4E)" Erasmus+ program. This project is entitled "Natural and Environmental disasters and European solidarity" and uses the discipline of Geography as an educational platform. A group of eighteen 14-year-old students actively participated in this project. The project engaged the participants in team-working through inquiry based learning activities. The student teams collected data from natural or environmental disasters and explored the contribution of the European Union to people's relief. Due to the 2020 coronavirus outbreak, the students worked distantly from their home for about half of the project's duration. This paper presents the results of this project. This study analyzes data produced by three main sources which are students' interviews, reports and questionnaire responses. Students' initial ideas on the European Union values and the Union in general, were used as an indication for their conceptual change and project evaluation. Due to their engagement, the students have changed positively their perspectives towards the European Union values. The social distancing obstructed significantly the project's procedure. The number of participants cannot permit the generalization of the project results, but it showed that this approach introduced students to the European Union values and helped them form their own political reality. This study explores also if the inquiring based learning and the discipline of Geography can be used to forge the Union values in formal education.

Keywords: Teachers4Europe, Inquiry Based Learning, EU Fundamental Values, Solidarity

1. **Introduction**

During the last decade, Europe has come up with significant crises in multiple fronts. Indeed, the European Union (EU) has faced up a sovereign debt crisis (Lane, 2012, p.55), the migrant-refugee crisis (Laffan, 2016, pp. 915-916), the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic (Pullano et al, 2020, p. 3) and Brexit (Dinan, Nugent and Paterson, 2017, p. 8).

All these crises resulted in an existential crisis for the EU. Indeed, the European architecture is challenged everyday and the cohesion of the Union and its stability are in serious danger.

According to the latest Eurobarometer, about one-third of the European citizens across the Union characterized it as "neither a good thing nor a bad thing" and a considerable number of citizens would vote for leaving the Union (European Parliament, 2019, p.16). It has been proposed to educate young EU citizens on the Union's fundamental values and emphasize the benefits of EU citizenship to strengthen the bonds with the Union (Lifelong Learning Platform, 2016, p.2; Council of Europe, 2010). On the other hand, it is questionable if education can play a significant role in fostering EU consistency (Hakhverdian et al, 2013, p. 536; Kunst, Kuhn and van de Wegfhorst, 2020, p.37). However, it has been mentioned that living in the Union and experiencing the benefits of a globalized society motivates the young people to be more positive regarding the EU compared to the elders (Rekker, 2018, p. 74S).

In order to raise awareness about the EU values and in the framework of the "Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic Culture (T4E)" Erasmus+ program, a project has been conducted in the 6th Junior High School of Iraklio Attica (Greece), from February 2020 until June 2020. The Teachers4Europe program is an Erasmus+ program that connects students and teachers across Europe in order to establish a multinational education network. Its purpose is to forge EU bonds among the member countries through education.

This project's title is "Natural and Environmental disasters and European solidarity". Natural disasters are severe events that occur suddenly with catastrophic results. The causes of these events are natural such as earthquakes and hurricanes and the damages affect significantly vast territories (Xu et al, 2016). On the other hand, when human activity interferes in ecosystems, the damages are called environmental disasters like climate change and the nuclear accidents (Farber, 2011). Both types of disasters are a major concern of countries and the role of the EU is significant for community recovery.

The aim of this paper is to present a teaching methodology to promote EU values by using Geography as an educational platform. This project aims towards this direction as it focuses on introducing the importance of the Union to young students through its activities and make them feel and act as EU citizens. Learning the fundamental EU values helps students formulate a clear opinion on the Union's roots and role. The research questions of this study are the following:

- RQ1: Can the inquiry based learning method be successfully applied to a project focusing on fostering EU fundamental values?

- RQ2: Is a Geography-originated subject attractive to students in order to foster EU fundamental values?

- RQ3: Can the T4E project make a conceptual change in students' attitude towards the EU?

In the following section the Methodology of the project is presented and particularly, the profile of the participants, the plan of the project, the assessment tools and the data analysis. The third section describes the results of the study, which are discussed in the fourth Section

with emphasis on the influence of social distancing. Then, recommendations for future research and implementation are presented, followed by the paper's Conclusions.

2. Methodology

2.1 The profile of the participants

Eighteen 14-year-old students were selected to participate in the project, thirteen boys and five girls. All these children were enrolled in the same classes from their early education steps. All these students attended the Geography of Europe and especially its Physical Geography characteristics as a continent, its geomorphology, the local climate and Geology. They were aware of the benefits that Europe's geographical position provides to its residents. They also worked on the Human Geography of Europe and especially its political characteristics and its division into countries. They were also introduced in the Union formation history and structure.

This group was selected according to the following criteria:

1. All these students are part of the same school class. Thus, the project could be run without disturbing the operation of the school.

2. Some of these students had expressed a personal perspective against the EU idea during their Geography lessons of the curriculum.

3. Students' familiarity with each other. Since most of them had worked effectively in groups before, they might do it again successfully.

As far as the educational environment is concerned, this Junior High School is a typical Greek public school. About 10% of the school's students come from other countries, providing a multinational sense in its classrooms. The students participated voluntarily, were enthusiastic about their engagement to this project and their parents provided a consensus statement.

2.2 The project's plan

The project has been designed to engage the participating students in teamwork through inquiry based learning (IBL) activities. IBL is a very popular method in Science lessons and most of the teachers and students are familiar with it. In brief, this method emphasizes the role of students in the learning process (Bell et al, 2010, pp. 350-351). It increases the engagement of the student with the subject as they make their own connections and learn effectively.

In this project, the participants formed small working groups consisting of 3 or 4 members. After performing team empowerment activities and games, each team worked on its own on specific tasks. An overview of the IBL procedure, which has been used in this project, is presented in Figure 1, based on the relevant literature (Bell et al, 2010, pp. 354-355).

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The project framework :

1. Problem Presentation

2. Student Questions

3. The Project Questions

4. Student Responses

5. Data Collection from Student Teams

6. Student Conclusions

7. Comparison between the student initial responses (step 4)
   and their final conclusions (step 6)

8. Generalization
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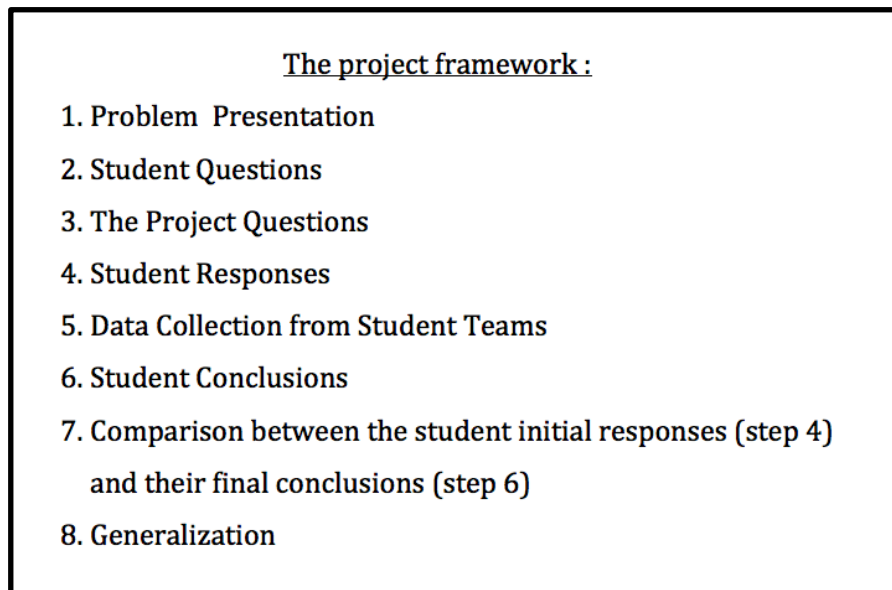
Figure 1: The Inquiring Based Learning scheme as designed for the purpose of the project. Steps 5 to 8 were performed during the 2020 coronavirus outbreak (Bell et al, 2010, pp. 354-355).

The project lasted eight teaching hours of 45 minutes, four in the classroom and four via the web. It was divided into three major phases:

Phase A: In the first phase, students were informed about the aim, the objectives and the framework of the project. A short inner survey to trace their perspective on the EU values was conducted. In the second part of the first phase, the students were asked to work on the European values as they have been described in the Treaty of Lisbon (European Union, 2007). In particular, they were asked to select which of these values is the most important for them and to explain their choice. After each task, a discussion on students' responses took place, where students commented on their answers.

Phase B: The second phase began by presenting an example of a disaster to the students in order to catch their interest. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster was selected and a special focus on its consequences across the European continent was given. This disaster occurred in 1986 in an area located in the former Soviet Union (today Ukraine) and affected significantly the European continent for a long period of time. In fact, its consequences are still studied (Berger, 2010, p.2). Students discussed the questions they had on this issue. Then, the issue on how an organization could help the people in the devastated areas was presented. Student responses were recorded.

The teams were asked to mention which natural or environmental disaster would influence their lives and in which sector. Additionally, they worked on a natural or environmental event that happened in Europe before the EU formation and on a similar one that took place after the EU formation. The teams compared the disasters' aftermath and described how the EU helped the affected countries. They interacted with their teacher, took feedback and improved their deliverable. It should be mentioned that most of the second phase of the project took place during the 2020 spring sudden school closure countrywide due to the coronavirus outbreak (UNESCO, 2020b).

Phase C: In the third phase the teams presented their results on a plenary web session and communicated their work. Then, they compared their conclusions to their initial answers, which is the core of the IBL method. Finally, they generalized the results.

2.3 Assessment tools

a) **Interviews.** In order to understand students' initial ideas on the EU, the students were interviewed with the following three questions, in the beginning of the project:

   1. What is Europe for you?

   2. What does Europe mean to you?

   3. Do you feel European citizen or what would make you feel as a European citizen?

   The themes of the questions were adopted from the European Commission's publication (2020) for EU citizens aged between 14-18. They were given as open-ended questions.

b) **Reports.** Students were asked to report which of the fundamental European values they consider as the most important. Additionally, they were asked to comment on which kind of natural or environmental disasters might affect people's lives and the EU contribution.

c) **Final Questionnaire.** At the end of the project, an online questionnaire was distributed among the participating students in order for them to evaluate it and for the teacher to collect data on any possible change in their attitude towards the Union. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions. All the questions, except for the last one were of the 5-scale Likert type (Not likely at all, Slightly likely, Not sure, Very likely, Extremely likely). For students' convenience, Google Forms were used to collect and analyze their responses. The questions are listed below:

   1. How interesting will a school program based in the EU be?

   2. Did you like the connection between Geography and the EU as it was held in the classroom?

   3. According to your point of view, to which degree is the concept of Solidarity a basic pillar of the EU?

   4. Did the T4E project help you formulate an opinion on the EU?

   5. Have you changed your opinion regarding the EU after your involvement in the T4E project in the classroom?

   6. Have you changed your opinion regarding the EU after your involvement in the T4E project through distance learning?

   7. Should EU solidarity be stronger?

   8. According to your opinion, as you formulated it within the T4E framework, the EU should:

      a) Remain as it is,

      b) Dissolve,

c) Enforce its role,

d) Weaken the bonds among the member countries,

e) No answer.

2.4. Data analysis process

Data were collected by interviewing students separately, by studying their reports and by analysing the questionnaire responses. Interviews and student reports were analyzed with content analysis and the questionnaire with descriptive statistics and mainly percentages. Student responses were translated from Greek into English by the author.

3. Results

The project began with a short student interview. Its purpose was to unveil students' views regarding the Union. Table 1 below depicts student responses on its questions. Some students avoided to reply to some questions.

Table 1: Student responses on the questions of the initial interviews. The purpose of this short survey was to unveil students' opinions and views on the EU.

Question	Student Response
What is Europe for you?	Home (1, 8, 10, 11, 17) Athletics (3, 6, 7, 9) Union of Countries (4, 5, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18) Euro currency (8)
What does Europe mean to you?	Bad thing (1) A continent (2, 7, 14, 17) Safety (3, 4) Poverty (10) Economy (11, 12) Democracy (14, 15)
Do you feel European citizen or what would make you feel as a European?	Feel nothing (1, 4) Feel as EU citizen without explanation (2, 5) Feel as EU citizen, because I live in it (3, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18) Feel due to Euro currency (6, 13) Feel, due to culture (13, 14, 15) No, different culture (7, 8) No, a real union would make me feel EU citizen (11)

Note: The numbers on the parenthesis refer to individual students. For instance the number 1 refers to a unique student.

The majority of the students described the EU as a simple union of countries (first question). The EU is called home for five students and four of them correlate it with athletics. Here,

it should be noted that it is common in Modern Greek to call the continental athletic competitions with the term "Europe". One student linked it with the currency of Euro. Nonetheless, only three students responded that they do not feel as EU citizens.

As far as the second question is concerned, about the meaning of the EU, only one student described the Union as a bad thing. Instead, four students related the EU with Geography. Three of the students focused their responses on the economic dimension. Two other students mentioned democracy, while two participants mentioned public safety.

The third question was about EU citizenship. Five students declared that they did not feel as European citizens. The possession of EU citizenship, because of living in the Union, is mentioned by seven persons. Two students accepted their EU citizenship, without giving any explanation. On the contrary, the students who declared themselves as EU citizens were based their choice on the Union's culture and the same currency (Euro).

In their short reports, students described the values of Democracy and Human Rights as being more significant for them, followed by Equality. As far as the natural and environmental disaster influence in their lives is concerned, most students mentioned deforestation, the wildfires and the earthquakes, followed by global warming and climate change.

Sixteen students replied to the final questionnaire. Their responses are depicted in Table 2. The majority described the program as interesting (about 90%). A quiet similar percentage liked the use of Geography for learning subjects about the Union. More than 60% of the participants indicated Solidarity as a basic pillar of the Union. A vast majority of students declared that this project helped them formulate an opinion about the European Union, while less than 20% were not sure.

Due to the school closure, the students participated in the project both with physical presence in the classroom and distantly. More than 55% described that they changed their opinion concerning the Union, independently of the learning model. On the other hand, about 40% of the group members mentioned no change during the distant learning process.

Table 2: Student responses on the final questionnaire.

Questions	Not likely at all (%)	Slightly likely (%)	Not sure (%)	Very likely (%)	Extremely likely (%)
How interesting will a school program based in the EU be?	0	6.3	6.3	56.3	31.3
Did you like the connection of Geography with the EU as it was held in the classroom?	0	0	18.8	31.3	50
According to your point of view, to which degree is the concept of Solidarity a basic pillar of the EU?	0	0	31.3	37.5	31.3

Did the T4E project help you formulate an opinion on the EU?	6.3	0	18.8	62.5	12.5
Have you changed your opinion regarding the EU after your involvement in the T4E project in the classroom?	12.5	12.5	18.8	50	6.3
Have you changed your opinion regarding the EU after your involvement in the T4E project in distant learning?	18.8	18.8	6.3	50	6.3
Should EU solidarity be stronger?	0	12.5	18.8	37.5	31.3

About 70% of the participants believed that solidarity within the Union should be strengthened.

The last question of the questionnaire was about the student's opinion on the EU future. Their responses can be summarized as follows: Enforce EU role at 62.5%, EU to remain as it is 31.3% and to weaken the bonds among the member countries 1.3%. None replied to dissolve the EU or avoided to answer.

4. Discussion

The results of the interviews showed that most of the participants identify the EU within a geographical framework (home, union of countries or a specific place). Interestingly enough, the participants did not connect the EU identity with their national identity as other students in other countries did (Polakova, 2018, p. 20). Additionally, they were aware of the economy and its importance in the EU. The latter is an evidence of a serious gap in their education about the EU, which might help some of them formulate negative views. Jugert, Serek and Stollberg (2019, p. 450) suggest a relation between EU-focused education curriculum and the building of EU identity among adolescents. Therefore, an educational project that focuses on cultivating a positive attitude towards the EU should propose and test a methodology to achieve it. This project suggests the Inquiry Based Learning method by using Geography issues as an educational tool. This paper reports the results of this project's application to a group of students. It studies the effectiveness of IBL and Geography combination to fulfill the project's main aim.

To begin with, the students enjoyed their participation in this project. Indeed, the analysis of the questionnaire sheets unveiled that interest. They also liked the connection with Geography. As Modern Geography tries to bridge Physical Sciences and Humanities (Bonnet, 2008, p.103), it can be used as an attractor for teaching the EU values and especially solidarity. More than 60% of the participants put Solidarity in the Union's front line and also proposed its enhancement among the countries.

As the student reports also showed, the project gave students the opportunity to connect the concepts they had learnt in other school disciplines with the EU, like Democracy and Human Rights. These findings are aligned with similar studies throughout the EU (Polakova, 2018, p. 20).

One of the project's achievements was that it helped students formulate a positive opinion regarding the EU. Particularly, according to their responses, more than half of them altered their initial views due to their engagement both in the classroom and through the distant learning. On the other hand, social distancing was an obstacle for about one fourth of the participants towards this conceptual change. This percentage is slightly different from the one which refers to the classroom performance.

The contribution of this study is to relative literature, to IBL teaching in social distancing and in linking Geography to EU fostering.

4.1. Social Distancing and other limitations

The sudden school closure in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic was a serious obstacle for the project. The author did not have the benefits from the traditional classroom setting and the project methodology had to be modified due to the mandatory social distancing. This situation has been described as emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al, 2020). Both synchronous and asynchronous teaching models were adopted through the platforms provided by the Greek Ministry of Education.

The most common problems were the same as those described in the literature (UNESCO, 2020a). The effects of the quarantine on the students' mental and physical health are under investigation (Lee, 2020, p. 421) and it is out of the scope of this study. Here, the focus is on more technical issues concerning the overall school performance of the participants.

1. First of all, difficulties in supporting the students due to the distance were recorded. To solve this problem, a student-centered model was adopted by working one-to-one with the students, in order to help them understand the difficult concepts (Morgan, 2020, p. 136-137).

2. Another issue was the discipline from the part of the students which is a common issue in e-learning environments and especially in the recent pandemic (Sun, Tang and Zuo, 2020, p. 687). The participants had to deliver their work on time or a specific part of their work, in order to move to the next step. Fortunately, most of them were self-disciplined, which can be explained by the attractiveness of the project.

3. A problem with some students was that they lack specific skills in Information Technology (Williamson, Eynon and Potter, 2020, p. 110), such as making a presentation file. Specific directions were given to the students by the teacher when it was necessary.

4. The free rider effect (Brooks and Ammons, 2003, p. 271), where a student became the team leader and performed all the teamwork, could not be identified, since the teacher had no physical observation of the teams when they worked on the subject.

All these issues could destroy team coherence. However, despite the social distancing, the participating students have accomplished all the project tasks successfully. The project

ended in the classroom as the Greek government decided school reopening for a month in May 2020. Each class was divided into two parts in every school. Half of the students came to school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, while the rest on Tuesday and Thursday and vice versa the following week (Muller and Goldenberg, 2020, p. 47).

Other study limitations are the fact that all the participants attended the same class. This means that they have constructed a particular framework on their relationship. It was difficult to understand the function rules of this group and the ways they communicated and interacted. The most interesting issue that came up during the project was the students' personality. Most of the participants of this group were extrovert and tutoring them within the group was a challenge. The team building activities were very helpful to easily overcome this issue.

5. Future recommendations - Project dissemination

The project is planned to continue during the following school year with the same group as well as with another one. The idea is to study the sustainability of the results reported here and to compare them with the ones of the other group.

The project outcomes are presented in the school's official web page. The closing ceremony was planned to take place at the end of the school year, but it was canceled due to the coronavirus school closure and the strict governmental measures for social distancing. Another recommendation is to deliver a portfolio throughout the project's website with educational material for practitioners.

6. Conclusions

The results of this study cannot be generalized, they are indicative. However, the most important result is the recorded conceptual change of the students who had initially expressed negative attitudes towards the European Union. Students discussed deeply the fundamental values of the EU and particularly the solidarity among the member countries. The analysis of their responses on the questionnaire shows that they have positively changed their views regarding the EU and its values. The Inquiring Based Learning and the concept of Geography was an effective combination which helped the project achieve its aim. The student's interest and the continuation of the project within the school closure period showed that it is easy to transfer such projects to everyday school life.

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1.5. EU common values: an eclass course for joint projects

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Abstract

The Council of Europe provided in 2016 a competence model for democratic culture which includes 4 groups of competences. It consists of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge-critical understanding. According to this model, citizens need to acquire 20 competences in order to participate effectively in a culture of democracy. In addition, digital citizenship competences are fundamental for living in the digital era. In this context, the project "Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic culture" aims to expand the Greek Teachers 4 Europe (T4E) national network into a transnational network and to establish partnerships and joint projects between schools of different participating countries on the theme of EU issues, values and democracy. At the beginning of 2020 the process of selecting Greek Ambassadors 4 Europe (A4E) and T4E was completed and their training had started. At the same time, the corresponding process in Cyprus, Germany, Malta and Romania was in progress. Simultaneously, humanity faced COVID-19 pandemic crisis which led to school closures and social distancing. Teachers struggled with remote teaching and elearning. These new emerging educational circumstances, prevented a considerable number of teachers from implementing their scheduled T4E projects due to the lack of parental consents, official school project documents etc. This paper proposes the utilization of eclass learning environment as a methodological tool for establishing joint school projects and teaching "EU common values" in school settings within the context of recent emerging changes. The course, available at link https://eclass03.sch.gr/courses/PDE5145/, has open access under creative commons license. It does not require user accounts, contains bilingual (English/Greek) educational material and interactive learning activities available to all partner schools. To sum up, "EU common values" course facilitates the establishment of schools' partnerships which can expand and cultivate within e-twinning platform.

Keywords: T4E, joint project, e-class, democratic culture, COVID-19.

Introduction

Increased migration and diversity in current societies highlights the need to live together democratically with mutual understanding. Democracy "lives through the actions and behavior of its citizens" (Council of Europe, 2016, p.7). The necessary democratic-intercultural competences are not acquired automatically; they need to be learned and practiced (Council of Europe, 2008). Education is a key factor for this. European Union (EU) has been active in the field of education for democratic culture and citizenship for

several years. Recently, the Council of Europe (2016; 2018a) provided a Competence model for Democratic Culture (CDC) which enables citizens to participate effectively in a culture of democracy; it includes 4 groups of competences: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding. According to this model, citizens need to acquire 20 competences (Figure 1) in order to attain democratic culture and behavior. Scaled descriptors were established for each competence indicating the corresponding level of proficiency (basic, intermediate or advanced) that a person achieves (Council of Europe, 2018b; 2018c). This offers education systems a common perspective on their action while addresses the essential role of education in building our future societies.
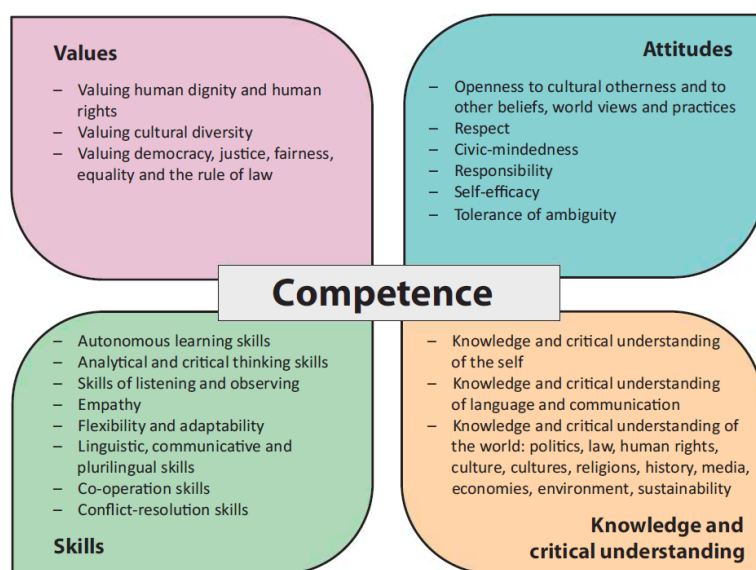
Figure 1: The 20 competences for democratic culture, (Council of Europe, 2016, p.35)

Internet and digital technologies have major impact in societies. In the digital era, people interact in real world as well as in virtual ones. Therefore, democratic culture competences have to be combined with digital citizenship competences. "It is fundamental not only to have future citizens able to participate in a democratic culture, but citizens able to do so in an environment in which ICTs add new challenges and opportunities" (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017, p.45). To place CDC competences into the current digital environment, a set of ten digital domains have been defined, grouped into three areas (Richardson & Milovidov,2019):

- Being online. Includes domains: access-inclusion, learning-creativity and media-information literacy.
- Well-being online. Includes domains: ethics-empathy, health-well-being and e-presence-communications.
- Rights online. Includes domains: active participation, rights-responsibilities, privacy-security and consumer awareness.

Project "Teachers4europe" in the time of social distancing

In this context, the project "Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic culture" aims to expand and scale up the Greek Teachers for Europe (T4E) national network (Ασδεράκη, 2017; Πριμικίρη, 2017) into a transnational network (Teachers4Europe, 2020).

Members of T4E network will act as inspiring cultural and social agents that will spread to local society, colleagues and young people the European values, guided from Ambassadors for Europe (A4E). The transnational T4E network fosters establishment of partnerships and implementation of joint projects between schools of different participating countries on the theme of EU issues, values and democracy.

At the beginning of 2020 the process of selecting Greek A4E and T4E was completed and their training had started. At the same time the corresponding process in Cyprus, Germany, Malta and Romania was in progress.

Simultaneously, humanity faced COVID-19 pandemic crisis which led in many countries to school closures and social distancing (Huang et al., 2020; Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). In most countries, teachers were asked to continue their teaching remotely and to deal urgently with their familiarization with synchronous and asynchronous learning environments (Hodges et al., 2020; Tzifopoulos, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). These new emerging educational circumstances, in many cases prevented teachers from implementation of their scheduled T4E projects due to lack of parental consents and official school project documents. It was not feasible to collect necessary papers in social distancing era.

"EU common values" eClass T4E Project

Greek schools reopened gradually after COVID-19 lockdown: on 11th May for final year secondary students, on 18th May for other secondary students and on 1st June for primary students (BBC, 2020). In all cases they were going to function for a few weeks before the end of the school year. At the same time, there were many T4E Greek schools that had not started T4E projects due to lack of appropriated documents. Furthermore, they had not established joint projects as a consequence of selection of T4E in partner countries, which completed at the beginning of school closures. In May schools had the opportunity to design, schedule and implement short viable joint projects between partners from different countries. During school closures, eclass and e-me platforms were used in Greece for asynchronous teaching while Webex Meetings and Big Blue Button platforms were adapted for real time communication.

This paper proposes the utilization of eclass learning environment as a methodological tool for establishing joint projects and teaching EU values in school settings within the context of recent emerging changes. For this reason, "EU common values" course was created and is available at the link https://eclass03.sch.gr/courses/PDE5145/. It is consistent with education for CDC and cultivation of digital citizenship competences. Furthermore, "EU common values" course can operate for teachers' inspiration and professional development.

ETwinning platform is highly recommended for partnerships between European schools. An eTwinning joint project requires enough time for finding partners, establishment of the partnership etc. During these complex circumstances, T4E can utilize eclass in order to facilitate new partnerships which can be transferred/expanded via eTwinning platform afterwards.

Due to these reasons, "EU common values" course entail:

- Open access. It does not require the use of a user account.

- Consistency with GDPR. It does not save/process any personal data.
- Creative commons license.
- Bilingual (English/Greek) educational material.

The course has short duration (2-3 hours), is applicable at school or at home and cites additional educational material for expansion. It targets mainly secondary education students aged 11-18 years and combines students' active participation with the advantages of autonomous learning and flexibility based on students' individual learning rate. Educational material and learning activities are organized into two sections (Figure 2): the introductory section focused on Europe Day and section for the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (Figure 2).

Figure 2: "EU common values" eclass course

These sections contain learning outcomes and interactive learning activities (Figure 3) which:

- Incorporate multimedia content.
- Facilitate expression of students' creativity.
- Promote differentiated learning.
- Integrate personal experiences.
- Advance collaboration.
- Enhance critical thinking and reflection.
- Utilize Padlet, a web 2.0 tool that does not require the existence of students' accounts.
- Provide feedback.

50

Figure 3: Learning activity

Conclusion

Social distancing and school closures disrupted educational process. Teachers tackled complex and frustrating conditions. In many cases, asynchronous learning environments were utilized in order to facilitate teaching process and projects.

Regardless of whether schools are open or closed, regardless of whether students are going to school or stay at home, they can participate in T4E joint projects in many ways. This paper proposes accomplishment of joint projects with remote access via eclass learning environment. Through "EU common values" course, students from different schools can participate in collaborative learning activities as active learners with the advantages of autonomous learning and flexibility based on own individual learning rate. The partnership can either be fulfilled through the course which incorporates ready-made content and learning activities or expand and cultivate within eTwinning platform.

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1.6. 14go4democracy

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Abstract

This educational paper deals with the issue of the direct and indirect form of democracy. In a modern-day class that tends to become multicultural, it is reasonable to deal with issues of accepting the immediacy of democracy or its representativeness. Students engage in democracy on the occasion of a fairy tale. They try to convey to the real world events related to decision-making through democratic processes. The dominant instrument in this journey is the use of visual rhetoric and the strengthening of participation in distance decision-making. Students use distance learning in its synchronous and asynchronous form. The choice of these teaching methods was chosen by the teacher during covid 19. The effort had begun before covid 19 and continued during its predominance. There was a discussion about diversity and the "Other" during the school year on the occasion of the course "Literature" but also the "Modern World Citizen and Democracy". The students were asked to participate in a form of teaching not so common. Nevertheless, the efforts of both students and teachers focused on the needs of students and the requirements of the course. About half of the students in the whole class responded, but only a few continued. The ongoing isolation of students from school premises has caused a saturation and indifference to their participation in online courses. In our discussions on the synchronous education platform, they admitted that the subjects of teaching were interesting, but they were tired of the slow navigation and the problems of the network. The effort of all students and the teacher continued after the opening of the schools, until the end of the school year.

Keywords: direct, indirect, democracy, citizenship, e-learning

Teaching objectives based on the rhombus model:

For the cognitive subject:

- To be able to describe the basic principles of democracy.
- To be able to analyze the basic principles of representative and direct democracy and to list the main advantages and disadvantages of each of the two.
- To be able to convey these Abstract concepts in their daily lives, within the school, especially with regard to specific issues of school operation that concern them.

For digital literacy:

- Learn to use Web 2.0 web tools.
- Organize a simple online "referendum" on whether decisions on specific issues should be made in the form of direct democracy.

- To become familiar with ICT tools and digital literacy.
- Understand the use of technology in the social sciences through Word, PowerPoint, padlet, google docs, digital diary.
- To acquaint students with the environments of synchronous and asynchronous education (e class, Cisco WebEx Meeting).
- Gain autonomy in learning using distance learning.
- Learn to work collaboratively and interactively from a distance.

Knowledge of the world:

- Get in touch with the usefulness of democratic discourse.
- To know aspects of democracy in different countries.
- Understand the ideological coloration of political discourse.
- Get in touch with extroversion, cosmopolitanism and social skills.
- Approach and explore how ideas, perceptions, prejudices, about man, society and the world are represented in the texts.

Identities:

- To make students aware of the possibilities provided by digital literacy through the use of distance education.
- To realize the development of autonomy which they can conquer through the above form of tele-education.
- To realize the possibility of becoming research and critical individuals.
- To realize their potential to create works of speech and art.
- To collaborate and communicate effectively with each other.
- To allocate responsibilities equally and democratically.

Literacy:

- Students develop literacy such as language, social, new literacy, multitasking.
- Develop creative skills such as analysis, synthesis and information processing.

Objectives according to the model of the three interconnected circles

Students use digital media and are given to them the opportunity to act on their own. Students are asked to create and present digital documents in Word, presentation software, questionnaires, crossword puzzles, concept maps, quizzes, cloud words, digital diary, character simulation, padlet, and google docs. Students work on the development of their own soft skills through the enhancement of interdisciplinary as well as the social data of a research (Κουτσογιάννης, 2012).

Theoretical starting point

This paper is based on the theory of constructivism in which learning is not transmitted, but is a process of personal construction of knowledge, which is based on previous knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, this effort is based on sociocultural learning theories. The learning and cognitive development take place in specific cultural contexts and are essentially created by the individual's interaction with other individuals (Bruner, 1977). Students take an active role in the learning process, while the teacher acts as a supporter in a virtual space in distance education (Keegan, 1996). The students work mainly

in groups and try to present their conclusions in the plenary session of the classroom and the school, with digital and printed polytropic text. This paper combines the advantages of the use and utilization of ICT and is based on sociocultural learning theories (Anon., Φεβρουάριος 2020). This paper, also, is based on the Storyline which is an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning (Ηλιοπούλου, 2006 December). Storyline uses a story to teach the required knowledge in a way that mirrors real life. The method is based on the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1987). By also utilizing information and communication technologies in the teaching of the social sciences, we can have direct access to digital libraries, files, text bodies and electronic resources. Web 2.0 tools provide rich options for the teacher, while not requiring high technical knowledge requirements. In addition, they are suitable for learning processes that take place within collaborative groups. Finally, the student in distance learning, according to Wedemeyer (Wedemeyer, 1973, op. Cit., Keegan, 1996: 54) (Keegan, 1996) and Moore, should have secured his autonomy in terms of: i) the goal setting, ii) the study methods and iii) his assessment (Moore, 1972). The concept of autonomy, of course, concerns the right of the trainee to take responsibility for his or her own learning process and, more specifically, to define the purpose, content, method, and evaluation of his or her learning process. An important obstacle to achieving the above goals is the wandering of the mind in the multitude of information available on the Internet. Another obstacle to e-learning is the lack of development of critical reading and writing skills, especially in asynchronous education programs. An additional obstacle for students in distance learning programs is the ambiguity of the role of teachers. Therefore, self-directed learning should be strengthened, but on clearly cooperative terms. There should be frequent, valid and timely feedback so that the student can develop critical thinking and not be led to failure. In other words, the goal of distance education should be the gradual development of students' autonomy.

Teaching organization - logistical infrastructure

Teacher provides learning and interaction environments that will support the effort of team such as the computer, the microphone, the camera (when necessary), the existence of an email account, social media, sms. Alternatively, we ensure the existence of the mobile phone. Then, after informing our students about the learning environments that we can use, we give the information for their introduction and the possibility to choose them according to the needs and accessibility of the students. Special reference is made to the tele-cooperation groups and to the development of the soft skills of the students. The Web 2.0 tools is being used (Bruce, 2008).

Work style

Students work in the proposed distance learning environments of the ministry such as WebEx and e class by groups that have been pre-agreed and defined by the students themselves in a previous online or other contact. We encourage students to read critically and evaluate websites and then compose the text they are asked to do. We ask them to comment on how they chose the images, the font, its size, but also why they used the specific words, such as the specific verbs and not some different ones (Baynham, 2002). Students process information about the text on page 22 of the student's book, digital media, videos and in combination with the freedom of movement they have with the use of both platforms and reflection who succeed in distance education, search into the texts and try to

identify their ideological foundations (Κουτσογιάννης, 2007). They are thus actively involved in the world of social education and co-shape their work. Students announce the results of their work and through the local network they "pass" the file they have created to the workstations of the other groups and publish them on the school's website (Ματσαγγούρας, 2008).

Brief description of the paper

This educational paper deals with the issue of the direct and indirect form of democracy. Students themselves are looking for ways to understand the different social and political backgrounds of today's society and are looking for ways to communicate with groups of people or individuals, such as their classmates from other countries who carry their own socio-political backgrounds. Given that students often like to degrade social norms and the adults who serve them, the present paper has been chosen in order to teach the use of otherness in democratic environments. The cognitive subjects in this paper deal with citizenship, languages, literature, art and sociology. Students work in groups and individually. Teaching is done remotely, collaboratively and interactively. ICT is used.

Course of the paper

Part of the text: "THE ELECTIONS OF ANIMALS" by PEDRO MARKOUN, and PAOULA DESGALDO is posted on the e class of the teacher's lesson (Desqualdo, 2019). Students enter the e class environment asynchronously and read the text. Then they listen to the whole story and together with their teacher and classmates through the modern distance learning of the WebEx platform, they are led to a storm of ideas about the concept of democracy that the text introduces. Based on the methodology of the Storyline, 4 steps of story development are created. Firstly, the story is created in a specific place and time, secondly, the characters are created, thirdly, the students are called to research a way of life and finally they are called upon to solve real problems of society, as they experience them every day as active or non-active citizens. So, during the 1st hour of the paper, the students have read the text, have prepared the four steps of the Storyline, have discussed with the teacher and their classmates and are preparing their 1st worksheet. In the current paper, they are dealing with their 1st worksheet in the lesson: "Modern World Citizen and Democracy".

ANNEX Worksheet A. Group 1.

It has been preceded by communication of their observations to the groups of their classmates and to the teacher through the navigation of e class and specifically through the command "Chat". After will coming to the plenary session, they deal with the Worksheet assigned to them by the teacher. (40′).

Four groups of three people are created, except for one that will have four students. It is necessary for each group to have at least one student with sufficient skills in using a word processor, presentation software and a browser. We could categorize the roles that students take on in the small group, at the stage of the exploratory process as follows:

1. To that of the PC operator and the "navigator" in digital material.

2. To that of the reader-coordinator of the process.

3. To that of the secretary of the group holding the notes.

For the assignment of roles to each student, the intervention of the teacher is not necessary. By acting on and interacting with each other, students take on the role that they themselves consider to belong to them and that the group usually recognizes without objection. We encourage students to read reviews and evaluate websites, videos and additional information in historical texts or maps and then compose one text.

You have read part of the text: "THE ELECTIONS OF ANIMALS" by PEDRO MARKOUN, and PAOULA DESGKALDO and the section Democracy on page 22 of the student's book: "Contemporary World Citizen and Democracy" during the asynchronous distance education on the e class platform. Complete the present text of the story during this 1 hour on the Cisco WebEx Meeting platform (15 ') (Anon., 28-08-2018). During fifteen minutes, create your stage and the characters imaginatively and collaboratively. Then, after researching a lifestyle based on storytelling, you are called upon to solve real problems in society. More specifically, try to deal with issues of the immediacy or not of democracy in our society. Then each one individually tries to understand the life of the animals in their attempt to capture the lion and finally save democracy. What did the animals do in the end? Which similar cases can you "tell" through your paintings? What problems would you like to solve in today's society and what solutions would you suggest? Do the different worksheets of group A. 1. After overcoming your fears about image design difficulties by watching excerpts from an informative and optimistic English-language video on image design, the so-called visual rhetoric, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TXEZ4tP06c (05') draw a picture of the community of animals in the fairy tale, exchange the paintings with your classmates and create a poster or a presentation or a picture book. Send your work to the teacher as well. (15 ') 2. Refer to the website of the "New Generation" and specifically to the subject "Development of new forms of participation in democratic processes, with particular emphasis on e-participation and the role of social media" and after reading this create a cloud word with the most basic ideas it proposes. (10 ')

ANNEX Worksheet A. Group 2.

Group 2 students are involved as well as Group 1 students with the student's book and activities as shown in the text above. They prepare their team's worksheets: 1. After overcoming your fears about image design difficulties by watching excerpts from an informative and optimistic English-language video about image design, the so-called visual rhetoric, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TXEZ44tP06c (05') draw a picture of the life of animals in the fairy tale, exchange the paintings with your classmates and create a poster or a presentation or a picture book. Send your work to the teacher as well. (15 ') 2. One of the goals of the United Nations in relation to International Youth Day 2019

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=DAGXvymq1jY&feature=emb_title is to help young people learn about many important issues such as participating in the decision-making process for the world and their lives. After watching the short English-language video, create a crossword puzzle or a Power Point presentation with the concepts displayed on it. (10 ').

ANNEX Worksheet A. Group 3

Group 3 students are involved as well as Group 1and 2 students with the book and activities as shown in the text above. They then prepare their team's worksheets: 1. After overcoming your fears about image design difficulties by watching excerpts from an informative and optimistic English-language video about image design, the so-called visual rhetoric, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TXEZ44tP06c (05) draw a picture of the community of animals in the fairy tale, exchange the paintings with your classmates and create a poster or a presentation or a picture book. Send your work to the teacher as well. (15 ') 2. In order to strengthen World Citizenship Society https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=23Jy2iPfVX8&feature=emb_title should create people who care about the various problems of the planet, issues related to the environment and climate change as well as to the religious, racial and ideological differences. Based on watching the video (in English), try to create a page on the padlet or a digital diary page with the main points of a global citizen's identity and the benefits of the global community. (10 ')

ANNEX Worksheet A. Group 4

Group 4 students are involved as well as Group 1, 2 and 3 students with the book and activities as shown in the text above. They then prepare their team's worksheets: 1. After overcoming your fears about image design difficulties by watching excerpts from an informative and optimistic English-language video about image design, the so-called visual rhetoric, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TXEZ44tP06c (05) draw a picture of the animal community of the fairy tale, exchange the paintings with your classmates and create a poster or a presentation or a picture book. Send your work to the teacher as well. (15 ') 2. Refer to the "New Generation" website and specifically to the subject: "Increasing Youth Participation in Voluntary Organizations and Voluntary Activities". After reading the information related to volunteering that is a form of participation based on a sense of solidarity between to young people and other social groups for selfless service to other members of society; and that volunteering is a way to get involved in other areas of democratic life, and that volunteering also offers significant opportunities to pursue an active state of citizenship by strengthening the democratic participation of young people, create a digital diary page with your own volunteer efforts or your family's or a quiz. (10 ')

ANNEX Worksheet B. Group 1

You have dealt with the fairy tale "THE ELECTIONS OF ANIMALS" by PEDRO MARKOUN, and PAOULA DESGKALDO during the 1st hour of this paper, with its extensions to the real human society as well as with the "Democracy" section on page 22 of the book: "Modern Citizen and Democracy". You can refer to the Dictionary of Common Modern Greek and find the exact meaning of the word "democracy". (05 ') Then you can watch a video from youtube on the subject of direct democracy in Switzerland. (5.53 ') Then discuss the video data and record your findings. 1. Discuss, among other things, the comments that follow this video. Try to understand the reactions of its viewers and the comments they post about it. Do you think that the citizen of Europe is interested in his contact with the government? How is this reflected in the comments of the viewers of the video? Record your observations in a Word text. (10 ') 2. Present the advantages and disadvantages of decision-making in a direct democratic way on a particular issue and then

measure the popularity of both decisions. The question for this group to discuss is whether the relevant decisions should be made through direct democratic procedures. The technology tool you will use for the arguments of direct democracy is the padlet. (05 ') 3. Also, the question is asked for consultation and verdict by classmates: "how will the school's educational trips be decided and carried out?" The team will be divided into two subgroups. One subgroup will have to list the pros and cons of implementing direct democracy in the above case and the other will have to edit a list of different arguments, for or against, in each case, in Google forms. (10 '). 4. In the presentation phase, share the result of your work through the collaborative document and accept the comments of your classmates. At the end of the process, use Google forms to vote on whether each of the two issues is appropriate for direct democratic processes. (In other words, there will be a referendum on whether referendums are needed.) Voting and results in the form of diagrams and percentages are presented in the cooperative document. (10´)

ANNEX Worksheet B. Group 2

Group 2 students work like students of group 1. Students and find the exact meaning of the word "state". What do they notice about this concept? (05 ') Then they can watch the same video with the students of group 1. and 1 record your observations in a Power Point text. 2. Work on the padlet as well as the students of group 1. (05 ') 3. The question is for the consultation and judgment by your classmates on "what will be the pedagogical measures in cases of non-compliance with school rules by a student?" The team will be divided into two subgroups. One subgroup will have to list the pros and cons of implementing direct democracy in the above case and the other will have to edit a list of different arguments, for or against, in each case, in Google forms. (10 '). 4. Students in group 2. can work like the students in group 1. (10´)

ANNEX Worksheet B. Group 3

Group 3 students work like group 1. and 2. students and find the exact meaning of the word "market" (agora) especially its fourth version. What do they notice about this concept? (05 ') Then they can watch the same video with the students of group 1. and 2. and they can 1. record their observations in google docs presentation text. 2. A form of implementation of the immediacy of decisions took place in the Community of Thessaly with representatives of the people deciding the fate of their cities. Each Thessalian city had its own Community and had minted its own coins. In the Ancient Theater of Larissa, in addition to the theatrical performances, there were also open-air meetings of the church of the Municipality, which in ancient Larissa had the ancient name of "Agora". In addition, the representatives, of the city-state that participated in the federation of the Thessalian cities, with Larissa as its capital, were meeting at the same monument in the same Community of Thessaly. Imagine that you are participating in such an ancient gathering. Compare the two presentations of this direct and participatory form of democracy in Switzerland and that in the Ancient Theater of Larissa. Create a digital poster with stimuli from the above two versions of direct democracy or a new story in the logic of Rodari's imaginary nicknames with the most used words of the texts in a Word text. (10 ')

ANNEX Worksheet B. Group 4

Dealing with the fairy tale "THE ELECTIONS OF ANIMALS" by PEDRO MARKOUN, and PAOULA DESGKALDO during the 1st hour of this paper, with its extensions to the real human society as well as with the "Democracy" section on page 22 of the book: "Modern Citizen and Democracy", you can go to the Gateway to the "Greek Language" in the New Greek Bodies and refer to the text bodies of the three versions of the newspaper "Ta Nea", the newspaper "Macedonia" and the Textbooks of the Pedagogical Institute and type the word "democracy". What do you notice about the frequency of occurrence of this word in each of the above environments? Give an answer about this difference in the appearance of the word. (05 '). Then you can watch the same video with the students of group 1., 2. and 3. and 1 record their observations in google docs presentation text. 2. Watch the video on e-democracy. (1.30 ') and discuss, among other things, the comments that follow this video. Try to understand the reactions of its viewers and the comments they post about it. Do you think that the citizen of Europe is interested in his electronic contact with the government? How is this reflected in the comments of the viewers of the video? Can e-democracy restore the lost glory of ancient direct democracy? Record your observations in a google docs text. Alternatively, you can participate in the teacher's flip grid and actively participate with the answers that support this view. (10')

Innovation

Due to the covid 19, several digital tools were used during the distance lessons.

Were used Web 2 environment, internet, e class, Cisco WebEx Meeting platform, websites, email and various environments such as google docs, Word, Power point, Padlet, flipgrid, penzu, socrative, crosswordlabs, wordart, issuu and canvas.

With the support of the teacher, the students created a logo and a small video to promote the electronic voting. The goal of this work is the promotion of digital citizenship. Also, in recent days in our school, students are trying to create a fantastic face on one of the social media in the name of a fairy tale hero who had been involved in the storyline at the beginning of the program. This effort will lead to create a network of posts with other secondary non-existent persons who will present their views on various social issues that concern them. This effort is seen as an original application of digital citizenship that leads students to practice the creative writing in a pleasant and original way, and to participate in an informal sociological research.

Correlation with the work of T4E

Among the program's axes are the promotion of democratic values, the enhancement of global citizenship, and inclusive education and diversity. I believe, then, that this paper leads students to know and promote democratic values such as distance participation, equality in access to decision-making, and the promotion of acceptance of diversity through the use of visual rhetoric. It also promotes the acceptance of diversity and active citizenship through the creation of citizen groups. Finally, all the digital tools that had been used promote the above thematic axes and awaken the students to actively participate in decision-making regarding their future.

Variation of targeted groups

The target group we worked with and are working with is the second class of High school (16 - 17 years old) but it can change as long as the goals, the methodology but mainly the tools will be re-framed.

Methodology

We ensure the use of the school's computer room, and the students' contact with the school library. During the elaboration of this paper due to the suspension of the operation of the schools due to the covid 19 we secured the learning and interaction environments that will support the effort of our team such as the computer, the microphone, the camera (when necessary), the existence of an email account, social media, telecommunications. Alternatively, we ensure the existence of the mobile phone. Students initially work in their classrooms and in the computer room. They then work in the proposed distance learning environments of the ministry such as WebEx and e class by groups that have been pre-agreed and defined by the students themselves in a previous online or other contact. We encourage students to read reviews and evaluate websites and then compose the text they are asked to do. Students announce the results of their work and through the local network they "pass" the file they have created to the workstations of the other groups. The teacher ensures the smooth operation of the educational process, encourages and feeds the students.

Possibility of transfer to daily school life

In this paper, the students participated in a collaborative document on google docs in order to agree and design the destination and schedule of their trip. They also discussed opportunities for students to influence their teachers' decisions about pedagogical measures. At the end of the process, students held a small referendum on whether school referendums are needed. Finally, the students participated in an online discussion about parts of the lessons that they would like to learn more about due to the non-functioning of the school due to the covid 19. Proposal: Students can also create projects in groups on an asynchronous education platform, using the "six-hat thinking" method of Edward de Bono (Bono, 2006), (Γεωργίου, n.d.). According to this method, which supports forms of distance learning, students develop their creative, side thinking.

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STUDENT WORKS

Snapshots from e class: 2

Snapshots from Cisco WebEx Meeting: 3

Snapshots from completed worksheets: 10

Snapshots from e class: 2

1.

2.

Snapshots from Cisco WebEx Meeting: 3

1.

2.

3.

Snapshots from completed worksheets: 10

1.

2.

3.

ΤΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΥΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΑΣ

Across

✓3. η δικαιοσύνη σε ένα δημοκρατικό κράτος είναι

✓5. είναι μια άλλη θεμελιώδης και αδιαπραγμάτευτη αρχή της δημοκρατίας και επικρατεί όταν εκλείπουν οι ανισότητες

8. αδιαπραγμάτευτη αρχή της δημοκρατίας και υπάρχει όταν η μειοψηφία την ελέγχει

9. είναι μια άλλη θεμελιώδης

✗10. είναι τύπος αντιπροσωπευτικής ή αλλιώς έμμεσης δημοκρατίας

Down

✓1. όλες οι εξουσίες ασκούνται όπως ορίζει το

✓2. είναι θεσμός άμεσης δημοκρατίας

✓4. όλες οι εξουσίες σε μια Δημοκρατία πηγάζουν από τον

✗6. η δημοκρατία είναι ένα ...πολίτευμα διότι απαιτεί από όλους τους πολίτες συμμετοχή,υπευθυνότητα, κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη κ.α.

7. είναι μια από τις θεμελιώδεις και αδιαπραγμάτευτες αρχές της δημοκρατίας

4.

5.
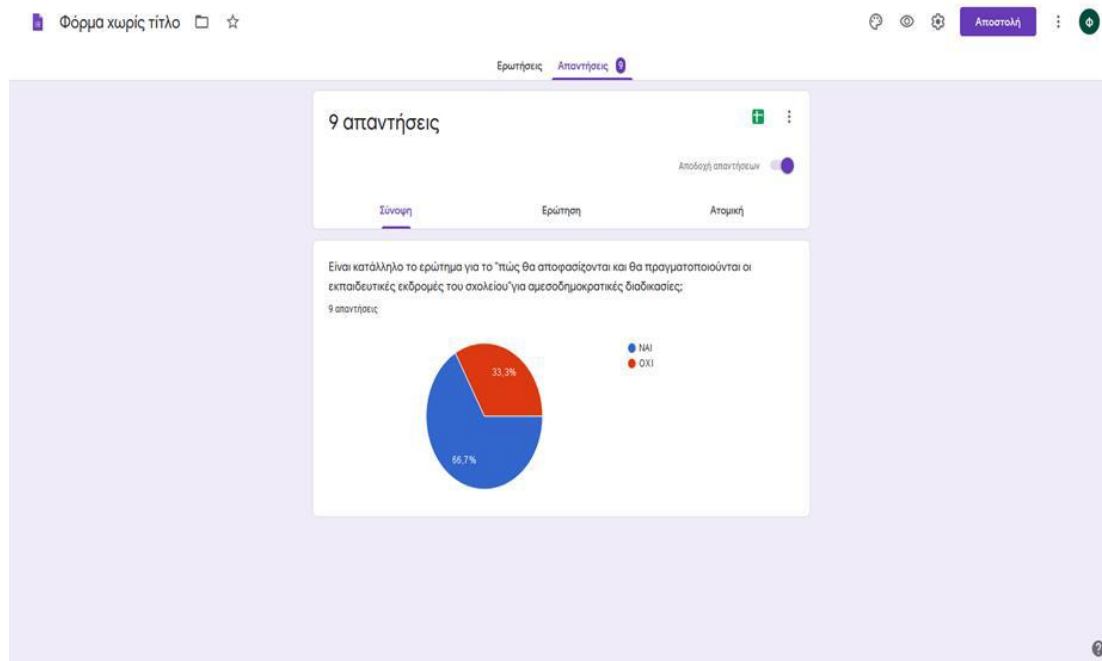
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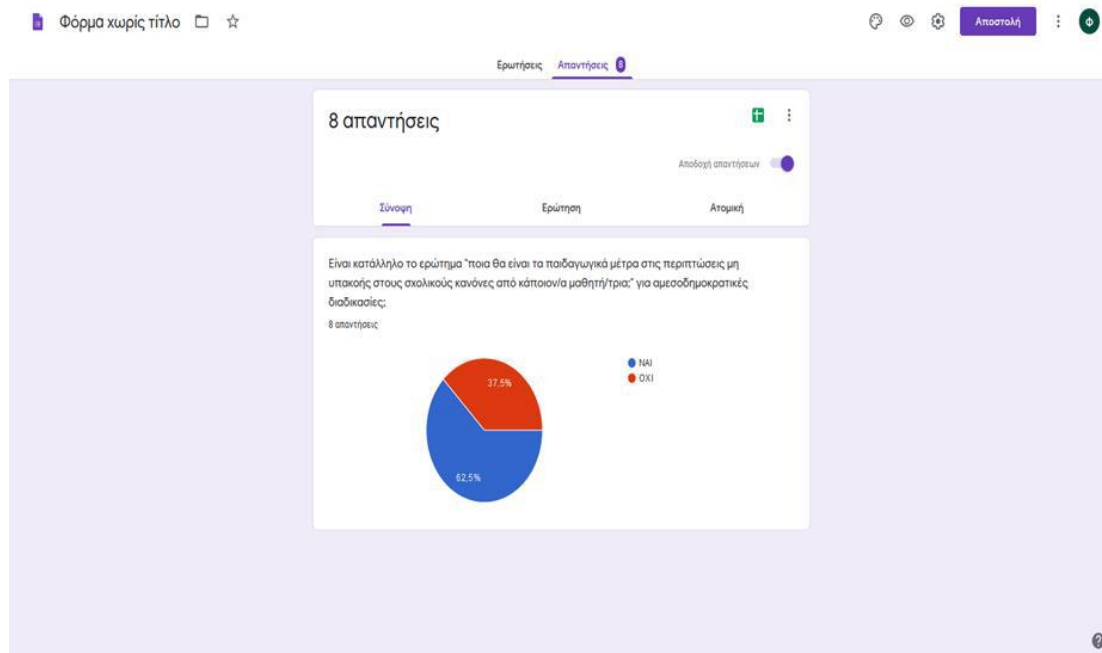
7.

ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΜΑΤΑ ΥΠΕΡ ΤΗΣ ΑΜΕΣΗΣ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑΣ	ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΜΑΤΑ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΣ ΑΜΕΣΗΣ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑΣ	ΕΡΩΤΗΜΑΤΑ
Ύπαρξη της δημοκρατίας από τα αρχαία χρόνια		Από πότε χρονολογείται η άμεση δημοκρατία;
Συμμετοχή όλων στη λήψη αποφάσεων	δεν υπάρχει πάντα συμμετοχή από όλους	Ποια τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά της;
	Δεν είναι τόσο συχνή η επαφή του κοινού με τις εκλογές για διάφορα θέματα.	Ποιες οι βασικές διαφορές με την αντιπροσωπευτική δημοκρατία;
ένα δημοψήφισμα για την ευρωπαϊκή ένωση	δεν μπορεί να γίνεται πολύ συχνά referentum	Είχαμε πρόσφατα στην Ελλάδα κάποια εφαρμογή άμεσων δημοκρατικών διαδικασιών;
όλο το σχολείο συναποφασίζει		Πώς παίρνονται οι αποφάσεις στο σχολείο γενικά;

Student projects: logo

8.

71
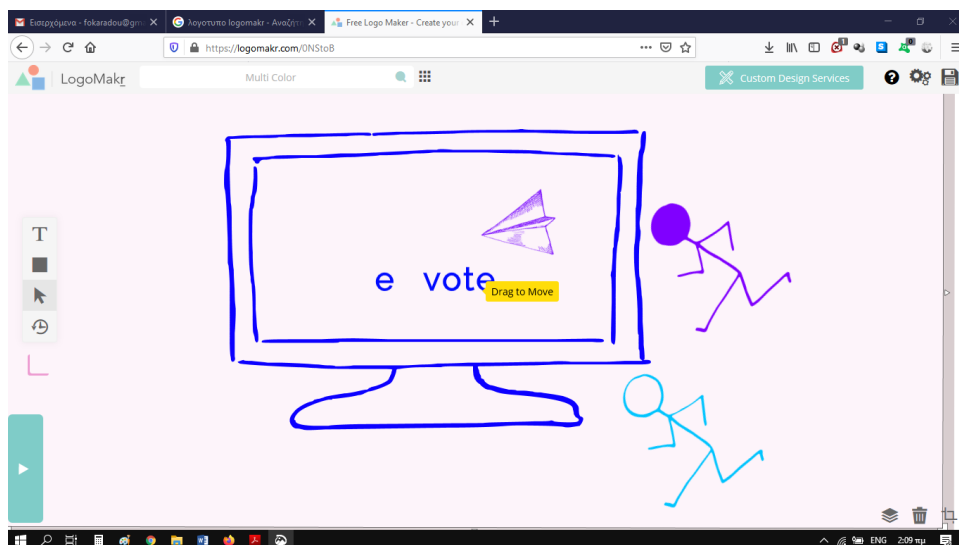
Student projects: video

9.
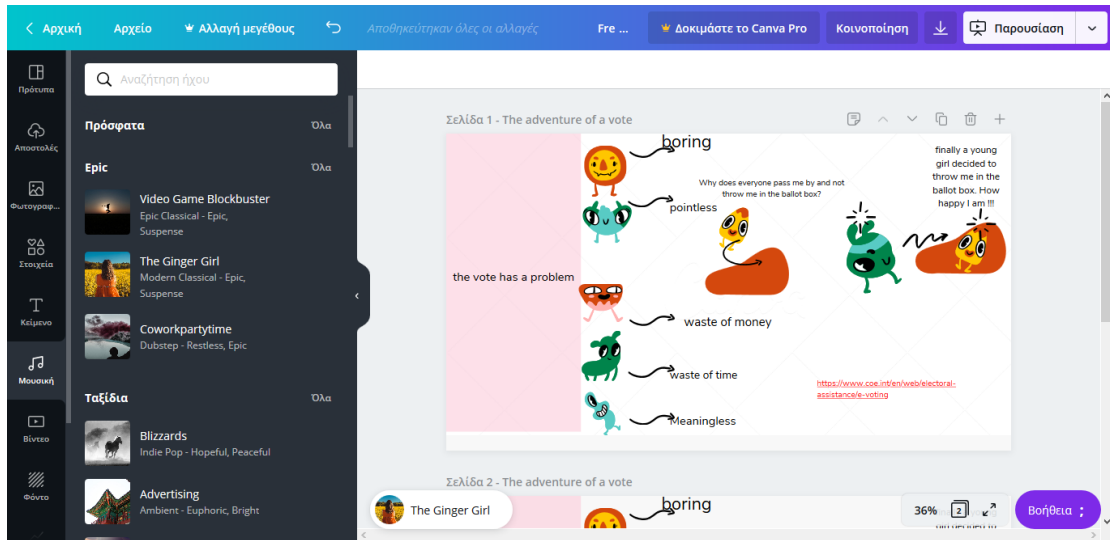
Student projects: Digital picture book

10.
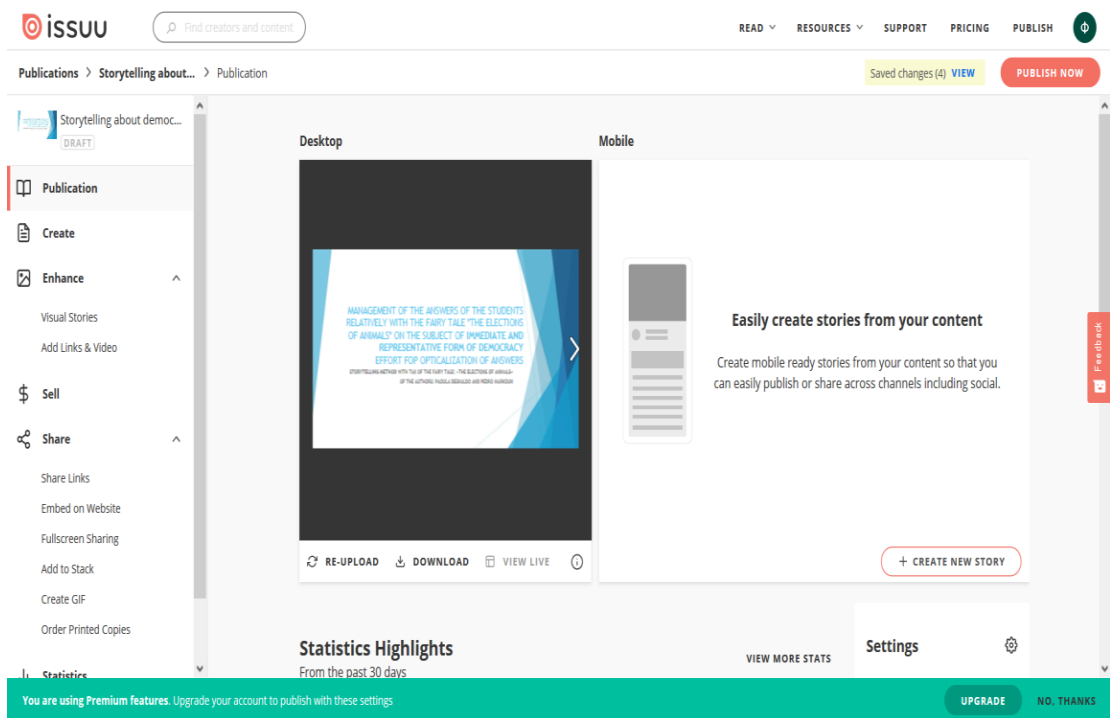
PART II: Skills

2.1 "Cognitive skills' contribution to Citizenship Education"

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Teacher4Europe
Home Economics Teacher at 1st Junior High School of Melissia, Athens
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Abstact

Citizenship Education is a growing field of study in the European Union on account of its eminent role in preserving social equity and building a European Citizenship Identity. Nowadays, Citizenship Education must focus on the significant role of personal responsibility, adaptation as well as resiliency in dealing with pandemics and other imminent social crises. Higher cognitive skills, such as critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving can promote students' capacity to detect fake news, discern right from wrong, have a broader scope of things to crystallize opinion as well as show patience and mental endurance. In this presentation, we propose innovative teaching methodologies and practices implementing students' cognitive skills towards the enhancement of Citizen Consciousness. First of all, our presentation explains more on cognitive skills and their relation to Citizen Consciousness. Second, we suggest ways to integrate cognitive skills, such as critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving in the lessons of Citizenship Education. Third, we propose an interdisciplinary collaborative project named: "Constructing a digital tool (Chatbot) based on European Union Pillars to upskill and reskill Youth", which is in progress at our school. This project comprises four school subjects; Home Economics, Geography, Civil Education and ICTs. Our teaching techniques are inspired by Socrates' dialectic method. Finally, we outline the strengths of our project and its expected results in terms of students' acquired competences, knowledge and behavior.

Keywords: Citizenship Identity, Education, Cognitive Skills

Introduction

Cognitive skills encompass a set of mental abilities and skills, such as working memory, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility, problem solving, creativity and critical thinking, communication, cooperation, empathy and self-regulation. Cognitive skills constitute human cognition and emotion, related to cognitive and mental enhancement. Moreover, the aforementioned skills are in line with European Union's core competences and values for the 21st Century; active citizenship, social equity as well as social inclusion. Citizenship education is a school subject, which can embrace cognitive skills training both as a teaching practice and a pedagogical technique. In addition, Higher Order Thinking Skills as described in Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives follow a ranking according to the complexity of the cognitive functions taking place in each one of the following

educational objectives; knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. In addition, the difficulty of using higher cognitive skills to achieve our top level personal need, self-fulfillment, is depicted in Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (Krathwohl, 2002, p. 218; Maslow, 1943, p. 370).

Cognitive skills are no stranger to European Commission. The New Skills Agenda has been number one in the list of major initiatives in the Commission Work Programme 2016. It is centered on employment, social affairs and inclusion, implemented through the following policy efforts and systemic reforms in education and training (European Commission "A New Skills Agenda for Europe", 2016, p. 3):

1. Improving the quality and relevance of skills building.

2. Setting as a top priority to make skills and qualifications more visible and comparable.

3. Upskilling and reskilling youth as well as improving lifelong learning skills for better career choices. The transferable skills, such as communication skills, collaboration skills, creative thinking, problem solving, self-leadership, entrepreneurship, digital literacy are rarely formally assessed in Member States. Furthermore, the latter skills were rarely considered a top level educational objective. As a result, people with interdisciplinary knowledge background, accompanied by the 21st Century Skills are increasingly valued by employers, although yet in short supply on the labour market of the Member States (European Commission's "A New Skills Agenda for Europe", 2016, p. 4).

EU workforce is ageing and shrinking, thus leading to individual-level skill deficiencies and underproductiveness. The aforementioned fact is mainly driven by european citizens' lack of ICT literacy skills including the ability to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information as well as the ability to acquire, process, store, retrieve and use information efficiently and effectively. Upskilling and reskilling EU citizens means rising innovation, entrepreneurship as well as competitiveness. Therefore, cognitive skills address the need of EU Member States to reform their educational systems as well as they trigger a change of mindsets in both individuals and organizations.

In addition, up-to-date skills are a key to growth and social cohesion. Cognitive abilities shall provide a strong foundation for emotional well-being and social competence and all together they are the bricks and mortar of brain architecture. Individuals' ability to "learn how to learn" is reciprocally related to cognitive flexibility and healthy aging.

Meanwhile, the concept of humanity, self-regulation and self-knowledge are well known virtues originating in Ancient Greece, but they are also considered mental abilities that can pass down to next generations through education. Socrates, Plato, Aristophanes, Xenophon understood self-knowledge as the process of constituting yourself as a self who can be guided by knowledge toward the good life (Moore, 2015, p. 3). The ultimate human virtue that can be a fundamental principle in every educational system is building happy individuals. Happy individuals use their knowledge and skills to serve human-centered values, such as peace, freedom, social equity, social justice, social inclusion as well as personal well-being and quality of life (Reshotko, 2009; Drigas, Karyotaki, Skianis, 2017, p. 4).

Implementation of Cognitive Skills Modules in Classrooms

Higher order skills have already been implemented in classroom settings through STEM, ICTs and Technology Education (Chinedu, Kamin and Olabiyi, 2015, p. 42; Drigas and Karyotaki, 2014, p. 75). ICTs can implement multi-level cognitive experiences, which boost students' cognitive skills and promote their self-regulation skills, regarding the construction of knowledge and the volition towards personal development. Language Education and Social Sciences have been also found to enhance students' complex thinking skills with special emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving (King, Goodson and Rohani, F. no date, p. 7-10). However, teachers should be well equipped with higher order thinking skills to be able to teach them in the classroom (Pillay Arumugan et al. 2019, p. 1-8).

Moreover, Citizenship Education is a school subject that can embrace cognitive skills as a separate part of its curriculum. Especially, teaching children self-regulation and decision making skills may enable improved general academic performance (Doyle et al., 2009, p. 1-2, Kautz, 2014, p. 4-5). Furthermore, by teaching 21st Century Skills, such as critical and creative thinking, entrepreneurship, problem solving and digital literacy as well as empathy and communication skills, students can develop their personal, professional and social background (Drigas, Karyotaki, Skianis, 2017, p. 17-18). Thus, 21st Century skills teach students how to be active and competent citizens (EU Science Hub, 2016) and provide the tools to assist students' attempt in satisfying their higher needs, such as social acknowledgement and self-actualization (Green, 2000, p. 10-12).

The school year 2019-'20, we started implementing our Teachers4Europe Erasmus+ Project, with the title: "Constructing a digital tool (Chatbot) based on European Union Pillars to upskill and reskill Youth". In the beginning, we set the pedagogical frame as well as the learning goals of our project. Our brainstorming concluded that students should:

- First, get acquainted with cognition and its relation to learning, such as memory, attention and other higher cognitive skills.

- Second, realize the significance of active learning methodologies and their relation to lifelong learning.

- Third, relate active and lifelong learning, simultaneously, to their Citizen Consciousness and their brain health.

- Fourth, relate cognitive skills improvement, simultaneously, to their Citizen Consciousness and their brain health.

- Fifth, be trained in healthy living as a way to enhance, simultaneously, cognitive skills and Citizen Consciousness.

In the second step of our project, students performed group work in the subject of Citizenship Education, related to defining the cognitive skills that can be taught at schools and are crucial for combating social inequity and social exclusion. According to our students at 3rd grade of the 1st Gym of Melissia, Athens, schools have to be able to enhance the following skills in order to teach youth the significance of democracy, social equity & social inclusion:

1. Responsibility.

2. Self-respect & respect for others.

3. Patience & resiliency.

4. Critical/creative thinking.

5. Compassion, empathy and prevention of violence.

6. Humanity and support to people in need.

7. Lifelong learning accompanied by media & information literacy.

8. Self-regulation (control, reflection, self-monitoring).

9. Be sociable & cooperative.

Our students continued with implementing innovative ideas and tools to convince their fellow students of the importance of these skills for their everyday lives, now and in the future. The project shall be concluded by the end of the school year 2020-'21 with the completion of our project: a digital tool in English, which shall address the need to enhance the aforementioned skills at schools, made by our students and delivered to students of the entire Europe.

Citizenship Education and its relation to Cognitive Skills

Students' research on how to promote cognitive skills at schools for all European students, showed that:

● 21st Century Skills are already established in students' consciousness.

● Education is the strongest tool against social inequity and social exclusion.

● Students can construct new knowledge and deploy their higher thinking skills to teach other students.

● Students working in a constructivist and dialectic way can enhance their learning motivation and learning outcome.

● Cognitive skills can build on students' school performance, while improving their mental capacity.

● EU emphasizes cognitive skills in order to enhance social equity, active citizenship as well as inclusive and secure societies.

● Social Sciences and especially, Citizenship Education presupposes the acquisition of cognitive skills in a direct, mere knowledge, or indirect way, through their implementation in Projects.

● Students can be entrepreneurs in the field of cross-curricular activities and educational reforms in Greece and Europe, in general.

● Students can pass their knowledge and acquired skills to their fellow students as well as to the entire society as a token of active citizenship.

In detail, Citizenship Education can use active learning and teaching practices, similar to the practices used to train cognitive skills (Karyotaki and Drigas, 2016, p. 38). Citizenship

Education and cognitive training implement experiential, constructivist and problem-based learning techniques (Gerstein, 2020) with the aim to build on students' self-efficacy and self-actualization (Wheeler, 2020). Furthermore, Citizenship Education with the aid of cognitive skills can endorse new citizens' inclusive attitude based on the recognition and rejection of divisive narrative and hate speech. Also, by promoting future citizens' skill to prudent decision making we prepare the ground for a viable society with competent leaders that shape their decisions on facts and quality information (Vogt, 2020). Notwithstanding, civil emergencies such as pandemics and/or riots demand citizens' augmented resiliency and the capacity to discern reliable information from misinformation in order to have clear judgment (EU Disinfo Lab, 2019).

Citizen Consciousness and its relation to Cognitive Skills

Citizen Consciousness, which means being able to realize and behave as a responsible, active citizen in a society, is the outcome of viable educational and social institutions. Citizen Consciousness encompasses several aspects of a citizen's everyday life, built in the early years of our lives. Thus, families and schools are the primary determinants of individuals' Citizen Consciousness enhancement. More specifically, families and schools can develop children's higher cognitive skills, such as critical and creative thinking, problem solving, cognitive flexibility, empathy, self-regulation, humanity in order to prepare the ground for open-minded, clear-minded, resilient and certainly, active citizens. Citizens must not be short-sighted. They should be able to "see" the whole picture, draw conclusions, make suggestions and act out for prosperity and common good. Especially in times of social emergencies, such as in case of pandemics and riots, citizens should be able to detect fake news, discern right from wrong, maintain a broader scope of things to crystallize opinion as well as show patience and mental endurance.

Project Deliverables

The technological base of our project stands on Natural Language Processing, Natural Language Understanding and Natural Language Generation. Chatbots are softwares that use mainly Artificial Intelligence or rules to respond to user's specific petitions made in a conversational form (Giagourta and Aleksiadhs, 2014, p. 1-10). Our project combines two didactic methods. The first part is related to the construction of knowledge, which aims at letting children teach other children about 21st Century Skills. This part is intrinsically creative and innovative and necessitates the guidance of the teacher to introduce all children to the 21st Century Skills. The second part lays on embedding the educational material in our chatbot. Therefore, the chatbot shall form an intriguing learning environment, following the dialectical way of Socrates (ask & answer questions) in order to teach other students about these skills. The chatbot shall be integrated in a website or a Facebook account, created for the purpose of diffusing our work. Below we have a diagram tree corresponding to the flowchart of our rule-based Chatbot.
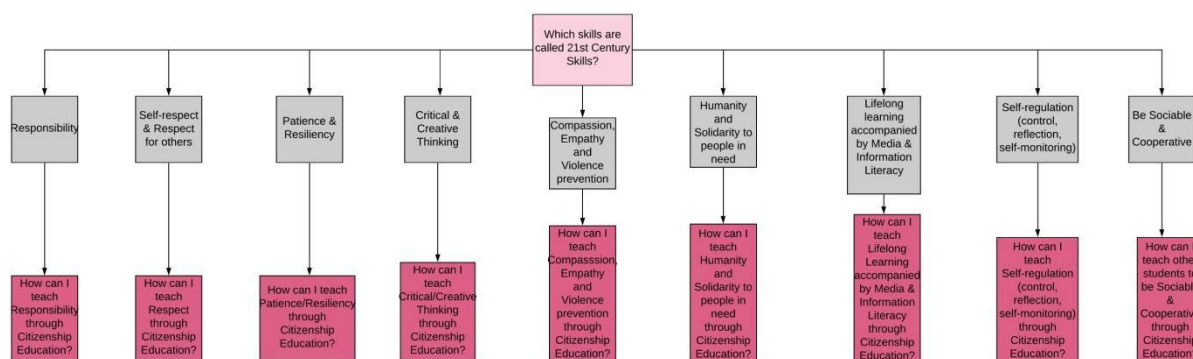
Picture 1: Diagram Tree of our rule-based Chatbot

Educational benefits of our Project

Cognitive training through education can contribute to a learner's overall cognitive and mental capacity as well as it can elevate students' school performance (Drigas and Karyotaki, 2014, p. 75-77). The key competences developed by the students comprise of:

● Democratic values literacy (Social Justice, Equity, Respect).

● Active citizenship (civil rights, human rights, personal rights, volunteerism, media literacy).

● Leadership skills (personal development).

● Social skills (communication/cooperation).

● Lifelong Learning skills and their relation to brain health.

● Critical/Creative Thinking.

● Adaptability/Cognitive Flexibility/Resiliency.

● Empathy/Sympathy/Humanity.

● Digital skills.

● Problem Solving skills.

● Realizing the significance of one's cognitive self-improvement.

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2.2. Elderly as educators. Intergenerational learning can foster soft skills and democratic values

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Abstract

The paper describes implementation of an intergenerational learning activity within the frame of an Erasmus+ project. Students learned from elderly people as storytellers-educators and in collaboration they produced a digital album with snapshots from the past, specifically the elderlies' youth period. Objectives of the project were for the school to open doors to the community, for teenagers to realize democratic values such as inclusion and respect to vulnerable groups and to advance their soft skills. For the elderly the intention was to enjoy being given an active role and gain respect by exploiting their experience. During the 3-month activity presented in the paper, elderly and teenagers exchanged intimacy with different topics and took turns the role of tutor. The results showed that teenagers acquired knowledge of local and national history through experiential learning, they realized the elderlies' maturity added value enjoying their role either as educators or mentees and, the most important, advanced essential soft skills. The elderly responded with gratefulness, creativity and warmth. Purpose of this paper is to bring to the public the benefits of transgenerational learning in developing skills to future citizens of the democratic Europe.

Key words: soft skills, intergenerational learning, democracy, open school

Introduction

Constant change is normality in our days. The modern world profile is shaped by technology and the internet, as their presence emerges in all areas of human activity and brings impressive evolutions every day. Obviously, the world of work is decisively affected but so is education and democracy itself, undergoing significant changes. Striving to understand, to adopt and obtain prosperity and quality of life, a great academic interest aims towards identifying and developing the skills required in the modern world. During the last two decades a good number of scholars agree that soft skills are highlighted as essential and mostly important in personal and professional success. With a similar orientation on the future of workforce, the ability to gain new knowledge will be more valuable than the knowledge itself, as a respected learning environment advisor states (MacAllister, 2018). He also offers an indicative paradigm, the "2017 Report" by Dell Technologies, estimating that "85 percent of the jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet". This statement articulates the importance of personal abilities which require character and personality to adopt to change. Education is inevitably involved in developing these skills,

as it is the institution that by default prepares young people to be qualified candidates for the labor market and, on top of that, citizens to sustain democracy.

Inspired by this context and with the priority of education for democracy, our school (the Macrychori highschool, Larissa, Greece) participated in an Erasmus+ KA2, 2018 partnership entitled "Storytelling for cultural and Language Development". The main objective of the project was to bring closer different cultures (Greek, Maltese, Romanian, North Macedonian, Spanish) by collecting elderly people stories from their youth. Students collaborated with the elderly, they gained knowledge from national and local history of the partner countries during 1950-1960, improved their language skills and realized the European culture. An important outcome observed was the development of students' soft skills and the elderly gratefulness and willing response to contribut in the project. This observation was the reason to share our experience with the educational community and policy makers through this paper at the Teachers4Europe e-Conference. Specifically, it presents an activity that the Greek school carried out in the frame of the Erasmus+ project, an indication that soft skills can be advanced through intergenerational learning.

Literature review

Soft skills and intergenerational learning

A survey conducted by Google in 2013 brought in light quite surprising results about 7 top characteristics of the company most successful employees. What shocked everyone was that STEM expertise comes in dead last while at the top were pointed out all soft skills: being a good coach; communicating and listening well; possessing insights into others (including others different values and points of view); having empathy toward and being supportive of one's colleagues; being a critical thinker and problem solver; and the ability of being able to make connections across complex ideas (Davidson, 2017). With regard to our discussion, Cimatti (2016) explains "τhe term Soft Skills is used to indicate all the competences that are not directly connected to a specific task; they are necessary in any position as they mainly refer to the relationships with other people involved". Moreover, Marques (2014) elucidates this bunch of skills which entail qualities such as social skills, communication, self-awareness, motivation, empathy, self-regulation. For education it is a challenge, to advance competencies that until the near past were considered rather inborn or part of the family and social environment influence. Needless to say, soft skills are not easy to track and measure at school. However, research findings indicate that education stakeholders in Europe and North America thoughtfully state that "at school far too little emphasis is placed on having learners collaborate with other learners outside of the classroom (60% believe this), group achievement (46%), and working in teams (40%), while these should be among the school priorities like reading, writing and arithmetic (Greenberg & Nilssen, 2015). In this frame, experts suggest teachers to practice developing students' soft skills, with the use of ICTs, like collaborative digital platforms to promote team work and communication in the classroom, or digital applications to enhance public speaking and monitor oneself, combined with outdoor activities and alliance with people and institutions from the local or international community like European programs, peer learning and assessment, the use of art in class and many more.

Expanding the scope of teaching methods and techniques, modern teachers are obligingly lifelong learners. A growing number of them incorporate strategies like experiential

learning; project based learning and differentiated teaching techniques. However, traditional teaching is not abandoned; instead it has to offer interesting methods that take on new dimensions supported by research-informed data. One paradigm is intergenerational learning. It is not a new concept. In fact, as Durant (2017) says, it goes back further than documented history the informal habit of 'passing down' of culture and knowledge between the eldest and youngest members of families. As Thomas defines the term, it refers to the activities which purposely involve representatives of two or more generations "with the aim of generating additional or different benefits to those arising from single generation activities". Learning outcomes may or may not be the primary focus of the activity. Nevertheless, intergenerational learning involves different generations who learn from each other and/or learn together with a tutor or facilitator" (Findsen & Formosa 2011). The practically old fashioned type of teaching and learning is proved to contribute a lot in the policy agenda against school leaving (Wilson, Hunter & McArthur, 2018) and in fostering positive relationships. Valid indications for it, brought the research of Orte who analyzed data which were collected through a multicountry intergenerational program carried out in primary schools at Spain, Poland, and Turkey (Orte et all, 2018). Moreover, Gallagher & Fitzpatrick (2018) pay attention to sustainability and pedagogies of intergenerational practice in preschools and elder care settings in Ireland.

Presentation of the activity

The activity was implemented in a 3rd grade junior highschool class (age 14-15), carried through a 3-month period in 3 stages, winter 2020. Participation of students was voluntary. It was planned in the frame of an Erasmus+, action KA229, project entitled "Storytelling for cultural and Language Development". The main objective of the project was to bring closer the partners' cultures (Greek, Maltese, Romanian, North Macedonian and Spanish) by collecting elderly people stories from their youth. The project activities were connected with the Curriculum of Greek language and literature class, the English language class ant the ICT class. The Greek team planned the activity presented below during the process of collecting stories, aiming to trigger students' interest and activate interaction in class as well as between students and the elderly.

Pedagogical – didactic methods

Experiential learning was the basic strategy, implemented with outdoors visits to elderly people and hands-on learning with original material from private records to be digitalized and shared with the local and international community. Students were offered many opportunities to take initiatives, create their products and present it the way they chose. Intergenerational learning was the method on which the activity was carried out. It is an approach that is lately becoming a trend in research, not only in adult but in typical education as well. Techniques used in the activity were Storytelling structure and public speech composition, offering opportunities to exercise the use of language in original communication context, which is among the main goals of curricula in Greece and other countries.

Description of activity

The activity is entitled "Through the lenses of the grand ones". As a first step in the Erasmus+ project, the activity would offer students the opportunity to work with digital

tools and have a first product in hand. The team also believed that the production of a digital album with photos from the elderly youth would please them and it would be offered as a gratify message.

1st stage

Students asked elderly people (in family or their wider social context) to browse together photos from their youth. In collaboration, they selected 1 or 2 photos. The student requested to listen to the story behind the scenes and kept notes. Student and the elderly person together digitalized the photo to be recorded in a digital file.

Results of this step were: 1) New form of relations: A younger and an elderly collaborated for a common purpose, the school project. 2) New original roles: the elderly storyteller/mentor (exploited the openness of student) - the listener/ future storyteller was preparing to narrate the story in class. An apprenticeship relation was created. 3) Reflection: the elderly on his experience and the teenager on local/ national/ international history. 4) The elderly took the role of mentor: Greek civil war, poverty, women fewer opportunities in the past, form of family relations, politics during evolution of a state, dictatorship were topics that came up during storytelling of the elderly youth (the period of 1950-1960). 5) The teenager took the role of mentor explaining to the elderly the digital tools and the project requirements.

2nd stage

In class, the teacher in charge organized storytelling sessions every time that 5 or 6 stories had been recorded by the students. Each student that had been active presented the photos collected and narrated the related story in a maximum 5 minute performance.

Results of this stage were: 1) Each student – storyteller prepared to make a good presentation with respect to the elderly storyteller of the original story. This required to have asked questions, kept notes about who – where - why, tried to understand the social and historical context of the personal story. 2) Students learnt a lot about aspects of life in the past like school life, forms of entertainment, family, love and friendship, sports, work, the social role of women e.t.c. as well as pieces of history of the period. 3) All members of the class reflected on life conditions in the past and expressed admiration and sincere respect for the elderly.

1. **Photos from private records**

3rd stage

After a 3-month period, the class had enjoyed 3 sessions for presentations of all collected photos and stories so far. As digital material, they were temporary shaved in a shared Google file. The collection contained about 30 snapshots. Students in groups categorized the photos, added subtitles and created one file. Finally it was uploaded as a digital photo album with restricted rights of access, until all elderly people appearing in the photo send us their consent to go public, a procedure which was delayed due to covid19 interruption of school year.

2. Photos from private records

Results of this last stage were: 1) Students became digital content creators. They were interested to learn about GDPR and agreed that the content will be published after all involved persons' confirmation. 2) The class immersed into knowledge by conducting their own ethnographic research about public and private life in their residence town during the 1950-1970 periods, gathering information from books and the internet. 3) The working group managed and shared cultural heritage material from personal archives. 4) The class felt honored for their family and social contacts who willingly participated in the activity and they expressed pride for offering the elderly voice and an active role in their education.

"Sometimes, our grandmas and grandpas are like grand-angels"

3. The digital album cover

Matching with the T4E "Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture"project

The T4E transnational network declares a general objective, to act as inspiring social and cultural incubator. It is a tool for better connectivity between different levels of the system, using education to promote the EU democratic culture, in favor of all people, irrespective of their identity. The program encourages learning, thinking, acting and enhances solidarity, tolerance and pluralism among other values. We believe that the activity "Through the lenses of the grand ones", as the brief description might show, aims to inspire teenagers for their role as citizens. One of its aspects is that it connects different ages and social groups as carriers of the continuity of our civilization. The activity presented, grew respect on the achievements of older generations irrespective of their not active social role

anymore and this fact was repeatedly expressed by the members of the working group of students. Participants were able to understand better and reflect on their family and local history with respect to international history. This important factor brought up a lot of thinking, discussions, learning – and hopefully acting. The teachers supporting the activity observed advanced empathy at the active students as well as critical thinking in managing their obligations and records. A wind of creativity blew in the class during the implementation and empowered a very good level of cooperation. These observed characteristics bring students a step closer to the skills that future citizens need in democratic Europe.

Transferability

The idea presented is simple thus transferable: students of all ages can be involved. Moreover, it can be easily connected with the Curricula of classes of language, literature, history, social sciences, biology, ICTs, environmental studies as well as in school events and outdoors activities.

Innovation of the activity

Introversion is one of the schools disadvantages in Greece. We consider as asset the fact that students and teachers of the class activity collaborated and shared their experience with a number of groups out of the school: elderly people from their community, parents, local authorities, that suggested the digital album to be uploaded on the municipality website, hands-on contemporary findings in pedagogy and didactics. It involves family/ community with school on a creative basis, unveiling the dynamic of synergies.

Iintergenerational learning approach is not a new concept. In fact, it goes back further than documented history. However, only recently appears on the educational agenda.

The activity fosters soft skills (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, empathy) that until a few years ago were considered as non-taught but are increasingly seen as crucial to employability. Additionally, it offers the elderly an important role, appreciation and respect from a large audience (eloquent example is a lady who confided that her father, killed during the Greek civil war, is finally resting in peace after her story was presented to our class by her granddaughter)

It is worth to say that in projects where Iintergenerational Learning is implemented, there are very interesting results worth spreading the experience.

Activity expansion

The activity can be expanded as a partnership program, even in the period of limited social distance due to covid19, with the cooperation of schools from different EU countries. On a collaborative platform, eTwinning, T4E or other, and the use of digital media the aim can be a digital library where photo albums with short stories from the elderly archives will be posted. The files should be under CC rights as open resources Such an initiative will contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage through local history and stories of ordinary people.

Epilogue

Citizen education can be as important as gaining academic qualifications. Teachers need to specify the basic skills of the future citizen and raise children awareness. Today basic skills are Soft Skills: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity, empathy. Speaking about awareness, we mean values such as recognition of Human Rights, human dignity, freedom, equality, rule of law and setting goals like promoting peace and the well-being of citizens, cohesion, respect of diversity, solidarity. These values and goals can be easily found on the basic declarations of the European Union. The presented activity is a small step but leads to teaching by offering students the experiences and opportunities to explore the above mentioned skills and to realize values by themselves.

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2.3. "DigiLit in the COVID-19 pandemic era"

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Abstract

Since its inception, the European Union has been aiming at defending humanitarian and progressive values. Similarly to values of a society, a state, the European Union which is based on Article 2, is relied upon on the values of respect for human dignity, democracy, social inclusion, ruling state of law and respect for human rights. Values are characterized by pluralism, tolerance, elimination of discrimination, freedom, brotherhood and equality. The recent **COVID-19 pandemic**, also known as the **coronavirus pandemic**, caused governments around the world to implement social distancing and lockdown policies designed to inhibit the spread of the coronavirus by restricting the movement and everyday activity of billions of people. Hence, the teaching of EU values in these challenging times for humanity has given way to online instruction, also known as distant or remote teaching. This paper attempts to portray a series of ideas and suggestions suitable for the teaching of EU values within the new educational directives due to the COVID-9 pandemic and social distancing measures. Teachers and educators around the globe collaborated and supported their students via online networks by utilizing online tools, creating and authoring innovative educational material and sharing expertise with other colleagues. Critical thinking and creativity, cross-curriculum activities, differentiation, argumentation, debate activities are only some of the ideas which will be presented and discussed in this paper, focusing more on practical issues rather than merely upon theoretical principles. Other themes addressed in the paper include Media Literacy, Digital Literacy and Online behaviour, Safety, GDPR, Democratic Culture, Social Rights, Inclusive Education, Engaged and Active EU Citizenship. Thus, educators can enable effective inclusion to occur through differentiation and maximize students' ability to use ICT skills effectively.

Key words: digital literacy, EU values, innovation, inclusion, social distancing

"At a time when billions of people are physically separated from one another, culture has brought us together, keeping us connected and shortening the distance between us."

(Ernesto Ottone, UNESCO Assistant Director- General for Culture)

Digital Literacy

What is it?

In the spectrum of 21st century skills (i.e. learning skills, literacy skills, life skills) digital literacy seems to be on the top of the list of competences a student needs to have acquired during their academic life and a crucial component in maintaining competitiveness in a changing job market. Digital literacy is the skills required to achieve digital competence, the confident and critical use of ICT for work, leisure, learning and communication. "Digital Competence was included as one of the eight essential skills, in the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong learning" (European Commission, 2018). According to (Rubble, M. and Bailey, G., 2007) digital literacy is "the capability to use digital technology and knowing when and how to use it." When students have acquired the skill to engage with multi-media in order to read and demonstrate understanding of a text, sounds, images, etc. this is when digital literacy comes into play. Digital literacy occurs when students can control and evaluate data to build their own meaning, appropriate to their individual needs and personal goals. Towards this end, teachers as well as well-informed parents, guardians or care-givers often assist students in using technology effectively and safely in various learning contexts, as in the case of the recent lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of students nowadays seem to be more knowledgeable on technological issues compared to their teachers, owing mostly to academic instruction and theoretical input provided in school curricula. However, most students lack sufficient training as regards using technology correctly. As discussed in (Rubble, M. and Bailey, G., 2007) "Too often the focus is on learning the technology itself, with little time given to discussing what is or isn't appropriate." Hence, in the event of the recent COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown period, everyone had to function on 'digital literacy' mode. For example, understanding how to use search engines, blogs, web browsers, email, text, PowerPoint, wiki, etc. to demonstrate learning or evaluating online resources for trustworthiness of information is considered digital literacy. However, merely having a computer lab in your school, learning just how to use multi-media to research a specific topic of interest and using online media without any knowledge or guidelines on how to judge whether the information is accurate or trustworthy, are only some examples of non- digital literacy. At this point, a distinction needs to be made between the terms 'digital literacy' and 'media literacy'. In short, "Media literacy is a set of competencies that enable us to interpret media texts and institutions, to make media of our own, and to recognize and engage with the social and political influence of everyday life" (Hoechsmann and Poyntz, 2012).

What innovation?

In the COVID-19 school hierarchy of needs the focus moves from: getting organized, maintaining safety, policy making, engagement and relationships, access, and learning; as

educators we need to be adaptable to the new directives and helpful to our students and the broader community. Never before in modern human history have so many people united forces in combating a common 'invisible', yet so forceful, enemy, as in the COVID-19 era! Accordingly, we will share with you our reflections on ways this project could be disseminated within the broader community making EU values and principles a tangible reality for the 'Day After' COVID-19 period. For this reason, learning communities and professional educators' groups were created in order to support all students and their families in the new challenge: dealing with new information, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, etc. alongside to continuing the learning journey. In fact, this attempt was realized mostly due to the commitment, collaboration, resilience and strong community spirit of all the involved parties (teachers, students, parents, academia, school management, etc.). At first, onsite teaching, in the physical classroom, gave way to online teaching and later on to Blended Learning (BL) mode. A hybrid of in-person lessons and distance learning, Blended Learning, is one of the proposed models for the future of the technology-assisted classroom and a worldwide tendency. Given the rise in the COVID-19 health hazard incidents, one may argue that "the future of online education is Blended Learning" (Bonk, Kim, & Zeng, 2006).

Venn Diagram - Face-to-Face Teaching vs Online Teaching

Fully Face-to-Face
- teacher determines pace
- requires students to be physically present in a classroom
- communication is in face-to-face, real time
- classroom determines/sets learning environment
- interaction with course materials happens at the same time for all students
- work submitted in hard copy form
- textbook/ other hard copy resources used in classroom
- time constraints require teacher to choose a specific delivery method
- teachers evaluated on performance

BOTH
- require a teacher
- involve group discussions and individual products
- follow a set of standards
- require advanced preparation of course materials

Fully Online
- flexible pace (on-demand)
- can be done from anywhere at anytime which leads to a more diverse class population
- increased student engagement
- higher level of individual interaction between teacher/student
- material can be delivered using a wide variety of web 2.0 tools
- communication is through email and discussion boards
- Learning Management System is the learning environment
- no physical textbook
- multiple delivery modes available to match students' learning type
- teachers evaluated on multiple dimensions

Fig.1 https://images.app.goo.gl/EYhbs78ZpFpgJT1v6

Does it match the T4E Project?

What challenges?

- Human Rights (HR)
- Democratic Citizenship (DC)
- Competences (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes)

- Digital Literacy
- Media Literacy
- Critical Thinking
- Creativity
- 'Smart' Citizenship Curriculum
- Leadership and Policies
- Differentiation
- Inclusion
- Argumentation
- Debates
- Online Behaviour
- Online Safety
- GDPR
- Democratic Culture
- Social Rights
- Engaged/ Active Citizenship
- ICT skills
- Good Teaching Practice/ Living Digital Citizenship

The particular project targets all the above challenges in an equal way. Education is thus used as the vehicle for the endorsement of principles and values comprising the EU democratic culture, which can add to improved understanding of the EU as an entity that works at many different levels to benefit all people. Teachers4Europe will play the role of inspiring social and cultural agents, multiplying the European values to colleagues, youngsters and the broader educational community. Moreover, T4E will encourage a discussion with stakeholders on a social and policy level and will work towards realizing synergies and improving the quality of training and learning through awareness about Europe and its values. Hence, the teacher's role will be upgraded, but also inclusive and democratic learning environments will be established.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education." (UNESCO, 2011). When implementing an inclusive education approach learning environments are promoted; individual needs are met and every student stands a chance in succeeding. Today's students can be characterized as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) as they were born in the age of digital technology. Numerous studies (Prensky, 2007; Whitton, 2010) have shown that the use of ICT enhances students' motivation, while they are also many studies (Fabricatore, 2000; Prensky, 2001; Gee, 2005; Habgood, 2007; Gros, 2007; Sandford & Williamson, 2007; Thomas, 2009;) which argue that the use of ICT in the learning process integrates basic principles in the learning process such as: active participation, implementation of creative activities, the development of a strategy for understanding and problem solving, self-control, transformation of pre-existing misconceptions, the interconnection of the educational material with general principles and explanations, application of knowledge in

real situations, cultivation of tolerance with regards to differences and the encouragement of students' motivation.

Inclusive education should be gradually adopted by all teachers who accept, respect the diversity of students and recognize its significant benefits not only with regards to students with special educational needs and disabilities but also concerning the school unit as a whole.

Inclusive education also, urges schools to break away from the norm and to prepare students who will be able to meet the needs of the new globalized society. Students acquire abilities and skills that enable them to become active members of the society to which they belong, and respect and support diversity. Digital tools engage students in learning in a playful way, while they are, at the same time, developing cognitive, metacognitive skills.

Digitally literate students cultivate their critical thinking as well as their social skills through the interaction with each other, continuous discussions, exchange of views and ideas. They learn to be respectful of human values such as solidarity, tolerance, equality which constitute the foundations of inclusive education. The challenges in ensuring educational continuity do not stop with the deployment of digital solutions for distance learning. It is of utmost importance that the use of technology in education will not amplify existing inequalities and not deepen the digital divide. In case the digital divide deepens, disadvantaged backgrounds will feel 'excluded' if schools shut down, particularly those students who lack the resilience, learning strategies or engagement to learn on their own. The challenge is to bridge the digital divide in education and to ensure digital technology by providing equitable and inclusive access to education for everyone.

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Below are some teachers' comments on the online sessions during the lockdown period reflecting on the situation:

Q. What makes 'GOOD' Online TEACHING possible?

A. Assistance, partnerships, networking, sharing, respect, resilience, opportunities…

Q. What do teachers MISS most with Online TEACHING?

A. Their student's smiles, giggles, jokes, comments, laughter, THE PHYSICAL CLASSROOM!

-We are not digital natives, so implementing the project gave us all (teachers and students) a unique learning opportunity; a genuine purpose to our actions and expected outcomes.

-'WANTS' gave way to 'NEEDS'.

-The new health hazard triggered and inspired us!

-All of us continued working on 'safety' mode; the whole planet was on LIFE SUPPORT!

-The T4E Project became our reserve, our common platform for online networking.

-Teachers and students 'matured' during the COVID-19 pandemic and explored/evaluated online tools, created material, which they shared on various platforms, actively participated in online special interest groups supported their learning communities.

-We actually moved from: BEING 'ONSITE' TO BEING 'ONLINE' THEN TO 'WELL-BEING' ONLINE AND TO 'RIGHTS' ONLINE!

-We used the Council of Europe digital Resources/Toolkit among other available online resources.

-We created online polls, surveys, virtual debates, etc. Digital Citizenship at its best!

Variance of the Targeted Group(s)

- Young learners
- Secondary School learners
- Teachers
- Parents
- Academia
- School Management

Being online

In the digital literacy era, learning opportunities within new learning environments lead to the development of new and creative personal as well as professional competences. Citizens prepare for the challenges of technology-advanced societies by investing in self-moderated, self-paced innovative modes of learning. Moreover, media and information literacy relates to the ability to interpret, understand and express creativity through digital media; the mere essence of critical thinking. A digital citizen, in the 21st century, has to sustain a positive mind-set relying on critical thinking as a basis for meaningful and effective participation in his/her community.

Well-being online

Ethics and empathy pertain to online ethical behaviour and communication with others based on skills such as the ability to recognise and understand the feelings and viewpoint of others. Empathy has to do with being kind, sympathetic and courteous while being on-line. Health and well-being relates to the fact that digital citizens exist both in virtual as well as in real spaces. Individuals also need a set of attitudes, skills, values and knowledge that make them more aware of issues related to health and well-being. E-Presence and

communications refers to the development of the personal and interpersonal qualities that support digital citizens in building and maintaining an online presence and identity as well as online interactions that are positive, consistent and reliable.

Rights online

In demonstrating active participation citizens need to be fully aware of certain competences when they interact within the digital environments they inhabit in order to make responsible decisions. One thing that cannot change is the issue of rights and responsibilities- it is something that citizens enjoy both in the real as well as in the on-line world. Digital citizens can benefit from rights of privacy, security, access and inclusion, freedom of expression, etc. Nevertheless, they need to adhere to certain responsibilities, such as ethics and empathy and other responsibilities to ensure a safe and responsible digital environment for all. By privacy and security we refer to two different concepts: privacy concerns mainly the personal protection of one's own and others' online information, while security is related more to one's own awareness of online actions and behaviour. Other issues which need increased awareness cover competences such as information management and online safety issues (including the use of navigation filters, passwords, anti-virus and firewall software). Consumer awareness, in the digital era, is considered a key EU competence where the citizen is also a consumer; an on-line consumer. "Understanding the implications of the commercial reality of online spaces is one of the competences that individuals will have to deal with in order to maintain their autonomy as digital citizens". (Council of Europe, 2019)

Reflecting on the online sessions we conducted with our students, one needs to stress the overall lack of knowledge regarding EU policies students demonstrated on matters such as ethical online behavior (GDPR), social rights, EU Citizenship, online consumer rights, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, etc. Hence, the tasks, group activities and assignments were designed accordingly in order to implement the T4E Project, in the best way possible, given the difficulties of social distancing, lack of online resources, etc.

Scientific/Pedagogical Methods

- Cooperative Learning
- Experiential Learning
- Learner-centred Approach
- Project-Based Learning (PBL)
- Differentiated Instruction
- Reflective Teaching (RT)
- Self-regulated Learning
- Self-access

Transerability to everyday/school life

- Authentic tasks to purpose
- Inclusive and accessible
- Use of web tools, apps, etc.
- Ownership of learning

Ideas for Project work/Group tasks

During the lockdown period our online lessons primarily focused on maintaining human contact, building resilience, team spirit and later on re-connecting with language content and curricula goals, objectives, etc. Students were quite cooperative in attending our online contact sessions and contributed to the project enthusiastically despite the unprecedented stressful conditions they were facing.

What follows is a list of tasks/assignments, which were realised in our distance learning lessons in an attempt to integrate the T4E Project on European Values/Active Citizenship and Digital Literacy in our institution:

(1) 'Online Entrepreneurship Game'

(2) 'Online Consumer Rights Simulation'

(3) 'Digital Citizenship Survey'

(4) 'WHO_COVID-19_Cyber Security Report'

(5) 'Fact-based Discussion Game'

(6) 'Key concepts of Digital Literacy' (poster)

https://padlet.com/evang_karag/hbp6fz0kb0556c93?utm_campaign=transactional&utm_content=peek_image&utm_medium=email&utm_source=started_a_padlet

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Conclusion

The recent health hazard, in terms of new teaching and learning modes, has given way to group empowerment, a deeper knowledge and understanding of educational policies; it has fostered new teachers' roles and online assessment/evaluation, to name but a few of the benefits. If there is a 'success story' to be told, one may speak of engagement in goals, strong bonds, shared learning communities, new digital environments and ownership of learning. For the 21st century educationalist teaching online requires and instills new ways of knowledge, and new ways of developing knowledge. Teaching online also, requires us to learn about technology and the ways in which it intersects with both content and pedagogy. Teaching online is what shows the way to self/professional development and it is here to stay!

Dire times require daring initiatives, and the particular project involves change and resilience for students and teachers, alike. More Digital Literacy lessons are definitely to be taught and learnt in the new 'normality', in the COVID-19 pandemic era.

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PART III: EU

3.1. Europe & us

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Abstract

Results of surveys show that numerous European students don't take an interest in the issues of the EU dealt through democratic processes which is beneficial for their own future. That was the main scope of a Project "Europe and Us" that was implemented in a secondary school in West Attica during the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020. This project sought to use formal and informal learning methods to focus on basic principles and concepts about the EU and to answer key questions, such as what it means to be a citizen of the European Union. The activities included in the Curriculum and connecting different subjects were based on active and exploratory learning (inquiry-based learning), addressed to all students of the school and were reflected on final products of different forms, as a result of authentic and collaborative creation. Through this Project, the students were able to approach the concept of a united Europe from a different perspective and according to their class and age. The first class approached the concept in a more playful way, through role and construction activities and the higher ones through discussions on issues such as the right to express opinion, the limits of individual freedom and the active participation of citizens on the basic condition of European citizenship. Apart of the formal learning methodologies were used also creative and informal methodologies, such as the black-out poetry, painting lab, video creation and both digital and "live" presentations. Questionnaires in e-form were given to students and teachers and the results of these surveys were presented to the educational community. All the results are uploaded in https://europeandwe.weebly.com/ . The necessary dissemination of all the works in the local community was given through a newsletter to the Municipality of Elefsina, to the local press and through the school's websites. It has also been linked to the Erasmus KA3 and KA2 programs implemented by the school. The impact of the project "Europe and Us" on the school community was significant and students gain interest and awareness in EU issues and concepts and got to know its institutions and bodies. Their participation was high, which can be a starting point for future ideas and collaborations at local and European level.

Keywords: Europe, Secondary Education

Introduction

Students don't have the necessary motivation and tend to have no confidence in the political system. Participation of voting or even joining a political party is low. In addition Europe seems to be in crisis, not only Economical one (Eurozone debt crisis) but also in Existential.

The main scope of the project was the students of the secondary school, aged between 12-15 years old to get a better knowledge of what Europe means, its institutions, and its values in order to create a conscious attitude towards Europe.

The EU according to the European Commission is established on the values of regard to human respect ,freedom ,laws, democracy, equality for all persons even those belonging to minorities https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/20860174/crisis_european_values.pdf.

Based on the above findings the main idea of the Project "Europe & Us" was to make students come closer to the concept of a united Europe, to get to know better the values and the institutions of Europe and to realize that they belong to this greater family. This approach was achieved through creative project and game-based activities incorporated into the curriculum and according student's class and age. As research has shown game based learning has effective outcomes and impact on student's motivation and engagement (Alsawaier, 2017).

The Project lasted almost five months and the final products were presented to the school community using live presentations, through the social media and school's website and to the wider local community through the website of the Municipality of Elefsina and posts to the local press.

Designing

The Project was implemented in a secondary school of general education in Elefsina, a city in the West Attica that counts over 300 students aged between 12-15 years old. The main idea was to involve as many students as it was possible and as many subjects of the school's curriculum. The first step was to motivate school's teaching staff in order to be them the facilitators and the conductors of several activities that can tingle student's interest in order to be creative themselves. At the first meeting among teachers that teach at A class was decided that the subjects that can be very suitable for students of this age can be History, Art, Music and Literature. In the same way the students of B and C class were involved in the Project through subjects like Social Science, Informatics and English.

Implementation

The Project "Europe & Us" lasted 5 months and it was incorporated totally into the curriculum of the school program. The methodology for the implementation of this Project was based in methods of formal & non-formal learning, such as Game-based learning, Outdoor learning, Role plays etc. All the activities were

- included in the Curriculum,
- Cross-interdisciplinary
- based on active and inquiry-based learning,

- addressed to all students

- products of authentic and collaborative creation

The activities were incorporated in the Curriculum of several subjects, using them as the main frame of their implementation. According to student's age and the content of each subject the activities may vary. In that way the younger students become more familiar with the countries-members of EU, their capitals, their flags and some of the main characteristics of their culture, such as music, gastronomy etc. The elder ones and according to the Curriculum of the subject of Social Studies they study the History of the European Union, the European institutions and its laws. They also organize a research and they presented the results.

Outdoor Activity

More specific, the activities involved the subjects:

Music and Art

Both teachers of Music and Art gave the motivation to students to know European compositors, musicians and painters, not only the well known and world famous ones, but also some artists that have only local recognition.

Modern Greek Language & Literature

In the course of Language the students improved their writing and communicative skills through the activity of creative writing, under the title "I am a European Citizen-I am researching and learning about EU Member States".

History

Europe has a history that is part of each member's history. And exactly that was what the students have discovered: the common history, which bounds all the countries-members.

Religion

The different religious approaches in the EU member states were presented and studied among the students.

Social Science

In this subject the students have created surveys in order to investigate the knowledge towards the EU not only of their mates but also of their teachers. They created They delivered the e-forms –available in https://europeandwe.weebly.com/presentations.html to students and teachers regarding European Committees, Strategies and Institutions. The results were presented also through the website of the Project.

Home Economics

The gastronomy and the alimentation habits of a country can be very intriguing and interesting too, and not only for students, as taste is part of people's culture. Special dishes of the countries of European Union have been presented and students become more familiar with the culinary culture, complaining it with also with the environmental conditions.

ICT

All the presentations, the e-forms and the digital outcomes as well as the website where the whole idea and the final products have been uploaded had the techinacal support and the toolkits of the subject of Information and Communication Technology.

English, French, German

Eventently, the foreign languages courses were involved in this Project focusing more in values and concepts that have to do with the European Union.

Dissemination

The distribution plan of a project works   for   informational flow which brings together cooperation between partnership and recipients. The dissemination strategy for "Europe & Us" employed a blend   of   electronic and composed   means and particularly personal interaction, especially teachers, students, parents and stakeholders. Measures that had been used were:

Web-site at https://europeandwe.weebly.com/. All the information is available to any other school or person that wants to use it as a good practice.

Presentations of the team work to school's community.

Brochures were distributed to students and teachers. As they were exhibited in school's areas parents or visitors could easily access the information delivered.

Local press: The project has been wider known through the local press (newspaper EPIKAIROTHTA, v.05/02/2020)

Post in the Panellenic School Network, (https://www.sch.gr/europa-and-we/).

Participation in a European contest. The Jan Amos Comenius Prize was a contest among European schools with the aim to offer assistance to their pupils in discovering ways to motivate them in learning about the European Union. Last but not least, it was presented in

the Municipality of Elefsina and to Eleusis 2021, the Institution that is the official responsible for the European Capital for 2021.

Dissemination through the local press

Evaluation & Conclusion

The Project, focus on the basic principles, concepts and strategies about the European Union, having as main scope to increase student's interest and knowledge and to give answers in key questions regarding Europe.

The Project had quite an impact in students as it was increased student's interest and motivation to create and to work in teams the several tasks regarding Europe. Also teachers and other stakeholders increased their consideration to issues towards Europe and its institutions, especially after they have answered the surveys and realize some ignorance regarding basics for European Union.

The activities, the surveys and the final products will remain in the website of the project and they will be used in next school years and can be an example of good practice that can motivate student´s to get involved more in politics, democratic procedures and active citizenship.

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3.2. Exploring our European identity in Gymnasio Vevis

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Abstact

The present paper outlines our 5-year quest in Gymnasio Vevis towards getting acquainted with our European Identity in terms of the basic concepts of citizenship education drawn by Scheerens (2009, 2011). One cannot help but notice that some of them are present either exclusively in some projects or interchangeably in others: we mainly followed a context-embedded approach, which is usually associated with informal learning, but also resorted to an explicit teaching approach, while all three dimensions of citizenship education, namely the cognitive (knowledge about the EU), the pragmatic (taking action and gaining experience) and the affective dimension (as regards the attachment to the local community and society in general), are present in one or another of the projects introduced below. From a historical perspective, our initial extracurricular programme for student participants later evolved into an Erasmus+ teacher mobility, and then again transformed into an essentially European project aligned with the T4E principles and promoting the democratic values of European citizenship education. For the past school year we employed blended learning to tackle the challenges imposed in the times of social distancing of spring 2020; a hybrid model was adopted not only to compensate for the closed schools but also to turn the project into an accomplished European experience of considerable pedagogic value.

Key words: European identity, non-formal education, extracurricular projects, distance learning.

Introduction

Traditionally, in Greece, European identity has been promoted in Lower Secondary Education (henceforward called Gymnasio) solely through the so-called subject of Civics/Citizenship Education/Social and Political Education. Little explicit reference in European identity might also be traced in the subjects of Greek Language and Literature, but other than that, the promotion of European identity is outside the scope of the official curriculum. Even though the European Commission (2008) has consistently stressed the imperative to promote multilingualism, multiculturalism and intercultural competence through foreign language curricula and has issued recommendations on the cultivation of European values in school settings, there has been however, no explicit plan or strategy as to how this can be achieved in most European countries (Eurydice, 2012; Byram, 2012; Hennebry, 2014). Indeed, relevant studies confirm this paradox -while foreign language teachers feel inextricably linked to the promotion of Citizenship Education in class, they seem baffled in the face of a concrete plan or pedagogical choices, therefore as Osler

observes (1998, p.90), they fail to conceptualize a core of a European Citizenship education or identify specific values as "common European values". It goes without saying that foreign language teachers wishing to promote an understanding of "Europeanness" or address topics of social cohesion, justice and inclusion choose to do so through extracurricular projects.

The design and implementation of extracurricular projects in Greek secondary schools, ie the Health Education interventions, or the T4E and Erasmus plus projects, is an opportunity for educators to incorporate innovative ideas in the classroom so as to either complement the specifications of the formal curriculum or compensate for its shortcomings. Our attempt to explore our European identity in Gymnasio Vevis was realized in the context of all of the aforementioned programmes at one point or another, as will be discussed in detail below, under each relevant section.

 Before embarking on such a detailed description let's just determine the connotations of "European identity" in the title of this paper. Contemporary literature provides a range of definitions for the concept of European identity, offering diverging perspectives, some even falling into the category of heated rhetoric and adding a negative connotation to all things labeled "European". To those attributing to themselves only a single identity, pronouncing their national identity and their relationship with the sovereign state to which they belong a moral duty, this paper may seem odd or even controversial.

Ascribing to ourselves a European identity in Gymnasio Vevis so that we can ascend to our optimum potential in the professional and educational context has been our key purpose since our first project in 2015. Our definition of European identity concurs with Wringe's and takes into account our right "to live the best possible life or achieve the greatest possible measure of self-fulfilment, consistently with others being allowed to do the same" (1996, p.68). Our projects are inspired by the official EU motto "United in Diversity", which recognizes the diversity among the member-states in a more inclusive sense, with a view to strengthening their individual identity rather than threatening them "with a sort of multicultural EU vision" (Toggenburg, 2004, p.5). Moreover, the values interlaced with such an identity are democracy, tolerance, freedom, lifelong learning and respect for human rights.

According to the specific goals and methods of European citizenship education distinguished by Scheerens' (2009, 2011), our students were exposed to the following three dimensions: the explicit teaching of content knowledge about democratic institutions (cognitive dimension), the learning by doing in terms of taking action and gaining experience (pragmatic dimension), and also the development of an attachment to the societies or communities to which they belong (affective dimension). Moreover, in terms of Scheerens' approaches (2009, p.2), we followed both the context-embedded approach, an approach that sees the school context as "a microcosm to exercise "school citizenship" as a bridge to societal citizenship and state citizenship"and the explicit teaching approach, an approach in which "school citizenship is characterized by specific goal-directed teaching and learning activities"; each approach was either used exclusively, or interchangeably in the course of a project in Gymnasio Vevis.

Peer mediation (2015-2018)

Peer mediation is a method of peaceful conflict resolution, which stems from restorative justice and the legal profession, and was first used in the schools of USA in the 60s (specific reference can be made to the "Teaching Students to be Peacemakers" programme, the Quaker Church projects, and the anti-nuclear war activists' influence). It later appeared in Europe as an innovative method in education, in the schools of Germany and the UK. Given that time management in the classroom is very important, it is without doubt that there is no room for any poorly managed conflict. According to Amsler and Sadalla (1987) classroom teachers often spend an excessive amount of time and energy managing classroom conflicts, which are not managed well by students or by teachers.

In our school, the peer mediation programme was implemented in the context of the Health Intervention programmes for Junior High Schools. The programme, which targeted the 3rd Grade students, ran for 3 consecutive years under the "Discovering my strength" title which is indicative of its content and goals. According to Baraldi and Iervese (2010, p.423) conflict resolution education:

> *encourages new social, emotional, and cognitive processes; requires acquisition of particular skills; and implies empowerment of students, in particular children, in using communication and creative thinking.*

Despite the fact that it was not a European project in an explicit way, it nevertheless instilled to our students some core democratic values such as equity, inclusion and tolerance. Thus, it can be considered as a context-embedded programme with a cognitive, pragmatic and affective direction which can be regarded as an optimum precursor of the European projects that ensued.

Some key points of a typical peer mediation programme are:

- It is a generic, holistic and versatile programme based on experiential learning

- The students get to know themselves and their fellow classmates better

- According to research, it considerably reduces referrals to the headmaster and student suspensions

- It builds up team coherence and produces high-quality school climate

- The students develop good communication skills, self confidence, compassion, solidarity, empathy, emotion management, active listening

- The students become responsible, develop leadership skills, and get actively involved in school life

- Students who retain the procedure over time may spontaneously transfer the knowledge to address non-classroom and non-school conflicts

The essence of a peer mediation programme can be best summed up in the Chinese proverb: "He who hits first, has run out of ideas". After all, according to Maxwell (1989), peer mediation is all about self regulation, training students to recognize and deal with their emotions and solve their conflicts without any external interventions by teachers, or grown-

ups in general. The two students in conflict finally get to reach themselves a mutually acceptable agreement and agree on a win-win solution in the absence of external monitors. This comes as an ideal alternative to traditional disciplinary practices in school environments. As Stacey and Robinson (1997) put it, peer mediation is a very matter-of-fact, logical and linear process in which a neutral third party assists voluntary participants to voice their feelings and ultimately to agree on a solution.

 The steps followed during the peer mediation procedure are specific, distinct and have been identified in most peer mediation manuals as "the six stages of mediation" (IREX, Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Toolkit, 2013, p. 35):

> 1. Agree to Mediate
>
> 2. Storytelling and Gathering Points of View
>
> 3. Focus on Interests and Needs
>
> 4. Create Win-Win Solutions
>
> 5. Evaluate Options
>
> 6. Create an agreement

Methodology

The "Developing my strength" programme was delivered in 15 sessions over a 6-month period. The EFL teacher, who was responsible for its implementation to Gymnasio Vevis, had been previously trained by the Coordinator of the Youth Counselling Center of Florina. The teacher / instructor utilized the various skills-building activities and materials included in the official programme manual (Bafiti, 2017). Besides the guidelines and steps for the actual peer-mediation structured procedure, the teacher/instructor also had at her disposal a set of experiential and kinaesthetic activities, role-play and simulation games, questionnaires, active listening activities, brainstorming techniques, icebreakers, and audiovisual material. Also, in the context of good practices exchange, we made two school visits in Athens to fellow schools belonging in the peer mediation school network. Last, but not least, the instructor participated in two Panhellenic Conferences in 2017 presenting the results of the peer mediation programme in Gymnasio Vevis.

What are the implications for students and teachers?

There is significant evidence about the benefits of peer mediation in education but literature has also suggested some serious limitations concerning the participants, i.e. both teachers and students. First of all, it cannot be stressed enough that peer mediation is a method which needs to be practised effectively by individuals who have been adequately trained in it by professionals. As Newton and Endler (2010, p.9) concluded:

> *Though effective human relations skills are useful in helping students with specific levels of need to explore and resolve questions of information, resource, support, and normal developmental transitions, they do not replace the more in - depth exploration of emotional, mental, or behavioral concerns that require expertise of a professional.*

This may hold true also for students; for example when students are responsible for the training of their fellow classmates in the school environment.

A research review by Johnson and Johnson (1996) indicates that there are some significant findings for untrained versus trained students who engage in peer mediation. Table 1 presents the conclusions drawn from the direct comparison between untrained and trained students who participated in peer mediation sessions. It is made clear that there is significant impact for trained students, while the research has also shown that, prior to receiving any sort of training, students' usual response to conflict was to "fight or flee".

Table 1: Outcomes resulting from students' conflicts (Johnson & Johnson, 1996, p.482)

untrained students	trained students
No agreement	agreement
Winner & loser (inequitable outcomes)	Maximize joint (equitable) gain
Decreased achievement	Increased achievement
Negative attitudes toward conflict	Positive attitudes toward conflict
Negative school climate	Positive school climate
Psychological maladjustment	Psychological health
Discipline problems/suspensions	Students resolve own conflicts
Negative affect	Positive affect
Discontinued interaction	Continued, ongoing interacti

The same review also points out that academic achievement of trained students is increased when peer mediation training is integrated into subject areas. However, as with European Citizenship education mentioned in the Introduction, this can hardly be the case with conflict resolution (used here as an umbrella term encompassing peer mediation) in Greek schools. Teachers would rather implement it as an extracurricular project, e.g. in the context of Health Education for Junior High Schools.

Johnson and Johnson (1996) have also outlined several requirements conducive to the success of mediation programmes on the part of teachers and the school environment. First, the educator implementing a peer mediation programme in his/her class needs to be fully committed to the project and invest time. The teacher should show self-awareness and go to great lengths at becoming a role model and the agent of change. He/She should avoid

discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice and practise what they preach. An attempt of merely modelling a process and "instructing" a group of students is inadequate and may ultimately confuse students. Support from the colleagues and the school headmaster is critical, so that there is a unanimous endorsement of the method and consistency across the three grades and the teachers of different specialties. The observation of the peer mediation method on a larger scale is required, otherwise any innovation is doomed to fail.

Erasmus plus (2018-2019)

Luckily the peer mediation programme in Gymnasio Vevis attracted the attention of the school staff, so much so that an Erasmus+ programme on the same topic was readily planned for 5 participants for the following year. The main goal was to bring peer mediation on a larger scale so as to involve even more students and more teachers, to strengthen interpersonal relationships among colleagues, to enhance the school status and last but not least, to increase the innovativeness and transform the attitude of the school towards traditional disciplinary methods.

The Erasmus+ KA1 mobility was approved and funded by the National Agency of Greece. The training course that took place in October 2018, in Barcelona, Spain, besides focusing at large on conflict resolution and bullying prevention, also introduced teachers to SEL, emotional intelligence and mindfulness. The content and materials of the course revolved around the need to cultivate a caring, participatory and equitable learning environment in our school, thus lending a hand towards creating an improved version of Gymnasio Vevis. The 5 participants engaged in practical, hands-on activities and gained in terms of input, self-awareness, linguistic, social and intercultural competence, team empowerment and cooperation skills.

The impact of Erasmus+ projects is measured not only by the quality of project results but also to the extent to which their results are known through effective dissemination. To this end, the role of the trainees was not finalized neither after the completion of the training seminar, nor after the year long project was over; they still serve as disseminators of the information to their students, colleagues, community, and fellow teachers in their area. A special logo was made to be used in the social media accounts created on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for our project, and in our official website which was designed from scratch in order to showcase the inspirational achievements to a larger audience. The website is the main platform for the spreading and sharing of the project's impact as of today, and it contains pertinent information about each step involved in the Erasmus+ procedure, since the early stage of the initial application for funding. Promotion activities, workshops and talks are also detailed under the various menus. Besides their life-changing European experience, the participants also acquired a Certificate of Attendance, the Europass Mobility document and the Europass CV. It is beyond dispute that the collective presence of Gymnasio Vevis has been given a significant boost by the added European value of the peer mediation project so far and the whole school community is still reaping the benefits of this project.

CONVEY (2018-2019)

Later that same year, another European project was scheduled and planned for Gymnasio Vevis, CONVEY. It is a project co-funded by the Rights, Equality & Citizenship

Programme of the European Union, raising awareness on the gender stereotypes and the sexual violence and harassment against women. Experienced partners from 6 European countries (Bulgaria, Ireland, Cyprus, UK, Greece, and Italy) joined forces to develop an online game and draw materials and resources to be used in the classroom. The Greek partner in the project, the Smile of the Child, is an internationally acclaimed non-profit NGO which gave Gymnasio Vevis the opportunity to take part in the piloting of the programme in Greek secondary schools in early 2019.

The EFL teacher of Gymnasio Vevis was among the educators who participated in the Train-the-trainers seminar workshops with a view to implementing the programme in her school. The project was implemented in January 2019 as a Health Education project and lasted for 5 months. The title used was "Using technology to deconstruct gender stereotypes", and it was an instant success with the student-participants. The original topic, the state-of the art technology, the interesting scenarios unfolded in the CONVEY Game, the use of smartphones and tablets at school and the exciting non-formal activities in the official training-kit were some of the reasons that the CONVEY project appealed to the interests of the students and yielded positive results in their end-of-project questionnaires.

T4E- Exploring our European Identity (2019-2020)

The previous sections of this paper, though extensive, have only been a foreword on the projects that paved the way to our most "European" project yet. "Exploring our European identity" is a T4E project that was planned as an extracurricular project for the 3rd Grade students, and was scheduled for January-May 2020. However, part of the project was realized while schools were closed during the COVID-19 quarantine, and thus, distance-learning was employed for its achievement and final completion. So, some of the allocated 12 sessions were, due to special circumstances, conducted online and attended by students on Webex.

The main goal of the project was to instill to students the desire to become informed, active and responsible EU citizens. Some of the topics of interest were human rights and democracy, the timeline of EU history and the role of Greece, the EU institutions, the EU policies and the current EU affairs. Some of the digital materials and resources used:

- Active lessons about the EU

- Europe in 12 lessons by Pascal Fontaine

- The EU Learning Corner

The methodology was inspired by the PBL model, encouraging team collaboration towards an end-product. Besides the content knowledge to which they were exposed, the participants also engaged in research and class debates developing thus their critical-thinking, communication skills and foreign language competence. We also took an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating texts and assignments from the Social and Political Education coursebook, applying thus a combination of context-embedded and explicit teaching approaches. The final product was a poster to be used for the presentation of the project in and outside of the school in the dissemination stage. To this end, right from the beginning, during the second session, the students used CANVA to design an official logo to feature on the poster and on the cover page of their portfolio binders.

Midway through the project, the students had the opportunity to interview via teleconference a Greek translator who works for the European Parliament in Luxembourg. Crafting salient questions, split between the interviewee's professional life and personal daily routines in the cradle of the European Union, is a key competence and core component of the PBL approach. However, a week later, the project coordinator faced an abrupt dilemma, as schools were closed down due to the coronavirus pandemic; put the project on hold until the recess is over, or embrace blended learning and try to make the best of the situation? A famous quote by Jean Monnet is highly pertinent in this case "People only accept change when they're faced with necessity, and only recognise necessity when a crisis is upon them".

Choosing the second path meant that the project was not discontinued, yet there was definitely some procrastination involved due to the frequent absences of the demotivated students, the internet lagging or various connection issues, the lack of ICT skill of students and their families, the poor time management skills of the participants during the online sessions etc. Blended learning calls for the use of synchronous and asynchronous tools interchangeably, thus all the materials were uploaded and accessed on Eclass (the official Ministry of Education asynchronous platform) and online sessions were scheduled on a weekly basis on Webex (the official Ministry of Education synchronous platform).

Despite the deviation from the original plan, by the end of the school year the project had significant results to present: written assignments submitted on Eclass, research about the EU institutions, online mock polls about Brexit, and the final poster created collaboratively on the education version of CANVA. Although the coronavirus pandemic has been challenging for students and teachers alike, our T4E project managed to meet the basic expectations of its instructor upon its completion. With learning materials inundating the internet (eg. the online learning resources and tools aiding educators during COVID-19 on the official European Commission website), there is a strong possibility that an enriched version of the same project will expand and be re-implemented next year.

In retrospect, there is only one thing that the instructor feels was missing from this year's not ideal, due to force majeure, but still effective when put in perspective, implementation: an EU simulation game. A study by Oberle and Leunig (2016) claims that there is great potential in simulation games; they impart content knowledge and a clear understanding of how political processes and the way the EU functions, and improve students' attitudes towards the EU, changing their perception of the EU's relevance to their everyday life. However, the same study pinpoints that a simulation game is not an easy task - cooperation with extracurricular partners specialising in the subject and methodology is necessary, as teachers might lack the skills, experience or competencies involved.

Therefore, employing a simulation game in our project with a view to strengthening the experiential element and the PBL aspects of the project, would undoubtedly render "Exploring our European identity" a concrete and holistic experience next year. In terms of expertise, we aspire to be meeting the eligibility criteria so that we could receive the support and guidance from the University of Piraeus expert team.

Conclusions

Our appreciation for the role of non-formal education and our passion for extracurricular

programmes have ultimately guided us to this year's European citizenship programme. Since the peer mediation programme in 2015, our journey in Gymnasio Vevis has been an invaluable experience, in every respect. Although the route we followed may seem arbitrary or haphazard, it reflects the gradual development of our teacher-student community in terms of social and emotional intelligence. A combination of context-embedded and explicit teaching approaches was used, and all the programmes acquired one sort or another of the cognitive, pragmatic and affective dimension of Citizenship Education as described by Scheerens (2009, 2011). Each previous year's accomplishments were used productively in building the goals and objectives of the next programme for a new target group. So far, the "T4E-Exploring our European Identity" project has been the most comprehensive programme undertaken, with significant results, all the more so now with the effective use of distance learning tools due to the new COVID-19 reality in education. We hope that our intention to create a sustainable project that reflects the spirit and mission of Gymnasio Vevis, will be realized during the following school year.

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3.3. «Travel to Democratic Europe: A world with a lot of Rights, Values and Destinations».

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Abstract

Promoting the understanding and assimilation of the values and fundamental rights of the European Union as well as equal active participation in decision-making, are values that should be promoted in the modern Democratic School through the development of innovative practices and methods.The preschool age, the stimuli and the education that the children will receive in this time period, play a key role in the formation of the democratic personality. Aiming to acquaint children aged 4-6 years with democracy and human rights, during the school year 2019-2020 and for the whole following year 2020-2021 in the 5th kindergarten of Argostoli, Kefalonia, we designed and implemented a project within the framework of the program Teachers4Europe with participation of 20 students and a kindergarten teacher. Through this journey, children will gain new knowledge, broaden their horizons, gain new perspectives and see Europe through a new perspective. The fairy tale, the song and the game will become the means by which they will understand that differences in language, culture, religion, financial status and educational systems are less important than the common values and goals of the European Union. Peaceful coexistence, awareness against discrimination, promotion of cooperation, equal opportunities, and therefore democracy, are commonplace for all European countries.

Key Worlds: Human rights, Democracy values, European citizen, Citizenship education

Part I

Kindergarten as a place of formation of the democratic citizen and education in human rights

Preschool age as a formal education system plays an important role (Οικονομίδης, 2009) in shaping democratic personality and has also a very strategic role in supporting every individual. When adopting democratic attitudes and values, the influence that children receive from their environment is very important, as stakeholders (parents, teachers) at this age act as role models. The kindergarten is characterized by an appropriate pedagogical, open democratic climate, in which various issues related to democracy and human rights are approached creatively (Engdahl & Losso, 2019). All activities start with the stimuli, the knowledge, the family environment and the experiences of the children. The kindergarten is a small stepping stone for the formation of tomorrow's democratic citizen who will respect human rights and will know them when they are violated.

More specifically, τhe curriculum of the Kindergarten is moving in two directions (Οικονομίδης, 2009):

1. The children's democratic education and the human rights awareness. Principles as creativity, collaboration, confidence, critical thinking, discussion, freedom, holistic approaches, involvement and equality characterize the curriculum of the Greek Kindergarten. The program adapted according to the interests, experiences and needs of the children.

2. Classrooms have one list of universal rules which accompanied by illustrations and regulate key issues of school life. In this way, children experience in the Kindergarten environment situation, similar to those of everyday life in a democratic society (Οικονομίδης, 2009). For example, the formation of class rules is an important key element of student participation in the school team and has been in place since the early days of Kindergarten. They are creation of the whole group and not only from the teacher of the classroom. The kids are discussing why we made them and what will happen if we don't follow them. Children understand that rules exist to protect, firstly, themselves and second the others (e.x. we share, we play all together…). Another example is the vote. Voting is good for children to understand what they are voting, what the problem is and to understand, also, that their vote will have an effect. The dilemma of whether to play or to paint could lead to a vote.

The curriculums of other European countries are moving in the same direction. Their basic principles are the protection of the fundamental human rights of EU citizens as well as the promotion of human rights around the world (Biesta, 2019). Although each EU country has its own culture and tradition, it has a common value that characterizes it and is the ¨Democracy¨. Some other human values that are common to EU countries are free dialogue, equal participation in decision-making, the promotion of respect for human rights, freedom of expression and the formation of democratic and responsible citizens (Οικονομίδης, 2009).

The formation of the democratic citizen in kindergarten

The Kindergarten as a part of the Greek education system follows the basic principles of education, one of which is the formation of democratic and responsible citizens on the basic values of democracy such as equality, equality, participation, and respect for freedoms and rights (Μπάλιας, 2002).

Although research on the subject is relatively few, it seems that children on this age are developing knowledge and feelings about the democratic values. Dewey (1916) was the one who first said children through school can be educated on Democratic values. Other studies (Sousa & Oxley, 2019) have suggested that the development of the understanding of democratic values seems to be able to be approached by preschool children in the context of their organized activities. In kindergarten the basic principles of democracy in practice are formulated and applied primarily by the kindergarten teacher (Mursell, 1955). She is the main body of democracy in the classroom, from the ways in which she shapes her teaching to the way in which she treats each child individually and as a member of the group. All the ways that characterize the teacher, establish the democratic way that the kindergarten operates and give a strong message to the children about democratic values

(Οικονομίδης, 2009). In a democratic preschool class the kindergarten teacher provides children with opportunities to make choices, to interact in different ways within a democratic society and promotes freedom of thought and expression respect for them others (Atkinson, 2017).Teacher functions as a model of a democratic person for the children of the class, gradually shaping the concept of democracy and aiming at the common good of the kindergarten. In this democratic climate children begin to learn about democracy, to know their rights and to be involved in democratic processes that make sense to them (Fielding & Prieto, 2002). Also, democratic teachers collaborate with students to solve problems and don't forget that their students come from different socio-cultural environments, different experiences and different ways of understanding those experiences (Atkinson, 2017).

Therefore, in kindergarten, the democratic education of children aged 4-6 is promoted mainly in the way of organizing school life, the classroom management style, the teaching methods and forms applied, the democratic pedagogical environment that is formed (Sousa el all, 2019). The kindergarten, as an open and democratic space characterized by security and safety, is suitable for the approach of issues related to democracy, thus laying the foundations for the formation of a democratic citizen.

Suggestions for Democratic activities in Kindergarten

Democratic education is characterized by freedom, discussion involvement and equality (Μπάλιας, 2002). These four parameters create classrooms that are characterized by self-efficacy, participation, experiential learning and opening of the school to the wider community. Within this democratic education, are created autonomous and critical thinkers who defend their rights and freedoms (Mursell, 1955). Democratic education is not limited to here, but also encouraged to participate all the stakeholders (students, family and faculty) in the educational process. There is a continuation of the program at home and it takes into account the previous knowledge of the children (Collins et all, 2019).

At this point, we will discuss some suggestions for activities and practices of school life, teaching and learning in kindergarten, which lead to the education of infants in democratic ideals and human rights.

1. Participation in joint-group efforts (for example votes, respect for the majority) should begin early in the child's life and give them the opportunity to experience democracy in practice.

2. Classrooms have one list of universal rules. Most of the rules are accompanied by illustrations and regulate key issues of school life. The establishment of classroom rules that regulate basic issues of school life should be done with the active participation of children in cooperation with the kindergarten teacher (for example, rules related to games that children play, what can be done if one does not apply them) (Κουτσουβάνου, 2002). The relevant discussions and the active participation of the children in the shaping of the rules of the classroom helps them to understand that they exist to protect themselves and others.

In this way, children experience in the classroom environment situations similar to those of everyday life in a democratic society (Biesta, 2019). At the same time, through collective

and group activities, they learn to expand their interest in the common good and realizing that their own interests and desires can be differentiated from those of others.

The Democratic Kindergarten

It is an open democratic, pedagogical environment that gives children confidence and security (Οικονομίδης, 2009). Help children shape tomorrow's future citizen. It is, also, a human centered education, in which children adopt values, develop emotions, shape behaviors, acquire knowledge and practice skills (Collins et all, 2019). In this democratic environment, children are beginning to experience (Οικονομίδης, 2009):

- democracy
- to learn about democracy
- to know their rights
- be aware of the rights of others
- to be involved in democratic processes

The Democratic Kindergarten also[1]:

- Respects human dignity
- Includes everybody
- Values diversity
- Lives in peace
- Gives everybody equal chances

These five values can be connected and can be learned everyday to school life.

Picture 1: Πηγή:https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/home

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[1] https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/home

Part II

Project Title

«Travel to Democratic Europe: A world with a lot of Rights, Values and Destinations».

Teacher's name: Georgia Tasiouli
T4E Ambassador's name: Aggeliki Totolou

School name: 5th Kindergarten of Argostoli, Kefalonia
Country: Greece
Target group: Grade 4-6
Duration: 2 years (2019-2020 & 2020-2021). The program is still in development as it began in February 2020 and it will be continued the 2020-2021 school year.
No of participants: 20 learners, 1 classroom
School subjects involved: CROSS-CURRICULAR REFERENCE to the subjects of language, environmental studies, mathematics, art, computers (Χρυσαφίδης, 2005, 2009, Ματσαγγούρας, 2003)

Aims of the project

The general purpose of the program is to promote respect for human rights. Promoting the understanding and assimilation of the values and fundamental rights of the European Union, strengthening democratic values and free dialogue and taking an active part in decision-making on an equal footing (Engdahl & Losso, 2019). Also, the promotion and consolidation of the Democratic School through the development of innovative practices and teaching methods, related to Democracy and human rights, as children experience in their daily lives at school.

Building and adopting democratic values at the individual level is the starting point for changing our attitude and behavior at the collective level, ultimately equipping students with knowledge, skills, and the development of democratic attitudes and behaviors. Our intention is to take human rights across the borders of the classroom at local, national and European level (Μπάλιας, 2002).

➢ To provide learners with the required background knowledge and experiences.

➢ Children will gain new knowledge, broaden their horizons, gain new perspectives and see Europe through a new perspective (through fairy tales, songs, games).

➢ As tomorrow's citizens to interrelate, interact, collaborate, cooperate, have equal rights and the same obligations and follow rules and regulations.

In more detail

• The formation of a pedagogical democratic environment.

• Understanding the value of teamwork and joint effort, realizing the uniqueness of each individual and respecting others who may have different ideas and beliefs.

• Education on basic fundamental values of democracy (equality, participation in decision-making, parity, freedom, dialogue, respect) through the way school life is organized and the democratic pedagogical environment that is applied.

- Cultivation of future citizens in the understanding and appropriation of the fundamental rights of the EU, in participating in joint efforts and in working for the common good.

- Participation in activities regarding freedom of expression of ideas, opinions, votes, collective and group actions, cooperation and development of the concept of common interest.

- Mutual awareness of the 27 EU member states and data of the conditions and lifestyle of their inhabitants.

- To know the actions of organizations such as Unicef, Action aid.

- Cooperation with other kindergartens in the region of Kefalonia / Greece/ Europe.

- Distribution of the results to parents, students and the wider community.

Themes addressed

- Digital literacy

- EU democratic values

- Human Rights

- Diversity

- Global citizenship

- Knowledge of EU issues

Methodology

The basic principles on which our program is based are:

- Scientific and interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and teaching[2] .

- Cooperative/Experiential learning through the development of an environment of active participation, cooperation and mutual support of team members (Χρυσαφίδης, 2009).

- Olistical approach to learning, which will stimulate democratic values not only as a pedagogical process but also as the main goal of the program to redefine European values for democracy in order to help children adopt a positive attitude towards these democratic values. Through initiatives, roles and active participation, children will create experiences, developing their personality and self-efficacy and will learn to be active and to react to social issues to improve their quality of life (Χρυσαφίδης, 2005).

- [2] Υπουργείο Εθνικής Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων-Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο (ΥΠ.Ε.Π.Θ.-Π.Ι.) (2003). *Διαθεματικό Ενιαίο Πλαίσιο Προγραμμάτων Σπουδών για το Νηπιαγωγείο*. Αθήνα: Ο.Ε.Δ.Β.

Activities

Activity 1: ¨Project Announcement¨

This program is part of the participation of our classroom in the European Innovative Program "Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic Culture" (T4E)" (2018-2021). We believe that our participation in the program will give us the opportunity to communicate, collaborate, exchange ideas and pedagogical methods with other schools in other European countries and other educational communities through experiential activities. It is still at the beginning and hasn't yet been completed.

Activity 2: ¨How it all started¨

At our request to the European Commission in Greece and their information about our participation in the program, the Commission sent us free material for our actions.

Picture 21: The box with the books we received from the European Commission in Greece.

Picture 32: The children are amazed at what the box has inside.

Picture 4: The children are holding in their hands the books we received from the European Commission in Greece. We thank them very much.

Activity 3: ¨The travel begins…¨

The children making puzzle, learn about Europe but at the same time they cooperate and interact.

Picture 53: The children are making the puzzle of Europe together.

Picture 6: Children observe the map of Europe and try to locate on the map the country that has their paper.

Activity 4: ¨The flags¨

Here, we talked about the flags, the countries, we listened the national anthem in some of them and then we categorized them according to their color.

Picture 7: The children choose the right flag and place it on the rope in the right color.

Activity 5: ¨Creating a group poster¨

We read in the classroom the book « The Stars of Europe» and then on the occasion of the lending library, the children borrowed a book each in their home, read it with their parents and discussed it. The next day in the school, we all created a group poster with different materials.

Picture 8: Each child places a material on the collage.

Picture 9: On the occasion of the book: "Τα αστέρια της Ευρώπης", we made our own group poster.

Activity 6: ¨During distance learning ¨

During the quarantine period we worked through distance learning with the kindergarten students. Quarantine period was a difficult time for all of us, students, teachers and parents. We experienced an unprecedented situation and even more for the children where the schools closed and they lost their friends, their habits, their routine. In the Kindergarten we kept in touch with the children through the Kindergarten blog (https://blogs.sch.gr/5niparg) where we uploaded various activities to the children. We choose the school website as a means of communication as well it was an easy way that all children could access even from a mobile phone. Inside the blog, there is a category with the title TEACHERS4EUROPE, where parents could come in, watch information for the program and do the activities with their children.

So, we exchanged our news, we communicated and the children sent us material from the activities, they did. Each week I uploaded activities from different thematic areas and one of these themes were activities our European program Teachers4 Europe. On the occasion of World Europe Day on May 9, 2020, which celebrates peace and unity in Europe, we decided to deal with Europe by making an animation video with title: ¨Ταξίδι στην

Ευρώπη…¨ in which we suggested a series of activities to the children. The video describes some of activities we had already done with the children in the classroom before the schools closed due to the COVID-19 and also some new digital actions such as the games in the European corner. An idea that the children really liked. The video is available at the below link.

https://biteable.com/watch/-2555289

We suggested, also, to the children to do the activities suggested on the website of the learning corner.

https://europa.eu/learning-corner/play-games_el
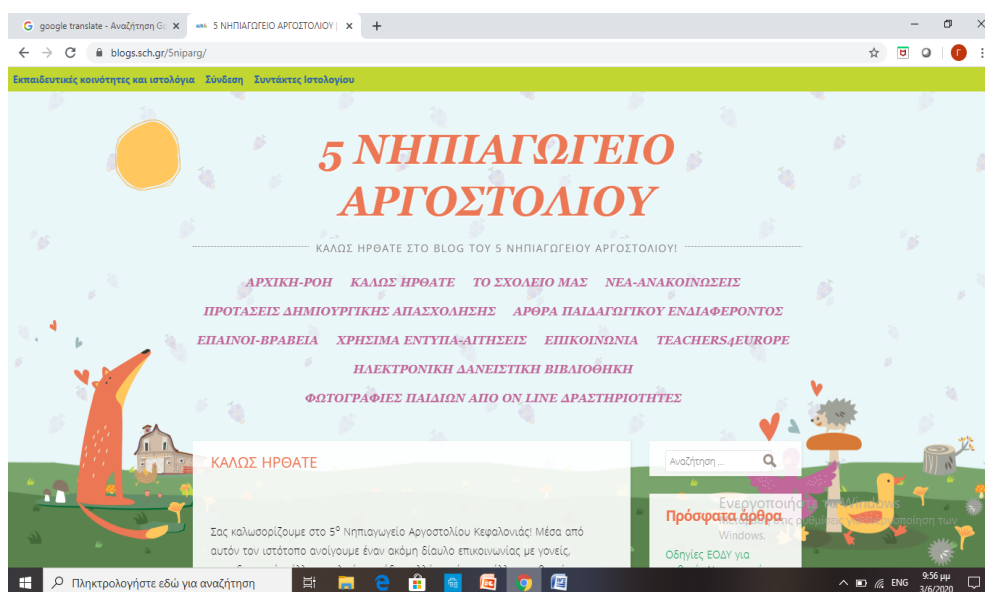
Picture 4: Photo from the website of our kindergarten

Evaluation

Taking into account the modern views on learning and assessment as well as the Curricula for Kindergarten (Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο, 2003, IEP, 2014a), assessment is perceived as a continuous and systematic process of collecting, recording, interpreting, utilizing and sharing information on the progress and achievements of a program.

Evaluation is the step where the school evaluates how well it has achieved the goals it set at the beginning of the program and whether the results meet the respective priorities. In fact, the evaluation process requires constant review, reflection and feedback through well-defined monitoring procedures (Ματσαγγούρας, 2003β). As with all programs, feedback is a vital component of any evaluation process and it is therefore very important to evaluate the changes that have taken place since the implementation of our program.

More specifically, our evaluation will be descriptive, it will be formative, it will be attempted in successive phases (initial, during, until the completion) and it will contribute to the adjustment of the activities, in case of malfunctions, in partial expansion or

contraction of the initially planned activities, always depending on the degree of maintenance of the active interest of the children[3].

The program is still in progress as starts in February 2020 and will be continued all the 2020-2021 school year. When the program finished we will evaluate the following points. In particular, we will evaluate if:

- The goals we set at the beginning of the program were achieved.

- Children have built new knowledge, adopted democratic values, attitudes and human rights' attitudes.

- They changed their attitude and behavior.

- Developed decision-making skills.

- Understand and assimilate EU values and fundamental rights.

- They formed a code of values, attitudes and behaviors.

- The necessary culture was developed in the school unit in order to promote and consolidate the Democratic School.

- Use of innovative practices and sharing educational content.

- The school used new technologies to communicate better with each other, with parents and the wider community.

- The program operated feedback-corrections, according to the interests, experiences and special needs of the children proving the pedagogical character of the assessment.

- The idea of human rights has crossed the boundaries of the classroom and has been transferred to the wider society (dissemination of results).

Conclusions

The implementation of the project was particularly fruitful for our kindergarten. Through the activities that took place, children were given the opportunity to act, create, collaborate and express themselves in a variety of ways. Children acted as sensitized and active members, showing that the formation of an active civil society can begin at such a young age. The pedagogical atmosphere of the classroom was characterized by democracy, participation and liveliness. The child expressed their opinions, and through democratic procedures (voting) decided what was needed. The implemented activities are a part of those that were planned, as the project will continue in the school year 2020-2021. The travel will continue, there are still many destinations.

It is very gratifying that through the program, children have been led to cultivate democratic ways of living and respect for others (Rautiainen et all, 2019). Goals such as development of self-esteem, developing collaboration and interaction skills, understanding the value of

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- [3] Δαφέρμου, Χ., Κουλούρη, Π. & Μπασαγιάννη, Ε. ΥΠ.Ε.Π.Θ-Π.Ι. (2006). Οδηγός Νηπιαγωγού. Εκπαιδευτικοί Σχεδιασμοί. Δημιουργικά Περιβάλλοντα Μάθησης. Αθήνα: Ο.Ε.Δ.Β.

teamwork and joint effort, approached through activities and contributed to the formation of democratic and responsible citizens (Biesta, 2019).

In conclusion, we could say that in kindergarten, in an open, democratic pedagogical climate, which conveys to children confidence and security, the creative approach to issues related to democracy, with activities that will start from the experiences and knowledge of children, which will involve the experiential, will develop the critical thinking and will be connected with the society, can from this age contribute to the formation of the democratic citizen.

Thus, after all, we support a human-centered education, in which children will adopt values, develop emotions, shape behaviors, acquire knowledge and practice skills. Our hope is the voice of children that can change the world.

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- https://europa.eu/learning-corner/play-games_el
- https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/human-rights_el
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights_en

3.4. United in Diversity (Unis dans la diversité)

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Abstract

In the framework of teaching for inclusion and diversity and promoting European values, we designed and elaborated a joint project entitled "United in Diversity" ("Unis dans la diversité"). As part of Erasmus+ programme "Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture", the main aim of this project is to promote awareness of EU`s value of respect for its cultural and linguistic diversity and enhance their knowledge and understanding of EU`s diversity and unity. The underlying theory that informs practice is that our European challenge relates to how students perceive and accept "other" Europeans and how they perceive themselves in a United Europe. The main concept was elaborated by the French language teacher serving in an inclusive Greek primary school with a common vision of providing equal opportunities for all students. In the framework of a linguistic exchange with students from a French school, the students were motivated to reflect on issues of cultural diversity, cultural prejudice and stereotypes. Hence, this project was designed and developed in order to be implemented in a Greek primary school in collaboration with a French school as well as an African school (Togo). During the first sessions of this project, the students were able to visit the official website of the European Union and browse through the learning materials. The students reflected on how the EU could change the way we see ourselves or the way we perceive others. The students also created padlets and drawings illustrating their self-perception. In the next steps, they are planning to create mind maps, posters, and interactive presentations as well as organise special debates called "World Juices" about the European concepts which are significant for their project. All these activities will help students realize that the EU brings us closer, teaches us to like each other or makes it easier for us to meet each other.

Key words: Inclusion, diversity, self-perception, reflection, collaboration

Introduction

Inclusion in diversity is a European priority that must be supported by an effective educational strategy of national governments (Rogge and Self, 2018). Inclusive diversity must be achieved through school curricula which aim to improve teaching and learning

through knowledge about European Union and its values, especially in the field of diverse cultures and languages by using innovative methodological approaches. As part of Erasmus+ programme "Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture", the main aim of this project is to foster awareness of EU`s value of respect for its rich cultural and linguistic diversity (Article 3, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). More specifically, through this project, the learners: a) enhance their knowledge and understanding of EU`s diversity and unity, b) become aware and embrace the EU value of respect for diversity, c) enhance their self-reflection, their critical thinking and become aware of their own prejudices. In addition, students strengthen inquiry skills, enhance critical thinking and creativity and improve their communication and collaboration skills. In general, this educational project aspires to promote "respect for human rights as the foundations for managing diversity and stimulating openness to other cultures" (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008:30)

The theoretical framework of this project consists of the Self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 1996), according to which people actively strive to ensure that their experiences in groups would validate their self -views, their thoughts and feelings about the self. This reflection on students` self-perception and on their cultural identity would lead them to a reflection on the strength of our common identity as Europeans. Hence, this project is implemented in order to promote awareness of the European identity in all its diversity and intercultural understanding.

In the first stage, a part of this project was implemented in a Greek school. The main concept was elaborated by the French language teacher serving in an inclusive Greek primary school with a common vision of providing equal opportunities for all students. In the framework of a linguistic exchange with students from a French school, the students had the opportunity to reflect on issues of cultural diversity, cultural prejudice and stereotypes.

The project: Unity and diversity to overcome adversity

This project focuses on European cultural identity and especially the concepts of self-perception and diversity. These concepts acquire now, more than ever, a distinct importance in view of the most recent events around the world. In this period, with the pandemic of COVID-19 and people being isolated, our relationships with other people have been tested. Additionally, there are tragic incidents around the world reminding us that we failed to overcome adversity and racism which lead to violence and destruction. All individuals developing racist attitudes were once students in someone's classroom. Their educators should have taught them about diversity and unity, about accepting and respecting others regardless of their race, religion or cultural differences. Unfortunately, racism continues to plague our society in innumerable ways.

Teachers4Europe can play a central role in the promotion of a different attitude in our society. We can make a deliberate plan of how we will disrupt racism within our circle of influence, our school community. There are plenty of opportunities in our schools to create deliberate spaces for our students to discuss issues of equality and respect of human rights and reflect on unity and diversity in our classroom.

And this is how the idea of our joint project was created. This project was designed and developed in order to be implemented in a Greek primary school in collaboration with a French school as well as an African school, in Togo. In the first stage, a part of this project has already been implemented in the Greek school and then the outbreak of the Covid-19 put a stop to our plans for proceeding to the next steps and sharing our experiences with the schools of France and Togo. We are expecting that the following year, we will be able to enhance our collaboration and to exchange our good practices with our partners. This project will help us enhance teaching and learning through knowledge about European Union and its values, especially in the field of diverse cultures and languages by using innovative methodological approaches.

Background

It is important, at this stage, to refer to the background of this project. Our school, the 8th Primary School of Kifissia, a large school with 300 students and 38 teachers, is an inclusive school with a common vision of providing equal opportunities for all students. This common vision is based on the principle that "generating better performance for all students and greater inclusion and equity are not only lofty goals individuals and societies should pursue, they are key objectives that can improve everyone's prosperity and well-being" (Schleicher and Zoido, 2016: 697). Hence, our school embraces modern teaching methods, integrates digital tools into the everyday learning process, explores the potential of digital storytelling and participates in European programmes (eTwinning, Erasmus+). Most importantly, our school focuses on accepting the "others", and welcomes all children, irrespective of their particular intellectual, physical, emotional, linguistic or other abilities, according to the UNESCO Declaration (Salamanca, Spain, 1994).

The French language teacher serving in this school considers herself as an informal "teacher leader" promoting change in classroom practices (Holland et al., 2014) and helping to improve students` lives through education (Crowther et al., 2002). Hence, her teaching objectives consist of providing students with purposeful and meaningful learning experiences, which are developmentally appropriate and reflective of contemporary social and diverse European realities.

Matching with the T4E project: Addressing EU challenges

Our European challenge relates to how students perceive and accept "other" Europeans and how they perceive themselves in a United Europe. In the framework of a linguistic exchange and correspondence with students from a French school in Lille, the Greek students had the opportunity to reflect on issues of cultural diversity, cultural prejudice and stereotypes. They all commented that the French students were quite "different" from what they expected them to be and they seemed to be disillusioned when they compared their expectations with "reality". During an introductory brainstorming session on the question: "What does it mean to be European?", students admitted that they needed more information in order to enhance their knowledge about the EU and its values. They also commented that small cultural differences between people can create misunderstandings and barriers, and even escalate into division of who is right and who is wrong. In contrast, the students insisted that Europe should bring together people from different cultural backgrounds, with different religions, diverse origins and ideas.

Theoretical framework

The underlying theory that informs practice is that our European challenge relates to how students perceive and accept "other" Europeans and how they perceive themselves in a United Europe. Thus, the theory underpinning this project consists of the Self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 1996), which contends that people actively strive to ensure that their experiences in groups would validate their self-views, namely their thoughts and feelings about the self. If we become aware of how we view ourselves, we might be able to deal with issues of diversity and tolerance. We might be even able to recognise that diversity is not only around us, but it can also be found within ourselves. Thus, we become different people, we change, we evolve, we diversify. We just have to understand and embrace our own diversity in order to understand and accept others.

Therefore, the teacher together with her students, who were the ones who came up with the title, decided to embark on a project pertaining to European cultural identity and to work on the concepts of self-perception and diversity. The students were able to visit the official website of the European Union and browse through the learning materials. In particular, the students searched for information about EU in the activity book: Europe better together (Europe+ ensemble!).

After collecting pertinent information and writing down key words related to "diversity", a group of students suggested using the title "United in Diversity" ("Unis dans la diversité") for the project. Students commented that this European Union's motto could also reflect their own experience of trying to connect with other Europeans, their French pen-pals, who are "different", but they might also have a lot in common with them, and they try to be "united" by using the same language of communication.

Aims and outcomes

The main aim of this project is to provide learners with the necessary information about how the European Union consists of diversity and unity, in that it aims to enrich itself through each country member`s diverse cultures, traditions and languages. A further objective of this project is to foster awareness of EU`S value of respect for its rich cultural and linguistic diversity (Article 3, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). Finally, this project aims to enhance learners` competence to express themselves in regard to their European identity and diversity.

As for the outcomes, we certainly hope that, by the end of this project, learners will have enhanced their knowledge and understanding of EU`s diversity and unity. Similarly, learners will have become aware of European values and they will have embraced the EU value of respect for diversity. Additionally, learners will have enhanced their self-reflection and their critical thinking by becoming aware of their own prejudices. To this end, the students will develop various competences, enhance their knowledge about EU values and present this knowledge in alternative ways. Furthermore, the students will understand the meaning and the importance of diversity so that they learn to respect diversity. Ultimately, the students will strengthen their inquiry skills, they will enhance participation, communication, collaboration with peers, critical thinking and creativity.

Activities

The students embarked on this project with enthusiasm and contributed with their own ideas about its implementation. Initially, during a brainstorming session on the question: "What does it mean to be European?", the students searched for information about EU in the activity book: Europe better together (Europe+ ensemble!) in groups as a home assignment in order to present their results on the following session. Subsequently, the students presented the findings of their research. After collecting pertinent information and writing down key words related to "diversity", a group of students presented their work in the class and named their project "United in Diversity" ("Unis dans la diversité"). As the next step of the process, the students were instructed to draw a portrait of themselves to illustrate their self-perception (Picture 1). The material used was the a A4 paper copy of the mirror of the Museum of Cycladic Art and the question asked was: I am... How do I see myself? (Je suis... Comment je me vois?).

Picture 1. Illustrating self-perception

The students drew the portraits at home and brought them to the class. When they looked at the portraits, they commented that how we see ourselves is not necessarily how others see us. They also mentioned that how we see ourselves changes every day and if they were to draw their portraits next week or next month, these portraits would be completely different. When they were asked how the EU could change the way we see ourselves or the way we perceive others, the students replied that the EU brings us closer, provides us with opportunities, teaches us to like each other or makes it easier for us to exchange cultural practices and ideas. In the end of our discussion, we admitted that if we learn to accept ourselves and to love ourselves, we might be able to accept and love others as well.

To further this process of self-perception and self-discovery, we scanned the portraits and presented them in the class in the form of a padlet that the students had to complete with information about themselves (Picture 2). Some students commented that a girl looked Spanish or a boy looked French and these comments gave them ideas about the next steps of their project.

Picture 2: Padlet about self-perception
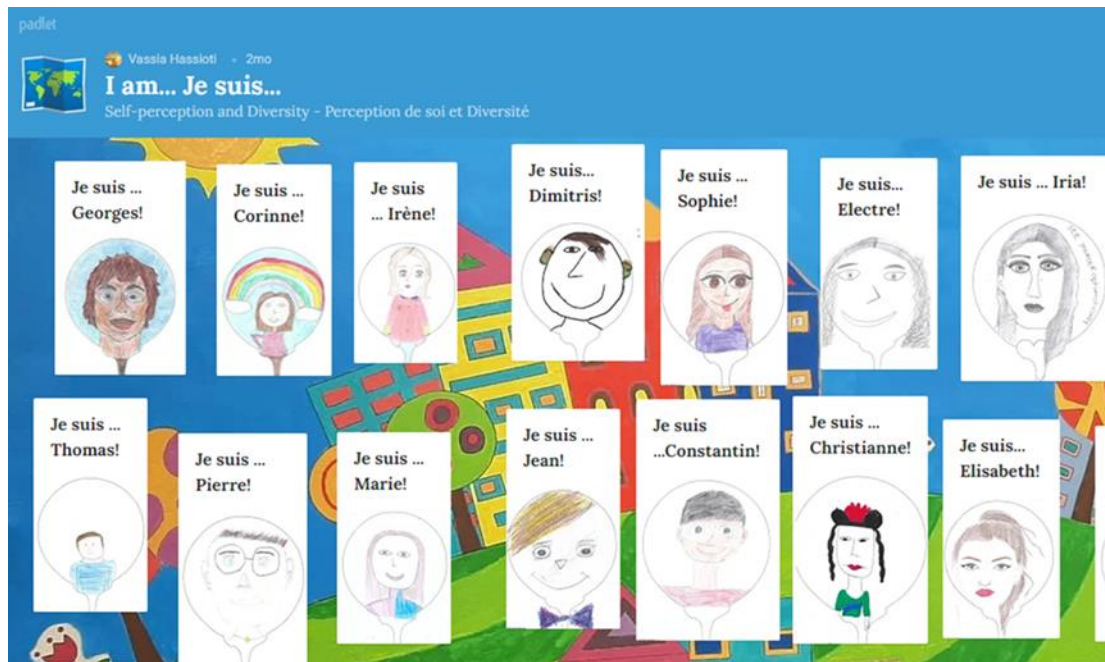
It is important to highlight that even though the teacher had some ideas about prospective activities that she could organize with her students on this project, it was the students themselves who decided on the next steps of the project. In fact, the students were always suggesting more activities to implement, thus becoming the leaders of their own learning. Thus, the students were actively engaged in the project according to the principles of active learning.

Students admitted that their next step towards accepting diversity and achieving unity would be to learn how to love themselves and to learn how to love other human beings. Self-love and self-acceptance are linked to the reference to the "other" (Hall, 1996:58). Hence, on the occasion of Valentine`s day, they worked on a video with Europeans saying "I love you" in their own language. The students tried to reflect on the message of this video and write only one word related to this message. Different groups of students wrote that the message was: "Love", "Welcome", "Different", "Happiness", "Together" (Amour, Bienvenue, Different, Bonheur, Ensemble). The students decided to conduct research in the Internet and find these words in as many European languages as they could.

Picture 3: Students` drawings

In the next session, students presented their work and their related drawings (Picture 3) and they had a discussion about all the Europeans that they viewed in this video. They commented on how these Europeans were similar or different from their expectations, thus exploring the issue of cultural differences and stereotypes about cultures, nations and appearances.

Unfortunately, the circumstances of Covid 19 outbreak and the ensuing confinement prevented them from proceeding to all the other planned steps of the project.

Materials

The materials used in the first stages of this project were mainly brainstorming stimuli in the form of web resources. Students conducted their research for the project and explored the following resources:

1. Activity book: Let`s explore Europe (À la découverte de l'Europe): https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/lets-explore-europe/en/
2. Activity book: Europe better together (L`Europe et toi): https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/europe-better-together/fr/
3. Video: https://safeYouTube.net/w/7h3J
4. Video: https://safeYouTube.net/w/d7BJ

Future plans

The next steps are very important for the students and they are looking forward to implementing them. To begin with, the students have decided to draw an avatar to represent different countries of the EU. They have already formed groups of 2 or 4 people to decide on the appearance of the avatar. When they resumed their lessons in June after a confinement of almost three months due to Covid 19 pandemic, they informed the teacher that they intended to start working on their avatar even if they had to share the progress of their artwork online.

The next step of the project is also an idea of a group of students. They have suggested working on their favorite song "On écrit sur les murs" by Kids United. As they work a lot with songs in the French class, they decided that this time they would create themselves a worksheet named "Le mur de la diversité" (The wall of diversity) on the notions of Unity

and Diversity and all the related elements in the song. This worksheet would contain key words in French and English and the students would write these words on the wall (padlet, poster). Finally, another group suggested making a mind map with all the words associated with related to "Unity" and all the words pertaining to "Diversity".

The final activity was suggested by the teacher but it was also enriched with various ideas of the students concerning the specific procedure to follow for its implementation. This final activity was based on the concept of the "World Café", an effective, and flexible method for hosting collaborative dialogue. The World Café is based on the premise that "people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges; that the answers we need are available to us; and that we are wiser together than we are alone" (Café to Go, 2015: 2). In the same line of thought, the students have decided to stage an event named "World Juices" (Les jus du Monde), during which students debate about the concepts that are significant for them and pertain to unity and diversity. The students will be divided in four groups and they will be sitting around four tables. One student will be the host and he or she will be serving different kinds of juice to classmates before the beginning of the debate. This student will also be the coordinator of the debate and he will be responsible for keeping the time and giving instructions when to begin and stop talking.

Every group will have a leaflet with information about unity and diversity in the EU. They will be given 10 minutes to debate about the concepts that are most important for accepting diversity and they will also suggest ideas about how to promote tolerance. Then, they will be given 10 minutes to debate about how to enhance EU unity. One person from each group, the secretary, will be responsible for organising a presentation of their ideas in any form they wish, namely texts, drawings or mind maps. The four groups will present their ideas and the host will write everything on the board.

When the debate is over, the group will be able to relax, enjoy their juices and evaluate their experience. The students came up with this idea because on the first session of this project, when they were talking about diversity, one student stated: "I drink a different juice every day, I am a different person every day!". These students have a good relationship with each other and they like to organise celebrations and parties. Hence, they also suggested that they could invite other classes to offer them juices and debate and that they could stage an online debate with their partners from France and Africa. And this is how the idea of the World Juices started to appeal to them and to motivate them into working towards implementing this project.

Evaluation of the project

Innovation

This project offers opportunities for critical thinking and innovation as well as participation and free expression pertaining to cultural diversity. During all the steps of this project, students take ownership of their own learning and organise debates and activities encompassing their own interests. They also resort to innovative use of digital tools such as padlets, interactive presentations and mind maps in order to express themselves on the topic of unity and diversity.

Matching with the T4E project

This project aims to promote EU`s values, such as respect for diversity and unity. In particular, the main issue addressed in this project pertain to fostering and enhancing knowledge about the EU, with an emphasis on both origins and functioning. Furthermore, this project enhances understanding and ownership of EU values and fundamental rights. Finally, the project aims to foster awareness of cultural identity and diversity in the EU.

Variance of the targeted group(s)

The targeted group consists of students of Primary schools, aged 10-12 years old, but it could also be implemented by students of Junior High Schools or High Schools, who would be able to enrich the debate about Unity and Diversity in the EU.

Scientific/pedagogical methods

The pedagogical methods employed in the implementation of this project consists of active learning, a pedagogical approach which is deemed as the most effective since it leads to positive cognitive outcomes (Freeman et al. 2014). In this student-centered approach, students suggest their own educational activities in order to implement their chosen project, thus they are able to take ownership of their own learning and actively construct knowledge. In this sense, students construct their own knowledge on a personal and social level (Freire, 1993) and the teacher becomes a coordinator or facilitator of the learning process. Throughout this project, students have active learning experiences which increase engagement and inclusivity as well as student motivation (Armbruster et al. 2009). In this specific form of active learning, namely project-based learning, students are actively engaged to enhance their skills of inquiry and debate and to prepare for future challenges in the real world (Bell, 2010).

Transferability to everyday school life

This project is highly transferable to everyday school life since it is based on a simple idea, namely promoting unity and diversity through student-driven activities, which is very easy to put into effect in all types of schools. Exploring self-perception, teaching and learning about values such as unity and diversity, motivating students to generate their own ideas about this project, exploring students` suggestions, are all simple ideas which are easy to transfer to diverse educational environments.

Conclusion

In these times of uncertainty due to the persisting pandemic of Covid19 and the ensuing financial predicament as well as various socio-political frictions around the world, educators have to empower their students and teach for diversity and unity to prevent adversity and conflict. Educators and their students have to stand united against discrimination, inequality and racism. To this end, teachers have to educate their students to be better humans sharing this planet and showing respect for each other.

It is the teachers' responsibility to eradicate racism within their circle of influence. Thus, their actions in their schools should be guided by their desire to allow their students to build a better society, a society promoting the European vision of embracing diversity, achieving unity, combating adversity and discord and preventing conflict and racism. This project pertaining to accepting diversity and promoting unity is in line with fostering European

values and enhancing intercultural acceptance and tolerance. As Teachers4Europe, we must continuously work towards becoming agents of positive change through self-reflection, education and promotion of European values. As Teachers4Europe, we should become beacons of light and hope that one day we would be able to accept diversity and we would live in a world without racism.

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3.5. Culture and Europe through the eyes of Youngsters

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Abstract

Focusing on human rights, gender equality, democracy, immigration and refugee issues, we oriented to the production of creative work and the promotion of the European ideas in education. Living in a multicultural society, in the largest industrial area of our country (Greece), with the highest environmental burden, we are presenting how our students have been promoting EU values for many years. Especially in the time of social distancing, we created videos as tributes to Women'sday, world Poetry Day, World Health Day, Easter's wishes and Labor Ma y Day, which were published in official European Websites and we are in touch for joint actions with other schools. Our school has participated in European competitions and programs such as Euroscola, in the European Youth Parliament, in the School Ambassadors of European Parliament program (EPAS), in the House of Adolescents, in simulation of the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, in rhetoric competitions, in national and international competitions in music, film, radio and digital audiovisual creation. We have created songs, films on immigration, the history of the European Union, spots for the European elections in 2019 (to urge citizens to do their democratic right) and we have also participated in radio shows, festivals, with the creation of musical theatres, school journals, in printed and electronic form, withsignificant achievements in all of the above every year. All of our actions have become known to the general public through press releases, our school website, radio and television broadcasts, events in our city's public, other areas of Attica, as well as in other districts of the country. Having actively participated in all the actions above, our students have realized how the EU actually works in practice, how it manages and regulates situations that affect our daily lives now and for the future thus they are enabled to handle local problems. Besides they are fully aware that the knowledge and experiences they have already acquired and those that will gain later on, will be useful in developing their critical thinking, so that they become active and responsible European citizens.

Keywords: Culture, European ideas, Youngsters, Education

Introduction

The 1st General Lyceum of Aspropyrgos, the unique General Lyceum, was founded

in 1976 (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1 1st General Lyceum of Aspropyrgos

It is considered the largest General High School in Greece, in a multinational and multicultural society, in the largest industrial area of the country, with the highest environmental pollution (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 The industrial area of Aspropyrgos

Each year, its students make outstanding achievements in higher education, in cultural and European programs (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Teaching European programs

We oriented to the production of creative work and the promotion of the European ideas in education, focusing on human rights, gender equality, democracy, immigration and refugee issues.

The above programs and actions find a great response to our students, with an increasing trend each year.

Our school distinguishes itself as extroversion and due to the multiple discrimination, this year there has been a significant increase in pupils who wanted to specialize in European programs. This year at Euroscola, for example, five times more students competed than last year.

Our school's students have become aware of how the European Union works and how

to handle current problems.

In the time of social distancing

We created videos online, staying at home following the steps below:

☐☐sending links with information

☐☐Photo Collection

☐☐Script creation

☐☐Voice messages creation

☐☐A music rug creation for each video

☐☐Editing (montage)

☐

as tributes to Women's day (Fig. 4, [1]), World Poetry Day (Fig. 5, [2]), World

Health Day (Fig. 6, [3]), Easter's wishes (Fig. 7, [4]) and Labor May Day (Fig. 8,

[5]), which were published in official European Websites (Fig. 9).

Fig. 4 Women's day

Fig. 5 World Poetry Day

Fig. 6 World Health Day

Fig. 7 Easter's wishes

Fig. 8 Labor May Day

Fig. 9 Publication in official European Websites

The School Ambassadors of European Parliament program (EPAS)

Our school, the responsible teacher and our students have been declared ambassadors of the European Parliament for 4 consecutive years and continue for the 5th year.

In "Europe's hangout" at the European Parliament Office in Athens, there is a painting ("For a human & a peaceful Europe"), a complex creation of a junior ambassador schoolgirl (Fig 10).

Fig. 10 "For a human & a peaceful Europe"

Focusing on human rights, gender equality, immigration and refugee issues, we have

created songs (Fig. 11), films on immigration [6], the history of the European Union[7], spots for the European elections in 2019 (Fig. 12, [8]), to urge citizens to do their democratic right. The movies and the spot are lined with a mus ical "rug", a band member creation.

Fig. 11 Songs recording

Fig. 12 European elections 2019

Athens EU Model Junior

The simulation took place at the Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Our students met other students and they exchanged opinions and concerns about the issues that concern the European space nowadays (Fig. 13, [12]).

They have improved their rhetorical abilities, they understand what it means to respect the interlocutor - "adversary" and to reduce dialogue to a unique means of disputes resolving.

Fig. 13 Simulation of the European Commission and the Council of Ministers

They have seen how the EU works in practice, how it manages and regulates situations that affect their daily lives and affect their future. On the occasion of a critical issue, the management of the refugee crisis, they have seen how negotiations are made, how decisions are made or blocked. They talked for hours, they listened the other opinions, they put forward arguments in defense of the interests they represented, they created alliances, they negotiated proposals to resolve the crisis and they promote joint action.

They were given the opportunity to learn about EU rules, institutions and strategies, but also of each country. They also learned the real meaning of the word 'compromise', which is not a negative word but it refers to the agreement of a decision and it only shows two winners.

Most of all, however, they understood the value of dialogue as it was the only way todiscuss and resolve various issues during meetings, while at the same time being key to our smooth introduction to society as active social persons.

They understood the complexity of the refugee and migrant crisis problem, they revised opinions. They expanded their knowledge of the two EU institutions that simulated, they embodied the principles of a constructive dialogue, they learned to negotiate and they made new friendships.

Competitions – Awards

For many years our school has participated in competitions, EUROSCOLA (Fig. 14),

EUSO, in the European Youth Parliament, in the House of Adolescents, in Business competitions, in national and international competitions in music, film, radio and digital audiovisual creation an recently in Jan Amos Comenius [9].

Fig. 14 Euroscola

It also participates in radio shows, festivals, with the creation of musical theatre performances, school journals, print and electronic, with significant distinctions in all

the above each year. We won the 1st Hellenic Radio Student Music Award and the

2nd Hellenic Student Music Award.

We recently won the 2nd International Film Award of Greek Educational Radio television & Digital Media competition (Fig. 15, [10]).

Fig. 15 Award ceremony

Diffusion of actions

All actions are publicized by press releases (Fig. 16), on our website,

Fig. 16 Press releases

on the action blog, by radio and television broadcasts, by events in our city's public, in other areas of Attica, as well as in other counties of the country (Fig. 17, [11]).

Fig. 17 Events

Conclusion

Having actively participated in all the actions above, our students have realized how the EU actually works in practice, how it manages and regulates situations that affect

our daily lives now and for the future thus they are enabled to handle local problems.

Besides they are fully aware that the knowledge and experiences they have already acquired and those that will gain later on, will be useful in developing their critical thinking, so that they become active and responsible European citizens.

We are in touch for joint actions with other schools and we continue.

References – Links

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=ULhuZw-PD2A&feature=emb_logo

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZdH5zdRlCg&feature=emb_logo

[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=LS8TD6EoPR4&feature=emb_logo

[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=87tx8c4J2V0&feature=emb_logo

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3UWTi3tnt0&feature=emb_logo

[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5NcAaMIrrA

[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeEWlKkSa18

[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il__rdqtRsc

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWPurBRdrXU

[10] http://fanisklirou.blogspot.com/2019/10/

[11] http://fanisklirou.blogspot.com/

[12] http://fanisklirou.blogspot.com/2018/12/blog-post.html

PART IV: Educational Tools

4.1. Learning for Democracy: Experiential learning of EU as a tool for European citizenship and democratic values awareness

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, the modern democratic framework of higher education has to cultivate students' relevant skills such as democratic participation, cooperation, taking responsibility, strengthen trust in public institutions and constitutions, freedom of expression and decision-making, as prerequisites for future's active citizens. Exactly these goals are advancing in the student communities, the function of which has continuously served the principle of democratic representation. Therefore, through the understanding of learning as a social activity and a vehicle of innovation and productivity in society, we may conclude that higher education can be – and should be a multilevel way for social cohesion and promotion of democratic values by preparing students to be active citizens. The main aim of this paper is to assess the role of higher education in the current challenging circumstances, in the context of addressing new and old problems while fostering fairness, diversity and social inclusion, broadly, democracy and social cohesion. The paper will analyze the importance of higher education institutions in order to achieve that goals, by focusing on the usage of a combination of diverse and innovative methods and new technologies but without undermining academic and institutional integrity. A case study of an EU institution simulation will also be analyzed in order to show the importance of such actions and alternative ways of learning for achieving the enforcement of active citizens. The analysis will lead to policy proposals for integrating new methods to fundamental academic values in the current context in order to foster democracy and social cohesion.

Introduction

Learning as a social activity of creativity and innovation, which promotes societies' modernization as well as societal and sustainable development, is a procedure which has been clearly connected with education, which is widely considered as a lifelong process (Blossfeld and Maurice, 2011). Furthermore, education is also directly connected with modern democracies. Several scholars have claimed that in order for a modern democratic state and society to rise, prosper and develop, it is necessary to create educated citizens. Therefore, an educational system in which democratic values, skills and virtues of democratic citizenship are developed, is necessary for modern democracies and their citizens (Gutmann and Ben-Porath, 2014). Higher education is a crucial part of educational system which plays an important role in democratic development and social cohesion. The lack of education in general and in particular of higher education, the inequalities of access and the exclusive use of long-gone-by formalistic educational methods, may increase learning problems and in the long term, cause social exclusion as well as increase several threats for democracy such as social unrest, populism and criminality (Webster, MacDonald and Simpson, 2006).

The relationship between Education and Democracy

In order to understand the advanced role of higher education in the new technological, social and economic era it is important to analyze the connection of education, in general, with democracy. Thus, it is true that in several countries education and democracy are highly connected. This has been strongly supported in literature, social and education research outcomes. That happens not only because through education democratic values could be developed and thrived, but also due to the fact that people learn how to interact with others, learn about the benefits of democratic participation and get acquainted to voting and self-organizing procedures. Therefore, education can be a useful tool and asset for democracy. Although democracy could have a wide potential base of supporters, at the same time, their motivation could be threatened. Alongside, dictatorship could have a smaller base of supporters, who have stronger motivations. Thus, here comes the role of education and especially higher education. It can increase the benefits of civic engagement and develop the participation in support of a broad-based regime (democracy), by strengthening it against a narrow-based regime (dictatorship) (Glaezer, Ponzetto and Shleifer, 2007).

There are many cases of countries in all over the world that have recognized the importance of education and its contribution to developing free, democratic and responsible citizens. As Rowland (2003) highlight, in several countries with different background such as the UK and South Africa, national education comprises the main tool in order to enhance democracy. For instance, in South Africa the National Educational Policy Act clearly declares that education enhance democracy. Similarly, the British Dearing Report declare that the development of democracy is one of the main objectives of Higher Education (NCIHE, 1997). Accordingly, the US report on Higher Education for American Democracy is commonly accepted as an influential statement on the capacity of higher education towards democratic advancement and practice (Hutcheson, 2011), due to the enforcement of equal opportunity as a socio-economic good as well as the cultivation through education

of democratic values, citizenship and participation. Respectively, in Greece the Constitution refers that "Education is a basic mission of the State and aims at the creation of free and responsible citizens" (Greek Constitution, article 16(2)).

Education: a social right and a tool of social cohesion

Social cohesion, which includes all interactions, attitudes and norms among citizens, is crucial for the democratic development of modern societies as long as it may increase the sense of belonging and democratic participation, namely, create a viable social capital. In order reach that objective, education system and especially higher education, is the main amplifying institution as long as it can re-orientate citizenship education using formal and informal educational methods as well as experiences of active participation.

In international literature issues such as social protection, social insurance, education and health are included as social rights (Marshall, 1965), where exclusion from equal access describes the modern meaning of social exclusion. Furthermore, inequalities in education is a crucial factor of social exclusion and they can be detected by illiteracy indicators, the percentages of compulsory education and the level of adult education. Old and recent empirical findings have shown the need of localization of social and personal factors which can lead to exclusion from work, such as family difficulties, education, debts or lack of skills (Pillinger, 2001; Ditch and Roberts, 2002). Several indicators have been connected with social exclusion and have been supported by researchers and technocrats as long as they seem to be connected with poverty. These are: low income, youth unemployment, regional cohesion, percentage of young people at the ages of 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) (Committee of Social Protection, 2001).

Consequently, we could support that the term of social cohesion is based on values and principles that aim to develop the participation of each person to social processes and education while decrease at the same time the existing trends for discrimination (Booth, 2005). Even if it is clear that education is one of the most important factors that support the social cohesion process, we should highlight that not only its definition, but also its implementation may differ between different cases of educational systems and cultural frames, as well as inside them (Dyson, 1999). Education that includes the form of comprehensive inclusion also in its highest levels promotes the specific value and idea of inclusive society, which is not focused only on the cohesion of socially vulnerable groups or people with special needs, but also includes all members of society regardless of nationality, sex, language, economic condition or each other distinctive characteristic.

Education as a fundamental process that aims at the creation of an equal society, has to include a wide scale of special needs. Moreover, when education plays a critical role to social cohesion, mainly it aims to social justice, equality and the assurance of social rights. Respectively, education constitutes the basic element of participatory democracy (Barton, 1995). Furthermore, the aim of education for each and every citizen (inclusive education) is to deal with multilevel discriminatory issues, ensuring the cohesion for all under conditions of redistribution (Unterhalter and Brighouse, 2007).

New trends of democratic, participatory and interactive higher education: a democratic and social cohesion multiplier

In order to achieve the abovementioned objectives, a new and innovative way of learning has been developed the last decades. This is non-formal education through implementation of conferences and simulations of national and international institutions and organizations as well as workshops for students, where young students and researchers are more involved in non-formal education and learning activities[4]. Thus, with such activities all levels of education and especially higher education could foster self-activity procedures that can lead to interactive capacity building. This form of education and training is a method of experiential learning that cultivates empathy, democratic participation, coexistence and co-decision (Kuk and Holst, 2018). This experience could be expressed through workshops, simulations, debates, creativity and self-realization games. Thus, it implicitly comprises an important innovation that creates the opportunity for democratic skills' capacity building for higher education students.

Higher education which involves both formal and non-formal activities and teach students the use of new technological tools could enhance participation and cultivate democracy and active citizenship. This is possible given the fact that young students not only learn with a formalistic way but also and most importantly, though their emulation and thus, through active participation. This non-formal way of education could also become a wave effect among young people/citizens as long as they will spread the awareness on the issues of democracy, participation and debate on contemporary problems and challenges. This wave effect will work as a democratic multiplier, creating a positive impact on the society towards democratic participation and citizenship awareness.

It turns out that higher education should empower students with a combination of formal and non-formal methods in order to enhance the notion of citizenship and thus, build a more cohesive society, with awareness and respect of diversity. Only this holistic approach can, in theoretical as well as in practical terms, prepare and achieve the essential and integrated democratic identity of an active citizen in the 21st century.

For countries that are lagging behind in terms of integration, it seems that higher education policy, if really focused on the democratic ideals through formal and non-formal methods, could provide opportunities for future social cohesion and development of social capital along with human capital investment (Tzagkarakis and Ieronimakis, 2019). However, such an investment does not seem to be applicable, while the risk of wandering in a larger crisis

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[4] Two cases of non-formal education initiatives helping university students to understand, train and learn the democratic values and develop their skills are the National Model United Nations (NMUN) and the Model European Union Strasbourg (MEUS). NMUN is a recognized Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) formally associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications since 1982 and a UN Academic Impact member since 2013. They simulate the UN institutions for students, developing students' understanding about the role of UN, increasing their democratic skills capacity, learning to cooperate and debate and gaining experiences for some important issues such as regional conflicts, gender and child rights, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, human rights, economic and social development and the environment (https://www.nmun.org/about-nmun/mission-and-history.html). The MEUS is a simulation in which students can take over simulating roles as Members of the European Parliament (MEP), Ministers of the Council, Journalists etc. It is organized by Bringing Europeans Together Association (BETA Europe) AISBL which is a politically independent and non-profit association, seated in Brussels. They aim trough their simulations to inspire students and help them learning through practice, gain experience and develop soft skills while learn about politics by discovering the founding principles of Europe through the experience on democratic processes and procedures. See: https://meu-strasbourg.org/simulation and https://www.beta-europe.org/about/

of values and knowledge is visible, due to the gradual prevalence of intolerance in several countries (see for example the governmental illiberal policy of Hungary and Poland). But it is the duty of social scientists and educators to highlight the problems and propose solutions. In this case, phenomena such as migration could become opportunities for building multicultural and tolerant societies but only if higher education is at the service of the fundamental democratic values, namely at its roots, necessarily but through the combination of new and old methods.

A case of experiential learning of EU as a tool for European citizenship and democratic values awareness

In December 2020 a European Parliament Simulation exercise (with the participation of University students and Lyceum pupils) was virtually conducted, due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, by the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists (HAPSc), under the academic coordination of Prof. Fotini Asderaki and under the framework of the project Teachers4Europe[5]. HAPSc prepared and organized this simulation exercise, including a detailed study guide. This simulation aimed to teach participants the way the European Parliament function and thus, deepen the importance of democratic institutions.

The consultation and legislative process of the European Parliament were simulated, through the performance of the main roles from the participants (Members of different groups of the European Parliament, Board members of the European Parliament). Participants were able to understand both the functions of the institutional preparatory process and the differences between party groups based on their different ideological backgrounds (Asderaki & Sideri, 2020).

It should be noted that participants did not learn about the decision making procedures of the European Parliament through a formalistic way but though their emulation and thus, through active participation in policy formulation. Especially, they discussed the new Erasmus program for the period 2021-2027. Therefore, the implementation of the simulation offered the opportunity for enhancing participatory democracy and European citizenship as long as it empowered young participants through the experiential learning of a European institution functions and thus, enhanced human rights, tolerance, solidarity, youth engagement, gender and general equality through increasing the awareness on European citizenship.

Experiential learning tools through European Parliament simulation generated democratic awareness to young people as long as they actively learned how democratic decisions at a higher level are taken. At the same time, participants experienced the common European way of life and the common frame of values, building and increasing the sense of belonging for the next European generations through the discussion on the topic of the new Erasmus program the period 2021-2027.

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[5] For more details please visit: https://teachers4europe.eu/simulation/

Figure 1: European citizenship values enforced through simulation action
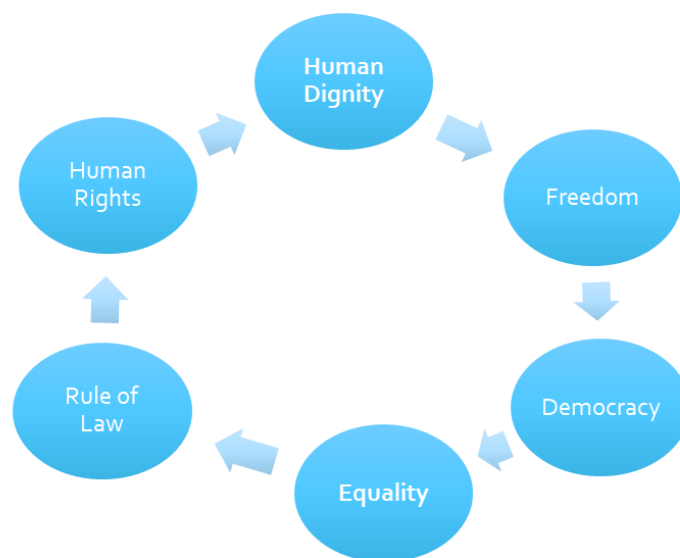
Conclusion

Educational systems and their values, as they were introduced the last two centuries, have been spread all over the world. The fundamental role of education is the evolution of the society, the promotion of social development and the enhancement of equality. Therefore, education that fosters comprehensive inclusion in all its levels and especially in its higher level, can promote the idea of an inclusive society. Last but not least, the new ways of formal and non-formal democratic, participatory and interactive higher education and the use of innovative methods and new technologies, as this paper has already shown through especially the case study of the European Parliament simulation virtual action, could pave the way for the promotion of the future democratic and active citizenship, bringing a better future with more democratic and cohesive societies.

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4.2. Tools and practices for learning about Europe and promoting democratic dialogue

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Abstract

To achieve the goals of the Teachers4Europe project, essential is a) to promote critical thinking, decision making and rational debate and b) to enhance the European identity among students and teachers. One of the best tools to achieve these educational goals is the European Institution simulations, interactive role-playing games which contribute to a better understanding of the EU's structure. Such simulations are usually organized for university students, but during the last years simulation events for secondary schools are also taken place. In this work we present an innovative training practice through a simulation of the European Parliament for teachers. The organization of this two-day event took place two years ago in Crete, with teachers playing the role of the EU deputies' in a structured discussion and decision making process. The idea was an initiative of the ambassadors of the teachers4europe national project in East Crete and was implemented in collaboration with the region of Crete in Greece, the Institute of Research and Training on European Affairs and the Europe Direct in Crete. Most of the teachers that participated in the event are members of the national Teachers4Europe network and their participation was part of their training to become able to teach about citizenship, and the functioning of the European Union. During the recent emerging changes, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, effort was given to organize debates by using online tools. An appropriate tool that was proposed is the Kialo Edu, which is available for free and offers argument mapping and debate possibilities for the teachers to organize debates with students online, while schools are closed. The tool can be also used to support rational debates in the framework of interschool collaborations, which would be very useful in the current phase of the Erasmus+ KA3 Teachers4Europe project.

Keywords: Democratic dialogue, role playing games, simulation of E.U. parliament, Teachers4Europe

Introduction

The Erasmus KA3 "Teachers4Europe: Setting up an Agora for Democratic Culture" Program will exploit, expand and scale up the Teachers4Europe network (T4E) which has proven to be effective at national and local level with the implementation of successful

educational projects about European issues in Greece since 2011. The T4E Program aims to support European teachers and students in a) fostering knowledge about the EU, its origins, functioning, policies and strategies, b) enhancing understanding of EU values and fundamental rights, c) appreciating democratic culture as a basic EU value and d) developing innovative material and didactic methods (Erasmus KA3, 2020).

Ambassadors have a key role to play for reaching the goals of the Teachers4Europe project. Thus, it is essential to support collaboration, communication and innovative actions that enhance the European identity for both students and teachers and to promote critical thinking for students so that they can make rational decisions. In addition, it is important that teachers learn more about Europe and about how Europe works and this is part of teacher's professional development process, which is considered a key element in this new phase of the T4E project. The value of teacher's professional development is well established and there are numerous publications that emphasize that teacher's competence has a direct impact on student's achievement (Solheim, 2017).

In this paper we present some of the initiatives we took as T4E ambassadors in Crete, in the framework of the national T4E project, to introduce innovative approaches in the teacher's training by using adult's education tools and practices such as role playing games and learning through the art. We especially focus in the role playing games such as simulations as tools for promoting democratic dialogue, argumentation, communication and the European identity to the participants. After a brief introduction to our training initiatives, the so called "Days of Expression and Creation", we will refer on the simulations in teaching the European integration and we will present the phases of the organization of a European Parliament simulation game for teachers that took place in Heraklion – Crete. Then we will move on to considerations about the actual running of similar activities in the social distance circumstances, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, and wrap up with reflections and ideas for the current phase of "The Erasmus KA3 Teachers4Europe: Setting up an Agora for Democratic Culture (2018-2021)".

The T4E network in Crete

The "Expression and Creation Days" started in Crete and was implemented during the school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. It included the training events of the national educational action Teachers4Europe. The main target group was the teachers from primary and secondary education who participated in the Teachers4Europe Network. The training activities were designed and implemented by the local ambassadors of the project in East Crete by following the national program guidelines, with emphasis to be given a) on the interaction and the empowerment of the members of the network and b) on the extroversion of the educational community for the promotion of the action T4E in the region.

Our action plan was based on the following points:

1. The highlighting of the educational, artistic and scientific human resources in the region of Crete via initiatives and works with European dimension of the local community and the island widely.
2. The development of synergies with groups from the state and the community.
3. The multiple benefits for the teaching community (Primary and Secondary Schools) as a result of teachers interaction cooperation, and their participation in the network.

4. The exchange of experiences between teachers from Primary and Secondary Schools.
5. The opening of the educational action T4E to the whole teaching community and the public.

The "Expression and Creation Days" training was implemented during the school years 2016-2017 and 2017-201. Starting from December, until the end of the school year, every month a two-day training event took place. The program of those activities was applied for approval in the University of Piraeus and the bureau of the Delegation of EC in Greece. In the first year, the central theme of the initiative was the values of Europe, while during the next year the theme was the cultural heritage and the natural resources, the environment and the energy. Emphasis was given to correlate European ideas and practices with regional characteristics. All interventions took place in selected public buildings of Heraklio and Lasithi. The training activities included lectures and workshops, while supporting material, mainly from digital European repositories and projects was also used. Teachers, and sometimes students, participated in workshops as presenters, by presenting their projects that had been produced as members of the T4E network. In the training process emphasis was given a) on the development of democratic dialogue and argumentation and b) to the exploration of European cultural heritage, based on the common European values.

The innovation in the initiative highlights the key role of the formal education in the formation of active and collaborative learning communities for practicing the values and the opportunities offered by the EU. However, the interventions in Crete were not closed, but allowed open participation for every adult citizen interested in European issues. In the training events, members of the community, representatives of local associations and individuals participated also as trainees. In this way, synergies of the educational community were developed with targeted actions in the district, aiming at the exploitation of opportunities and the promotion of the values and ideas of the European Union.

In the training workshops adult's education techniques were implemented, with the selected activities to be relevant to the teacher's needs. In this way, teachers participated actively in the learning process, while the instructor acted just as a facilitator (Collins, 2004). Such participative techniques include learning through the art and role playing games. Simulations of International or European Institutions are also included in the role playing games.

The EU Parliament Simulation

For learning about Europe, about the European Institutions and about how the decisions are taken in Europe, EU parliament simulation is reported as an ideal role playing tool to engage participants. Simulations can also be extremely successful in acquainting participants with negotiative logic and process, especially in those political systems in which negotiations are prominent, such as the European Union (EU) (Lightfoot & Maurer, 2013).

In addition other skills like communication, collaboration, argument formation, debating e.t.c are developed by the people that participate. Simulations are usually part of the university students training and are organized by the faculties of political studies, international affairs, European affairs e.t.c. (Andrews, 1993). Recently such simulations

are organized also for high school students to get them familiar with decision making processes in Europe.

Such a simulation event for students was organized by the experimental high school of Rethymno in Crete 3 years ago, with the participation of students from other ten high schools from Crete and the support of the T4E network in East Crete. The simulation was conducted by the Institute of Research and Training on European Affairs (IRTEA), which is a Greek Institute that is specialized in conducting simulations of European Institutions, mostly for professional development purposes. The subject of the debate was the EU policies about educational and employment opportunities for young people in Europe. All the students that participated in the 3-day event expressed their enthusiasm both about the procedure and the learning outcomes.

Preparation Phase

This event gave us the idea to organize a similar event not for students but for teachers, in the framework of their training process within the T4E project. We discussed this idea with the people of IRTEA and they found that very challenging, since it would be the first time for them to work with teachers as target group for professional development in European issues. After that agreement, we had to collaborate closely with IRTEA to prepare the event. We had also to collaborate with the local authorities, with the educational community and also with the local museums.

The subject we chose for debating was the common European cultural heritage and the EU policies to support this. This subject was related to our experience, to our guidelines and our thematic axis we have chosen for this year. Moreover, it was part of our broader action plan towards enhancing the common European identity. It was also a subject accessible for our "non-expert" participants, to get them mobilized and to generate debate. In addition it was suitable for a simulation event, because of the given constraints, such as the availability of time, of participants, etc.).

In the preparation phase we had also to prepare teachers to participate in the simulation event. We decided to have a balanced representation of teachers from both primary and secondary education and we asked the participants to commit themselves for full engagement during the preparation phase, the 2-day main event and the following up activities. No prior knowledge of debate, pubic speaking and specific knowledge about the European affairs were asked by the candidates. For their preparation, they had to pass through the supporting material that was provided be the IRTEA. In addition, we had to inform the local community about the event. For this reason we used all the available information channels. We printed posters and flyers, we made announcements in the local press, we gave interviews in radio and T.V and we used the electronic media.

The main event

The two days event took place in the central meeting hall of the Region of Crete. During the simulation the 30 teachers that participated, without absence, stepped into the shoes of the members of the European parliament. They were split into the European political parties and in member-countries, by reaching a representative number of 'big' and 'small' states. The president of the meeting was a member of the ISREA team and in her duties was also to remind the rules of the procedure to the participants. As the main goal of the simulation

was for the participants to acquire knowledge about the institutional system of the EU, the event started with an introduction on the institutional system itself. The chairman gave also some instructions to the participants, related to the role they had to play as members of the EU parliament.

An interesting development during the simulation was the formation of informal negotiation blocs. During the break periods, team members from different political parties tended to talk among themselves, trying to find a common place that was at the same time highly favorable for their countries and consistent with the values they represented. Rational debate and negotiations are the most important features for reaching agreements and implementing policies in the European Union. The first day, some of the participants were somehow reluctant to speak to the public, but the second day all the participants were fully engaged in their role that they were required to play, i.e. to speak in public, to elaborate quickly information, to justify and defend proposals to answer questions, and to counter objections. After a series of negotiations, alliance formation, formal speeches and voting procedures, all teachers - EU deputies, agreed to sign the final decision, like the "real" one, which was supposed to be published in the official newspaper of the EU and transmitted further to the European Council and the European Commission. In the decision, measures to be undertaken for supporting the common European heritage were proposed, including funding museums, organizing workshops, introducing related subjects in the national curricula e.t.c.

Another important team in the simulation was the "observation team" that had the specific task to make structured observations to be discussed later during the following up activities. Members of the "observation team" were our stakeholders, i.e. representatives from the local community, museums, universities, NGOs e.t.c who attended the meeting without participating actively in the discussions. It should be also mentioned that representatives of the local authorities, like the responsible for the European affairs regional vise director, and even the archbishop of Crete were also present and they attended the event with great interest.

Follow up activities

In order to assess the event we asked our participants to express their feelings about what they had just experienced. All teachers expressed their enthusiasm about this unique experience in learning about the institutions in a pleasant way and they said that they were surprised by some aspects of the simulation game (e.g. in the negotiation). They considered that their participation in this role play game increases their motivation to follow closer the European issues and to investigate further the complexity of the EU policy process and the institutional dynamics. They admitted that they realized that every decision in the EU is the outcome of a rather complicated process. Although different people and interests contradict, they manage finally to come up with an agreement that satisfies almost all the negotiators. It was discussed also that the EU parliament simulation they were participated was just a simplified game and that in reality the decision-making in EU is a much more complicated process, with other institutions like the EU council and the EU commission to interact with each other. However, they consider the simulation as a great educational tool for their students also and they asked the event to be repeated for them and also for the students.

After the event, a series of follow up activities took place. First of all we disseminated the event in the educational and broader community. Then we organized a round table with the participation of the members of the "observation team" to reflect on the outcomes and the challenges of the training event. Each member of the observation team presented the findings, according to his/her initial task. Emphasis was given to the discussion on the active participation, the group dynamic, the development of democratic dialogue, the rational debate, the communication and the negotiation, skills to be transmitted both in teachers and students. This working panel took place in the closing T4E meeting at the end of the school year during the final two-day festival of the initiative in May 2018. Some months later, a similar simulation event for high school students was organized by the municipality of Heraklion. In this simulation the already trained teachers encouraged their students to take part.

Conclusion

The EU parliament simulation is an important instrument for teacher's formation in the framework of the T4E program. All teachers that participated in the event were satisfied, both about the procedure and the learning outcomes. The interaction between participants emphasizes the social dimension of knowledge, i.e. the knowledge that is socially constructed, and so are the behaviors, while democratic dialogue is developed. This example is also our proposal for teachers training in the current phase of "The Erasmus KA3 Teachers4Europe: Setting up an Agora for Democratic Culture (2018-2021)" project, in order to initiate actions that promote democratic dialogue in the broader educational community. We consider also simulations as important tools to supply participants not only with knowledge about EU issues, but also with life skills like comprehension of the complexity of the world. However, EU institutions simulations are quite difficult to be organized and inconvenient to be held in the framework of joint projects (Jones, 2008), especially when schools come from different countries. On line simulations are also possible to be held and recently a number of commercial tools (i.e. http://senaryon.de/) have been developed, which like the in onsite simulations promote arguing, building coalitions and reaching compromise. Participants can experience the complexity of political processes in a playful manner and can interact independently of time and place. During the COVID19 pandemic, with the implementation of online learning in the European countries, all of us have learned and used a variety of platforms and digital tools that support communication and collaboration from distance. Synchronous and asynchronous communication tools like Zoom, Webex, Skype, forums, blogs, the e-twinning platform can be used for debates and topics of current interest in Europe. Such topics include the migration problem, health issues, educational topics, climate change, genetically modified food, fake news e.t.c. Some special online tools are also designed especially for conducting debates from distance. Tricider (www.tricider.com) for example is used very often by teachers to support discussions in the e-learning. A more specify tool for debates is the Kialo Edu (www.kialo-edu.com), which is free, easy to use, permits interactivity and promotes rational debate. Kialo is designed to keep discussion in balance with clear, concise arguments from both sides. The arguments are displayed according to their impact, so the strong arguments, as judged by the users, appear at the top. Users can browse over many arguments or they create their own and interact with colleagues. These tools can be used not only during social distance circumstances, but they can also support innovative

activities, European interschool collaborations and joint projects with countries participating in the Program, which will enhance the networking, the key objective of the current phase of the T4E project, with the ambassadors to support this.

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4.3. E-Twinning, Tool for Promoting European Values

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Abstract

The European Union is founded on the common values and general principles of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as set out in article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. Based on article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, the European Union seeks to protect and promote its values. (Council Recommendation from May 22, 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching (2018 / C 195/01)). Education, in all its forms and levels, plays a central role in promoting the values of the European Union. It contributes to ensuring social inclusion, giving each child/youngster a real chance and the same opportunities to succeed in life. In the current context of the increasingly visible manifestation of phenomena such as xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, at European and global level, it is important that we - educational decision-makers and teachers - continue to promote the values of the European Union as a means of cohesion and inclusion, to train and improve ourselves professionally on the topic of European citizenship and diversity, to create a participatory learning environment, to encourage critical thinking and media literacy of all students. Given the current context generated by the Coronavirus pandemic, educational platforms offer us-teachers- efficient channels for promoting European values both in classes but also in school projects carried out at local, regional, national and even European level with the involvement of students. An extremely useful and easy platform to develop school projects at the European level is the e-Twinning platform. This is a virtual community of schools, teachers, school mediators, librarians from Europe, and not only, having as a purpose to develop school projects on various topics, exchange ideas and good practices between members.

Keywords: education, European values, e-Twinning

Values - in the broadest sense - represent the cornerstone in creating a healthy society. They are the ones who give identity to the society and the human group. Therefore, assuming the values of the European Union - human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, human rights – actually, it means assuming the membership of the European Union.

As a teacher at Viisoara Low Secondary School, Cluj County, Romania, I have the triple advantage in terms of promoting values of the European Union:

- I teach History and Social Education, these two subjects are very open to deal with this subject in terms of content and methodology. From this position- I have been teacher from more than 16 years- I have the important mission, and at the same time the extremely noble mission, to cultivate to my students the values of the European Union

and the feeling of belonging to this space, through the curricular and extracurricular activities developed and or coordinated by me.

- I carry out my teaching activity into a multiethnic and multicultural school and also very diverse in terms of the social environment from which students come. Students from the Viişoara Low Secondary School belong to the Romanian, Roma, Hungarian, Polish and Jews ethnic groups. A significant number of students are Romanian students returned in recent years from different states of E.U. with their family after several years of study in different European educational system. I call those re-emigrated students. Taking into account this aspect, the promotion of European values is an exceptional way to create cohesion at students' level and a proper learning atmosphere.
- I teach in an educational institution very open to European actions and projects that promote the spirit and values of the European Union. Viisoara Low Secondary School took part in Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+ Programme. The most extensive projects were: Comenius Partner Schools For an E-Quality Education, Interculturality and Crucible of European Identity and Citizenship and Inclusion and integration (Multilateral Comenius Projects) and Consortium for Training in Rural Areas (Erasmus+KA1 project)

Teaching in general, and by default teaching the values of the European Union in this period of social distancing, is a challenge for each teacher. Teaching methods that I usually use in the classroom are meant to make students accountable regarding their own learning process, to be interactive, and to use external stimulation and to exemplify how the European Union is important in people's daily lives, and especially for young people.

Given the current situation, in the context of the Coronavirus disease, I believe that the most effective way for teachers to promote the values of the European Union is through school projects on this subject, and the extremely important space for carrying out these projects it is the eTwinning platform. The eTwinning platform is a virtual educational community of teachers, librarians, school mediators, school counselors in Europe. This platform facilitates collaboration, exchange ideas but especially the launch of educational projects. e-Twinning has become an integral part of Erasmus +, the EU's Education, Training, Youth and Sports Program.

Time of social distancing

The E.U. values

School projects

Etwinning platform
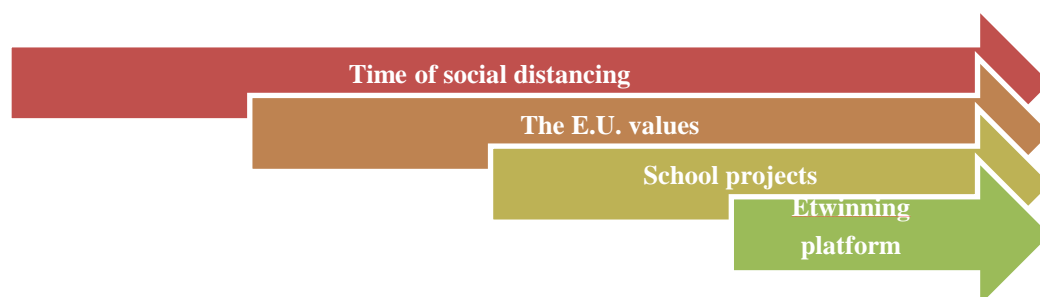
In recent months, the number of members (schools and school staff) has increased significantly, as well as the number of ongoing projects, evidence of teachers' concern to adapt their educational approach to the context generated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Today, eTwinning brings together more than 800.000 teaching staff, librarians and school mediators, 200.000 schools and 100.000 projects. Due to the difficult period we are going through and which led to the suspension of face to face school activity, the number of eTwinning members and school projects hosted by the platform has increased significantly in recent months (April-August), This growth can be attributed, among other things, to the concern of school staff to train their students in interesting and stimulating activities/projects and also to collaborate and exchange ideas with each other.

https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm
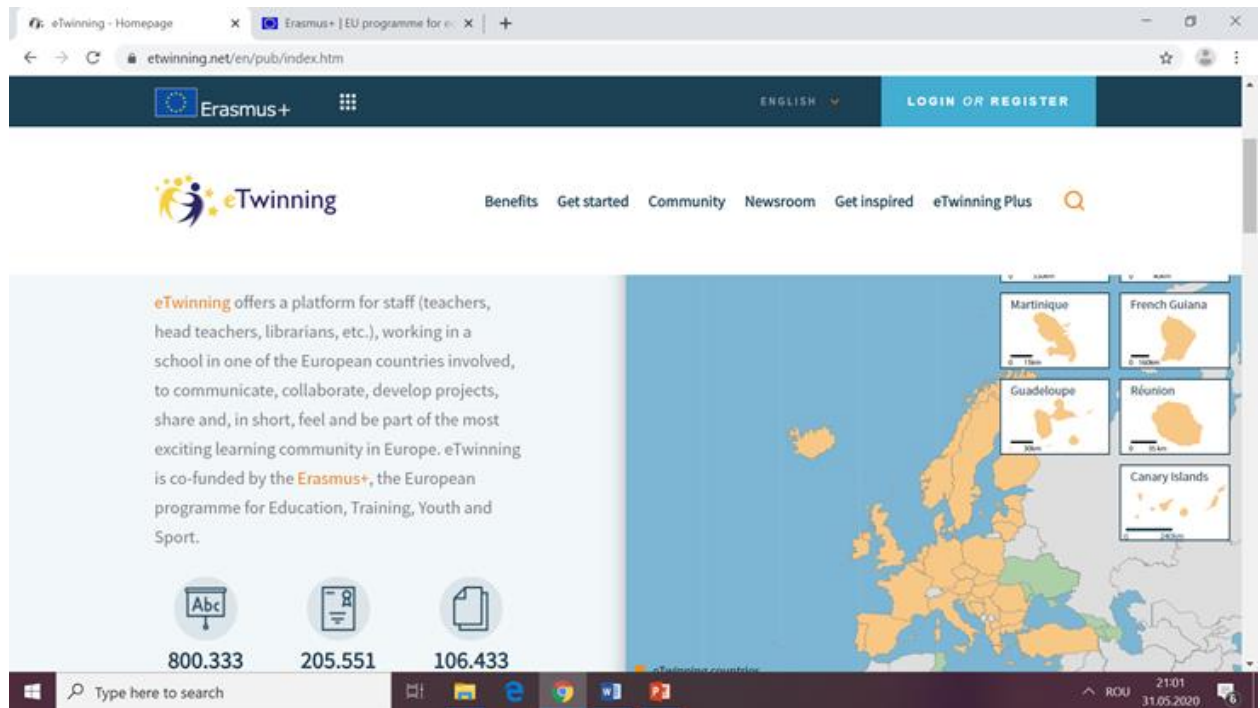
Print screen, May 31, 2020, 21:01

Print screen, August 19, 2020, 15:05

The evolution of eTwinning staff members, schools and projects in terms of number and percent			
No. of	school staff	schools	projects
31.05.2020	800333	205551	106433
19.08.2020	818511	208251	107759
Number evolution	+ 18178	+2700	+1326
%	2.23	1.30	1.24

Legend: ■ 31.05.2020 ■ 19.08.2020

	Staff school number	Number of schools	Number of school projects
31.05.2020	800333	205551	106433
19.08.2020	818511	208251	107759
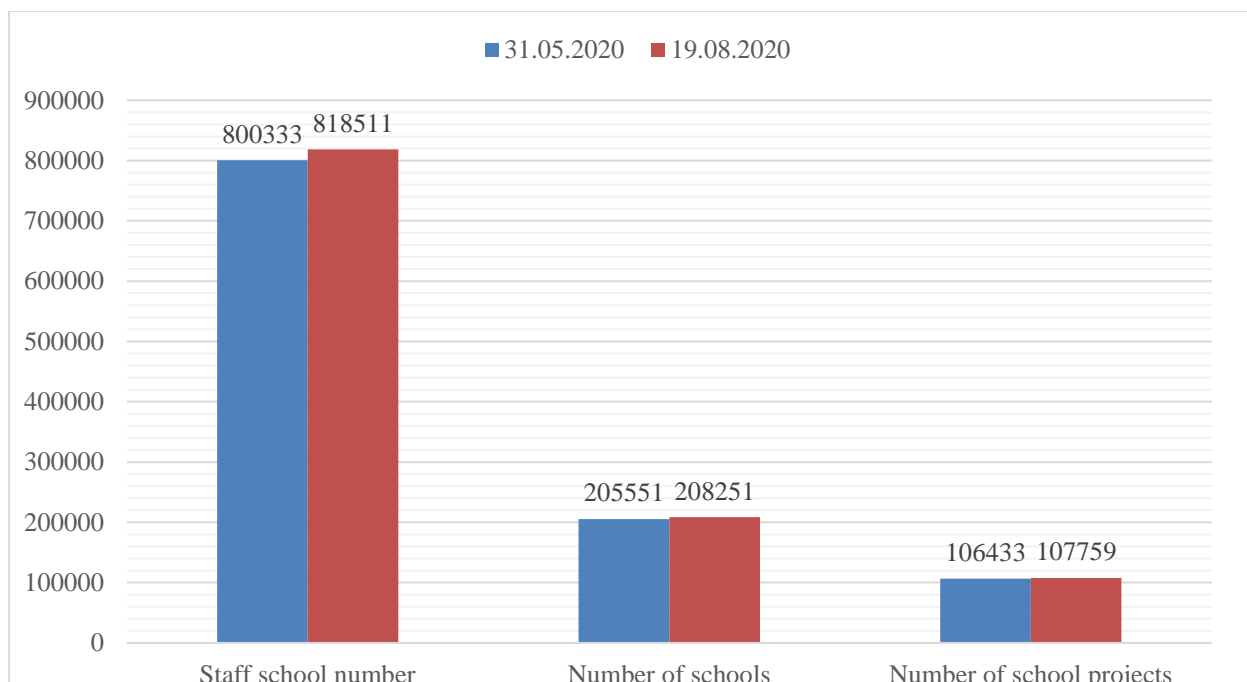
At my school level, 19 teachers (45.23%) have an active eTwinning account. They carry out projects, participate in training activities or organize events. This year, in April, Viisoara Low Secondary School received the title eTwinning School thanks to the activity organized on the platform by the teachers consisting of school projects on different topics, participation in training activities and organizing events such as projects dissemination, etc.

One of the messages that the platform greets us with and which I like very much and seems to me to define it, is the following: Meet colleagues with similar concerns, create projects, exchange ideas, learn, develop yourself, tear down classroom walls and broaden your horizons." (https: // www.etwinning.net/ro/pub/index.htm).

I'm currently conducting the eTwinning project EU- ,, My home is your home" through which I want to familiarize my students with the objectives and values of the European Union, using digital tools and on-line resources and also to give them the opportunity to get in touch with colleagues from other European countries using Myspace and to practice their digital skills and communication skills in English. Partner schools are form Portugal, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece and Hungary.

To carry out an eTwinning project, a teacher must have an active account and to create a project or to join a project. To create a project, teachers must follow the next steps: selecting its school, selecting the main partner, drafting the project (title, short description, communication language, age of students, subject, objectives, working procedure, expected results) and waiting for project approval. In the following stage, the activities provided in the project will be carried out, according to the methodology and the established calendar.

There are multiple benefits of the eTwinning platform for students. Those include the opportunity to interact with students and teachers from other European countries, teaching and technical support provided by the portal to the highest European standards, innovative working tools, inter and transdisciplinary approach to chosen topics, teamwork, stimulation interest and critical thinking, the opportunity to have a constructive dialogue, deepening knowledge, capitalizing on the skills and creativity of the participants.

The platform came to support the users in this time of social distance with the option eTwinning at home. eTwinning in times of school closure. (https://groups.etwinning.net/113665/home) Here, the users can find:

- Online activities where teachers can share their experiences and their best practices, and they could get inspired by the other eTwinners
- Online guides in the "How to..." section. In this section, teachers can find practical guides and examples for teaching online.
- Section Activities at home where teachers can find activity ideas about different themes that they can introduce to their students at home.
- Online events include a calendar of the upcoming events within the Group, and here teachers can also find recordings and slides from previous events.
- Forum for discussions and questions
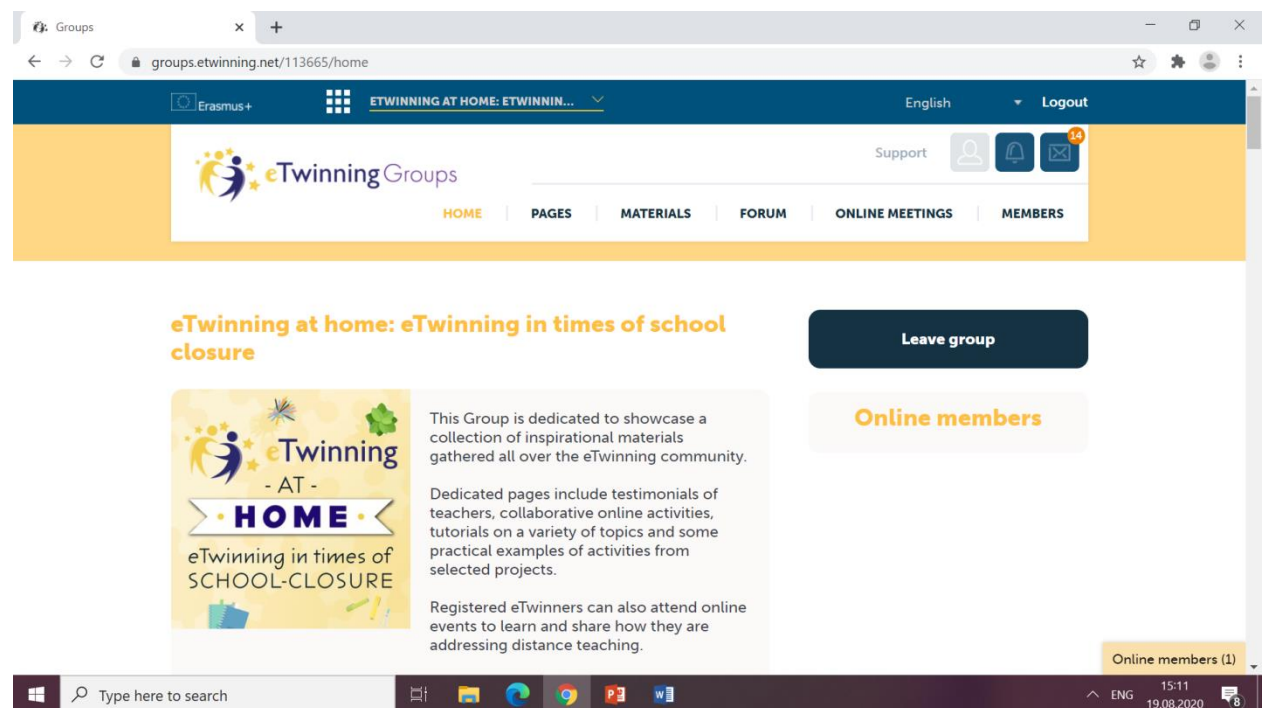
https://groups.etwinning.net/113665/home
Print screen, August 19, 2020, 15:13

I encourage my fellow teachers to use this virtual space because it is extremely easy, contains many working tools, and facilitates collaboration with many schools across Europe. Also, eTwinning projects and events can be starting points for other collaborations even within Erasmus + projects but at the same time they can be a source of inspiration for the daily teaching activities we carry out with our students.

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4.4. Geoinformatics as an educational tool for the development of the status of global active citizenship

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Abstract

Globalization, wars, global economic crisis and climate change have led to the need to implement strategies to ensure the viability and sustainability of human society and natural environment. In order to achieve the relevant strategic goals, it is essential to develop individuals with the status of global active citizenship. Education, which must not remain uninvolved and static across to developments, but actively participate in social processes, can take advantage of the science of Geoinformatics and its applications, which are ideal, valuable and flexible tools for all components of education, and can catalyze the fulfillment of its goals, as they offer the opportunity to study a variety of collaborative and interdisciplinary issues, enhancing students' critical thinking and actively engaging them in the decision-making and problem-solving processes at local, European and global level.

Keywords: Citizenship, sustainability, Geoinformatics, GIS.

Introduction

The modern era is characterized by rapid and violent changes in economic, political, social, technological, scientific and environmental level. Those changes are so intense and important that they finally have a global impact, bringing human civilization faced with the global economic and social crisis, as well as with the global environmental destruction. Therefore, it is very important to create, develop, implement and feedback strategies and policies so as to address these problems and to ensure the viability and sustainability of human society, but also of the natural environment, part of which is also the man. Thus, in order to achieve these strategic goals, it is essential to form democratic cosmopolitans, who are able to understand the value of peaceful coexistence and creative participation in all areas of action in social and political life, to show respect for the natural and cultural environment, and to perceive their global dimension, as well as to recognize, critically process and effectively address the various undesirable mechanisms of influence and manipulation (Kalogridi, 2005, pp.188-189).

In addition, the phenomenon of globalization has dissolved the homogeneity of societies, created multicultural communities and the need for people who no longer share common blood, national, historical or cultural ties to coexist in the same space, thus, the recognition and the acceptance of the different need to be included in the qualities of the citizen of the world. The new identity of the world's citizens acquires supranational features and cooperative spirit, with a sense of solidarity, tolerance for cultural differences, recognition of common elements and differences, but also with the ability to be flexible, with independent thinking, judgment and action (Nikolaou, 2006, pp.446-447).

Given that democracy is not only established by the commitment of citizens to its fundamental principles, but it also presupposes their active participation in socio-economic, political and cultural processes, both at local and national or international level, a responsible citizen is a citizen who actively belongs to a community, participates in developments, knows his rights, which he exercises with respect to himself and others, but also recognizes his obligations as a sense of duty to the community (Kouraki and Vorilla, 2014, p.220).

It is noteworthy however, that the majority of citizens are not actively involved in these processes, either because they do not have the skills, or because they are not given the opportunity, or because they are reluctant to do so. Characteristic is also the low participation of young people in the electoral process worldwide.

Education for the development of the status of the global active citizenship

The contribution of education to strategies for the sustainable development of societies is vital and therefore it is imperative to strengthen its assistance to the protection of human rights, peace, gender equality, health, and sustainable development, as well as to locally and globally fulfillment of the status of responsible citizen (UNESCO, 2015, p.47).

Therefore, the modern education systems of developed countries are facing a serious problem, which concerns the cultivation, development and implementation, in their context, of democratic citizenship, with the ultimate goal of creating active, democratic, global citizens capable of stand with dignity and consciousness in a context of globalization and rapid change. Thus, in order to shape the democratic personality and the active citizen,

the institutional framework of the educational function and the Curricula are constantly revised, taking into account the principles and values of sustainability, such as solidarity, respect, oligarchy, integrity, justice, tolerance, democracy, etc. Moreover, modern pedagogical methods and student-centered and collaborative teaching practices are applied, encouraging the required qualities and attitudes for living in a global, participatory and democratic society of citizens, which carry out their obligations and claim their rights. In this learning environment, students have the opportunity to express their views, make decisions, participate in group projects, negotiate, collaborate and communicate, accept and respect the different, so that eventually democratic values become part of themselves and find application in their everyday life (Sakelariou, Gesiou and Tsiara, 2020, p.49). In addition, the above horizontal social soft skills, which are interrelated, as the development of one supports or depends on the development of the other (Pedagogical Institute, 2011, p.9), can really help students realize that their choices have an impact not only on their school and local community, but on the whole planet, only if they develop satisfactorily and gradually, throughout the educational life of students, still starting from pre-school education and only in this way in the future students could be developed into active citizens who will operate flexibly in the various social environments in which they will be found during their lifetime. Otherwise, it would be deceptive to expect students who have never been involved in participatory processes and have not developed the relevant skills, abilities and responsibilities, to be formed in the future into responsible and active adult citizens, capable of contributing to sustainable recovery and development of societies.

Additionally, on the one hand, the benefits of the development of citizenship in the educational process operate at the socio-political level, as democracies are based on citizens who know their obligations and rights, are active in their communities and are responsible for their actions, on the other hand, they contribute decisively to the school-personal level, as the emphasis on citizenship creates people with confidence, capable to face challenges such as discrimination and bullying, and to raise their voices (Kouraki and Vorilla, 2014, p. 220).

The Geoinformatics as an educational tool

The science of Geoinformatics and its applications are ideal, valuable and flexible educational tools, which could play an important role in the development of global citizenship and sustainable development, as they offer the opportunity to study collaboratively and interdisciplinary, environmental, political, economic and social issues, both at local and global level.

Geoinformatics is the science that utilizes geographical information and modern technologies developed by the ICT sector, in order to be able to collect, store, inform, manage, process, analyze, visualize and present proposals on problems to related sciences (Tzotzakis, 2016, p.9). It is the science that connects spatial, temporal and descriptive information, offers the ability to process and analyze data, and assist to the properly manage of various important and complex issues and to the solution of problems with environmental, socio-economic and political dimensions.

The science of Geoinformatics has universal appeal and is used in academic but also in professional environments. Its applications are used for a variety of purposes by the military, but also by the civil protection services, such as the police, the port and the fire

179

brigade (for the registration of traffic accidents, fires, earthquakes and in general emergency situations, with main purpose the preventing and early treatment of them), by the forestry departments, the meteorological service, the cadastral service, the urban planning service, during the survey of the correct location of both public constructions, such as roads, ports, schools, parks, hospitals, etc., and commercial stores or private enterprises, as well as when locating and managing utility networks. Moreover, nowadays, it is used systematically for the proper management of environmental issues, such as water management, the greenhouse effect, and environmental impact studies as a consequence of socio-economic, anthropogenic activities, such as major constructional projects, intensive agriculture and over-exploitation of the earth's natural resources. In addition, it has applications in financial research, polls, and demographic analyzes, but also in the everyday life of the citizen, as new technologies, such as digital thematic maps and navigation systems, are nowadays necessary means of informing the modern western citizen on a variety of topics, such as cultural, recreational, consumer, informative, etc.

The most important tools used in the science of Geoinformatics are G.I.S (Geographic Information Systems), G.P.S. (Global Position Systems), but also the techniques and special instruments of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, which are able to acquire, analyze, process and interpret information from aerial photographs and satellite images of entities located on the earth's surface.

Nowadays, the science of Geoinformatics is the dominant method of mapping, visible and non-visible, entities, on both the earth's surface and its interior, as well as on its atmosphere. The science of cartography is inseparable with the science of geography. Its goal is to project, on a scale, a portion of the earth's surface in a horizontal plane, which will also include the graphic representation of natural or anthropogenic information, depending on the use of the map (Tzortzakis, Striliga-Pistolla and Leounaki, 2015, p.8).

The GIS, aided by the other Geoinformatics tools, is a smart map tool that enable users to capture spatial information, create interactive spatial or descriptive questions, edit and analyze spatial data, and then present them either in classic analog format, such as printed maps and diagrams, or in digital format of spatial data files, or in digital interactive maps (Tzortzakis, 2016, p.9).

In general, Geoinformatics tools are designed to be accessible to the general public and provide quality solutions to spatial problems in a fast and understandable way(Tzortzakis, 2016, p.10). Nowadays, it is systematically used in Higher Education, while there are free and reliable software such as Quantum G.I.S. or QGIS, with friendly and pleasant graphical environment, which is an excellent choice for educational and professional applications, and which has been used since 2016 as a basic educational tool of Vocational Secondary Education, in Greece, in the courses a. "Topographic Design - Digital Mapping" of the 2nd class, of the Department of "Structural Engineering, Built Environment and Architectural Design" of the Vocational High School, and b. "Geoinformatics Applications in Engineering" of the 3nd class, of the professional specialty "Technician of Structural Engineering and Geoinformatics", of the Department of "Structural Engineering, Built Environment and Architectural Design" of the Vocational High School. Since 2017, it is also taught in Post-secondary Education, in the learning unit "Geographic Information Systems (GIS)", of the Curriculum of the "Post-Secondary Year - Apprenticeship Class",

of the professional specialty "Technician of Structural Engineering and Geoinformatics", of the Department of "Structural Engineering, Built Environment and Architectural Design" of the Vocational High School.

However, Geoinformatics could also be an important educational tool for more students of Secondary Education, and could be used in courses such as the Project and the Creative Activities Zone of High School, as in the future most of these students may use it in their personal or professional lives, but also because it is a dynamic, interdisciplinary tool that can utilize scientifically diverse fields of study, such as geography, physics, mathematics, biology, history, culture, etc., whose issues could be correlated and projected in many different ways. The common use of diverse scientific fields and the interdisciplinary organization of teaching are expected to cultivate in students complicated thought, which is essential for the study and analysis of global issues.

The interdisciplinarity of digital maps of geoinformatics is due to the fact that they are capable of providing a range of overlapping levels of categorized information, such as, for example, one level with the administrative boundaries of an area of interest, one with its road network, one with its hydrographic network, one with its topography, one with the agricultural parcels of the area and one with the land use, which could be partially or totally combined, placed one over the other and create a dynamic, smart, digital map that could be analyzed, edited, highlight new aspects of a phenomenon and provide answers to spatial and temporal questions and concerns of students, utilizing their knowledge, while, at the same time, enhancing their critical thinking and their active participation in the public and in global developments.
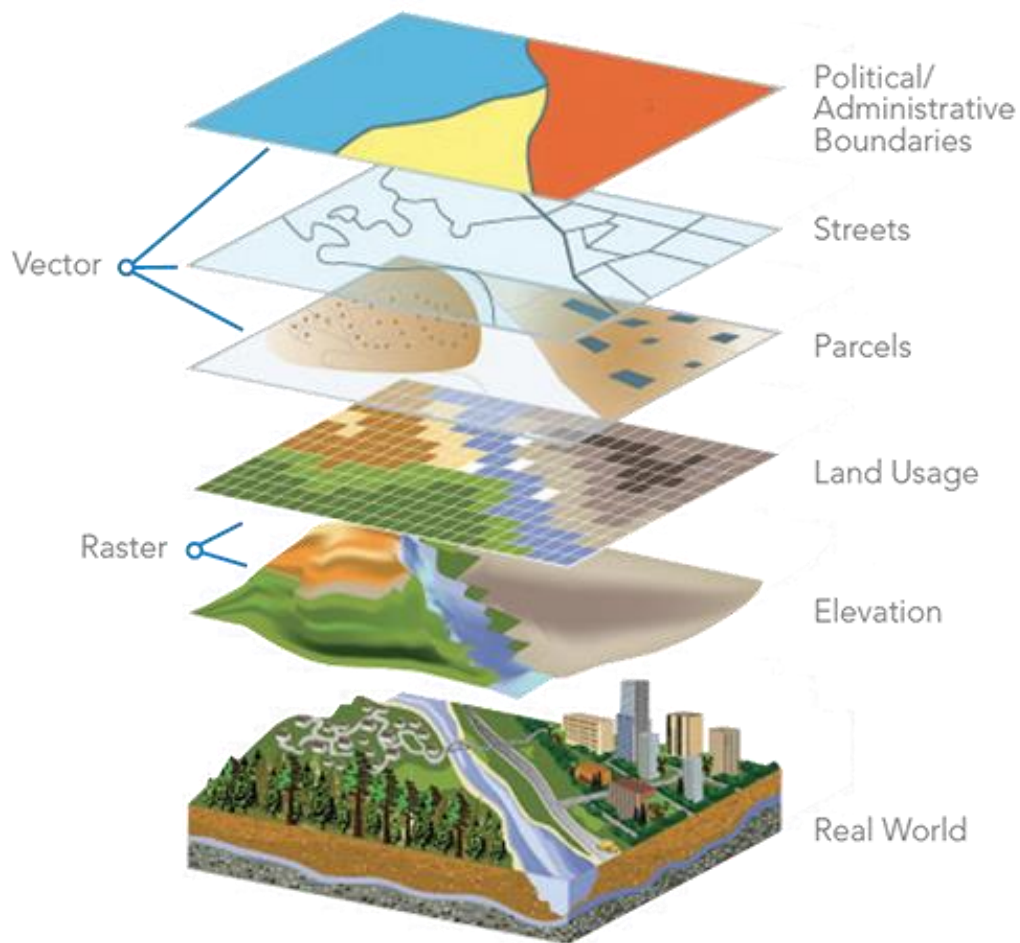
Figure 1. Example of information levels used in combination in GIS (Fperegrine, 2014)

Furthermore, the science of Geoinformatics and its applications are ideal, valuable and flexible tools for all components of education, such as environmental education, intercultural education, health education, citizenship education, etc., as they contribute to the study of environmental, economic, political, cultural and social issues, both at local and global level, influencing the way students perceive themselves within the global community and helping them understand the economic, social and cultural interaction and interdependence of the local with the global. Teachers, taking into account the special interests, values and attitudes of their students, their cognitive level, as well as the peculiarities of the local community, could implement various themed activities, such as:

- Climate change and its effects. Spatio-temporal study, where aerial photographs, or related thematic, digital or not, maps from different time periods are compared with other data, such as statistics or testimonials.
- Population movements. The causes and their spatial and temporal consequences, through the comparison of population movement maps, financial data, immigration reasons etc.
- Modern epidemiology. Which factors could shape or affect it? Spatial analysis of incidents and performance of a geographical dimension to the problem.

- Urban development planning, restoration and consolidation projects of urban green areas. Research on the social and environmental impacts of anarchic urban development, and proposals for landscape restoration of degraded urban and industrial areas, with the creation of digital maps and spatial databases.
- Fundamentalism and human rights. Spatial presentation of the areas of influence of nationalist or religious groups, which lead to violent conflicts and violation of human rights, and correlation of economic, political and religious interests.

in which students will no longer be passive knowledge receivers, but through active learning methods such as field study, role-playing and consultation, will learn to recognize problems and treat them with the help of geographical approaches and analyzes. Children will learn to act as a team and take strong action against the centers of power. They will also develop empathy, understand cause-effect relationships and, above all, understand their responsibilities as members of a community and citizens (Kouraki and Vorilla, 2014, p.222).

Issues, related to the sustainable development of the local community or the school environment, are also particularly attractive, as the learning process acquires personal interesting and a strong incentive for students to engage. For example, a problem associated with the school environment, which concerns students, parents and teachers on a daily basis, and which could be studied and sought ways to solve it, is the safe access of students to the school. Initially, students explore, analyze, and exchange views and queries that they consider important in relation to the issue they are studying. Then, they are divided into groups and take on roles to work in the field by photographing and recording, using GPS applications and cameras, or by noting on a printed map of the area adjacent to the school, or even just in a simple drawing by hand, the traffic marking that exists around the school (pedestrian crossings, traffic lights and signs), but also the dangerous points due to incomplete or damaged marking, limited pavement, damaged road surface, illegal parking of vehicles, etc.

Subsequently, the student groups may initially draw the maps on rice paper and place the information levels of each group, one above the other, so that they could visually combine the collected information. Then, they may digitize the data that they have collected, in order to be able to process and adapt them more easily and quickly, and to determine empirically the benefits and advantages of the application of modern GPS technology in comparison with the traditional mapping methods.

In this way, students visualize and locate the issue they study, combine and correlate information and knowledge, and form a complete view of the subject, through the production of digital interactive maps, pictures, graphs and 3D representations. They also extract useful conclusions and they become able to assess the risks of human activities and propose solutions to ensure the safe movement of students and citizens in general, in their urban environment.

Conclusion

Therefore, citizenship could be cultivated in the students through the active and collaborative teaching method and the holistic view of reality, with the help of Geoinformatics, as they are actively involved in decision-making and problem-solving,

develop their critical thinking and creativity, acquire tolerance, responsibility, political interest, respect for other cultures, sense of global identity, (Voudrislis and Labrinos, 2014, p.4), and become able to envision the development of viable societies, and propose sustainable management plans and measures, contributing to the fulfillment of the goals for sustainable development.

In conclusion, it is imperative for modern children to be educated as global citizens, so that they can raise their voices and oppose at injustice and inequality, contribute to the confrontation of the current political, social, economic and environmental problems and in ensuring democracy and social cohesion. Continuous evaluation, adaptation and feedback of curricula is very important to achieve this goal, so that the new technological means and the abundance of data that they provide could be fully exploited, but also very important are the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities of democratic cooperation and participation of teachers (Nikolaou, 2006, p.449), who in collaboration with parents and society have to shape those citizens who will be capable and worthy to deliver them our world (Vasiliadis and Tsioumis, 2015, p.2).

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4.5. Simulation as a learning tool to promote EU values: the case study of Experimental Primary School of Serres "Konstantinos Karamanlis"

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Abstract

After the Paris declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education in 2015, educators triedto focus on learning tools that could serve those goals. Social distancing, as the mainCorona virus effect, is an additional factor educators have to face. Knowledge building is an innovative educational practice that focuses on the active participationof learners and pre-existing knowledge and experience, which allows them to betterunderstand the knowledge they receive, interpret it, analyze it, compose it and evaluate it. The consolidation of the acquired knowledge and its retention in memoryfor a longer period of time has been proven to be achieved through experiential learning, which together with simulation games has piqued the interest of the educational community, mainly due to the positive results. Their contribution to the construction of knowledge was demonstrated in the implementation of a simulation program carried out, in the context of the present work, at the Experimental PrimarySchool of Serres "Konstantinos Karamanlis" with the participation of 23 students inthe Simulation of the European Parliament's Culture and Education Committee dealing with European values like Freedom, Respect and Cooperation. Evaluation findings showed that the students find this way of learning extremely attractive, thatthey enhance their socio-mental abilities and their learning efficiency.

Keywords: knowledge building, simulation games, Culture and Education Committee, European Parliament, effective learning

Part A- Bibliographic Review

Introduction

The importance of knowledge is an issue that has preoccupied humanity sinceantiquity. In fact, ancient Greek philosophers believed that knowledge emanates fromman (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), while in modern times, the number of organizations, organizations and companies that invest in knowledge is increasing daily in order to gain competitive advantages (Balis, 2007). Alternative educational tactics include collaborative teaching, the integration and utilization of technology tools, and the use of the information sources they

provide. These are innovative practices, which at the same time contribute to the reduction of competition, which prevails in most school classes and which works to the detriment of students'socialization (few friendships, reduced mutual understanding and cooperation) (Dakopoulou, Kafka, & Maniatis, 2013). The results of this educational practice have been investigated by many scholars. In her research, Murray (2005) found that collaborative environments make it easier to learn foreign languages. Kessler (2009), Panagiotidis (2004) and Tsombani & Hamel (2004) found the same in their own research, while Raptis and Rapti (2003) found that virtual collaborative environments change the structures of social relations and communication within of the class but also the role of the trainee by teaching him to emphasize teamwork (Tyrou, 2015). In this particular issue, the use of simulation in teaching strategy is dealt with in this paper which presents both the results of relevant research in the literature and the results of the simulation made by students of the Experimental Primary School of Serres "K. Karamanlis", who were divided into groups that participated in a virtual meeting of the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament.

Social historical context of simulation development

As in recent years there has been an increase in diversity in student populations (mainly cultural level), it is considered necessary to look for alternative educational practices, so that the participation of all students in the class (Dakopoulou, Kafka, & Maniatis, 2013; Tomlinson, is possible). 2010). The simulation technique, which activates the students and increases their participation rates, has also given very good results, in an attempt to represent a situation that, however, corresponds to reality. In this context, students are asked to play roles and think like the "protagonists" of the situation. In essence, the simulation technique is an experimental teaching method of known value that excites students and activates them. According to Edgeworths, students express much higher levels of satisfaction when they acquire knowledge through the experimental method, while according to Piaget the role of the experiment is important and important in the educational process (Kokkotas 1998). The benefits that arise for students from teaching collaborative teaching are multiple. Their technical skills are enhanced, their exposure to other languages and cultures is increased, their spirit is expanded, their perception of diversity is facilitated and their acceptance rates are increased, while it brings students into contact with the digital society characterized by multilingualism and multiculturalism. But the most important thing is that it increases children's self-esteem and strengthens friendship (Tyrou, 2015).The results of this educational practice have been investigated by many scholars. In her research, Murray (2005) found that collaborative environments make it easier to learn foreign languages. Kessler (2009), Tyrou (2015) and Tsombani & Hamel (2004) found the same in their own research, while Raptis and Raptis (2003) found that virtual collaborative environments change the structures of social relationships and communication. within the classroom but also the role of the trainee by teaching him to emphasize teamwork (Tyrou, 2015). Other research has shown that small collaboration groups help children better understand the knowledge they have acquired and lead them to academic success, maximize learning outcomes, interpersonal relationships, social support and self-esteem, and contribute to the development of quality friendships and relationships (Johnson & Johnson & Smith, 1998). The methodology followed, in experiential teaching, focuses on four specific characteristics. The reflection, the planning of the actions, the implementation

of the actions and their evaluation. (Chrysafidis, 1996). The reflection concerns the issue that the class will discuss, the planning concerns the preparation that is done (distribution of roles and provision of information), the implementation of the actions refers to the utilization of the experiences that the students acquire and the evaluation concerns the critique on the whole for what took place (Giannouli, 2014). From the above it is understood that the concepts of group collaboration, experience and experience complement each other. The success of simulation programs (roleplaying games) in teaching practice has led many countries to decide to introduce technological applications in education systems, while teachers who recommend teachers to incorporate them into their teaching are constantly increasing (Hatzitsinidou, 2012).

Although the benefits of this educational practice are many, there are some disadvantages that have been identified by researchers, with the most notable being the disorientation and confusion of children about what is realistic and what is not, so that students consider that Repairs made to the virtual world can also be done in the real world. For this reason, it is advisable to clarify the complementary character of the simulation in learning (Vratsalis, 2002). The main benefit of collaborative teaching is that students' critical thinking develops. This is achieved by the complex processing processes that are developed and which are based on the pre-existing knowledge of the students and by the interaction that exists, the students' thinking is promoted to higher levels. Through this process, the concepts of strategy, avoidance of similar errors, formulation of scenarios (hypotheses) and control are understood. At the same time, as the interaction is continuous, the expression and communication of the language improves, which also helps the students who face learning difficulties (Γκόλτσιου, 2016). The simulation method is considered one of the best alternative teaching practices because it provides the ability to deal with problems in many different ways without great financial cost, gives the opportunity to evaluate alternatives that do not yet exist (eg roads that have not yet been done), provides the ability to study complex problems, while using complex optimization functions makes it possible to evaluate the phenomena being studied (Elrehail et al., 2017).

Theoretical framework of documentation

Building knowledge

There are many who argue that the cornerstone of education is access to knowledge, especially strong knowledge, which gives learners the opportunity to connect, in a vertical way, symbolic knowledge to other symbolic structures (Thomas, 2017). Knowledge building is an innovative educational practice that focuses on the active participation of learners and pre-existing knowledge and experience, which allows them to better understand the knowledge they receive, interpret it, analyze it, compose it and evaluate it (Fykaris, 2016). It should be noted that a wealth of research on education and learning focuses on declarative learning (emphasizing what we learn) and procedural learning (emphasizing how we learn), proving that learning does not simply result from the transmission of knowledge. and their memorization, but from the participation of the learner himself in it (Koulaidis, 2007). Although learning theories are difficult to categorize, as many of them overlap, Giordan (2006) nevertheless categorized them according to the criteria each emphasizes in knowledge, the learner, and society. From the classification, four (4) basic categories of visual learning, behavioral, cognitive, sociosocial

and humanitarian emerged (Giordan, 2006). Trying to render the definition of knowledge, many theorists in the field describe it as "information and skills that a person acquires either empirically or after training" (Hong, Chen and Chai, 2016). Matapa, (2017), believes that knowledge is a mixture of values based on information and insight.

It should be noted that theorists distinguish knowledge into tacit and explicit. The unspoken arises from the experiences and views that the individual has, on a personal level. It is imprinted on the mind, but it is difficult to pass on to other people as it includes (human) instinct, personal skills and insight (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Matapa, 2017). Explicit knowledge is that which is encoded and transmitted through texts, databases and diagrams, electronic messages (systematic language). It therefore consists of the information, language and means by which it conveys it (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Forms - Types of Simulation

Role-playing games/simulations are divided into four categories based on how far they are from the real situation. Thus, they are separated in the case of study, in roleplaying games, in games and computer simulation. Their usefulness lies in the fact that they help students to develop critical thinking and logic, to compare their values and to use in practice, the knowledge they have acquired so far (Karagkiozis, 2017). They also help students to understand the realistic situations that are unfolding in the wider economic, social, political and cultural environment (Lahiry et al, 1988). The benefits of role-playing games, at the educational level, have been mentioned in a number of researches, while many theorists also refer to them. More specifically, Kousouris and Papadogiannaki (2005) connect the game with the role of life itself, as it includes action and creation as well as knowledge. Karagkiozis (2017) connects the game with the construction of personal values (internal development), but also the development of the mind, estimating that in this way students better delve into knowledge and retain it for a longer period of time. For his part, he believes that all games that encourage students to take an interdisciplinary approach to a subject, facilitate the learning process, train them in decision making, enhance social interaction, broaden the horizons of the spirit, are dynamic and entertaining (Karagkiozis, 2017).

Structural elements of the Simulation

In the context of simulation and in order for students to understand a situation in depth, they undertake to play various roles (related to the situation), in order to experience the process and gain experiences, which will then be transformed into knowledge (Koulaidis, 2007). It should be noted that the simulation technique is widely used in cases where there are views that need to be reconciled (eg political decision-making), and conflicts that need to be overcome through communication, behavior, skills development and adopting attitudes and opinions (Koulaidis, 2007). This process helps students understand why some people react in a certain way, and why and under what conditions they make a decision. However, for themselves (students), decisions are not made under pressure, nor do they themselves bear the responsibility and the consequences of a decision (as in real life). On the contrary, they have time to thoroughly examine the situation, identify any errors (with the help of other students participating in the simulation program) and intervene with improvement moves (Koulaidis, 2007). In the educational field, simulation began to be used in teaching practice in the 1960s, in the form of role-playing games that combined learning with fun, cultivating teamwork, collaboration and communication between team

190

members, while achieving cognitive and emotional learning goals. Both the scope of application and the criteria for its use are many and are distinguished by the freedom that students have (during the decision-making process), the degree of interaction, complexity and transparency (Adams et al., 2008). The use of this method in teaching mainly concerns issues of politics, history and economics and helps students to understand conflicting situations (due to different views or interests) and the complex way in which a decision is made (Bernhardt, 2003). Regarding the process itself (simulation), its evolution goes through three (3) stages: a) the creation of the model, b) its implementation and c) its evaluation, with the most important being the initial stage, which determines the reliability of the simulation. Although simulations hardly replace the traditional way of teaching, however, it has been observed that when simulation methods are incorporated into traditional teaching practice, then the positive results are multiplied (Mikropoulos, 2002).

Design and implementation steps for simulation

The whole process of role play evolves into four (4) phases. It starts with the preparation which is very important, as the success or not of the game will depend on it. This is followed by the distribution of the roles that the students will play, which is accompanied by information material about the people they will play. The third phase involves the actual phase of the game which (if the scenario involves resolving conflicting situations or composing opinions in order to make a decision) is the negotiation phase. During it, students list the problem and their views (in the context of their role), analyze the information they have and try to find ways to solve the problem and make a decision. The game ends with the evaluation and feedback phase (EOPPEP, 2014).

Preparation – Design

As mentioned above, the first phase of design (teaching design) is the most important phase of the game. The success of the whole project will depend on the design that will be made and the model that will be used. Due to its seriousness, it is the most difficult phase of the game. The coordinator - teacher, is called to identify the appropriate places for the execution of the program, which should be attractive to students and have ease of access. At this stage, the required material will be collected, while the necessary information and clarifications will be given to the participating students, both for the objectives set and for the questions that need to be answered in order to make a decision. (www.cerebrum.gr).

For example, if the game's scenario envisions the simulation of a political committee (eg the European Parliament), the venue should resemble the EC's plenary space, with offices for the political formations participating in the European Parliament. space for the Press but also the necessary logistical infrastructure (e.g. bulletin board, computers, etc.). The same attention should be paid to the presentation of the material that will be used by the students, in the context of their roles. The information material should be structured in such a way that it attracts the children's interest and corresponds to the knowledge they already have (Karagkiozis, 2017).

Introduction - assignment of roles

The second phase of the role play includes role distribution and information. More specifically, the teacher-coordinator undertakes to inform the students who will participate on the topic of the game (story / scenario) and the goals. It also makes extensive reference

to the bodies to be represented (as part of the role play), the way they operate, the persons who make up them and their CVs, and analyzes the way in which the whole process will be conducted. Roles are distributed in three specific ways, selectively, randomly or by lot. More specifically, in the case of selective distribution, the coordinator-teacher presents the role played by the persons that make up the body or organization (starring in the game scenario), and the students choose at their discretion and interests (www .cerebrum.gr). In the case of random distribution of roles, the names of the protagonists, the player, are printed on a piece of paper and placed upside down in the meeting bank. Each student simply selects the seat the will be sitting in, while taking on the role that is on the paper that corresponds to that position. After the distribution of the roles, the "players" are given a reasonable amount of time to get acquainted with their role and the person they are called to "represent" in the game. In cases where the game/simulation involves a meeting of a political body (e.g. the European Parliament's Culture and Education Committee), the whole project must include special "functional roles" (such as, for example, the President of the European Parliament). This is followed by the negotiation phase or the action phase (Rappenglück, 2010).

The action phase

The real action of the simulation game is the negotiation phase. The negotiation is evolving according to the theme chosen as the script. For example, if the scenario concerns the meeting of the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament, the procedure is in accordance with the provisions of the European Parliament on the meetings of its committees (www.cerebrum.gr).

The meeting begins with the presentation of the issues included in the agenda of the body and the positions of the representatives. The children, depending on the role they have taken on, present the positions of each representative depending on the country and the interests it serves. In many cases, as in real meetings, they are interrupted in order to consult, take breaks, deal with emergencies, inform new information or inform the press (Rappenglück, 2010).

Part B-Research

Example analysis and explanation of features

Simulation of a meeting of the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament - Experimental Dim. School of Serres "Konstantinos Karamanlis". The limitations of the teaching practice of simulation are the fact that it cannot accurately reflect reality as in the meetings of the real committees there are various unbalanced factors that can hardly be predicted in simulation and this should be emphasized to participants to avoid confusion and misunderstandings (Rappenglück et al., 2011). The role play that the students of the Experimental Primary School of Serres "Konstantinos Karamanlis" were invited to participate in focused on the operation of the European institutions and more specifically on the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament. The ultimate goal was for students to get in touch with the policies being developed in Europe and to learn about how its institutions work (Karagkiozis, 2017).

At this point it should be emphasized that, although the goals of these games are future-oriented, they should be realistic, measurable, time-bound, specific and smart. In this

context, the objectives set for the Experimental Primary School of Serres, were   he acquisition of knowledge about the operation of the European Union and the activation of future Greek European citizens (Karagkiozis, 2017).

Initially, the problem was identified, which was the lack of knowledge about how the European Union and its institutions work. Then, both the expectations and the forces (smart goal) of the project were analyzed, through interactive events aimed at raising the awareness of students and the wider society (Karagkiozis, 2017).

The problems and causes that caused them were recorded in a "Problem Tree" which included:

- The problem (lack of knowledge about EU operation).
- The immediate (indifference and lack of knowledge on important issues that affect the daily lives of citizens) and the indirect (small opportunities in education and low self-esteem) results
- The direct (lack of information and absence of politicians) and indirect causes (absence of actions and attractiveness in the school environment).

After identifying the problem and its effects, a positive change was attempted. Thus, the "Solution Tree" was now structured as follows:

- Direct causes. Objectives
- Indirect causes. Activities
- Immediate results. Expected result
- Indirect effects. Expected impact

If it was found that knowledge of the European Union and its course of action was insufficient, an attempt was made to fill the gap through actions and events related to the European Parliament and the rights of Europeans and especially young people (Karagkiozis, 2017). In this context, in Serres, interactive events were organized (May, 2017) in order to sensitize the society and young people about various European educational programs (e.g. Move to Learn, Learn to Move) and to be informed about the action fields of the Commission. At the same time, educational policies have been implemented to enhance computer skills, improve bargaining tactics, rhetoric and argumentation (Karagkiozis, 2017). Before an extensive reference is made to the simulation carried out by the Experimental Primary School of Serres "Konstantinos Karamanlis", it is interesting to examine, briefly, the structure and operation of the European Union, which was also the subject of the simulation. One of the twenty (20) committees of the European Parliament is the Committee on Culture and Education, which is responsible for the cultural issues of the European Union.

Regarding the program, the role play that took place at the Experimental Primary School of Serres "K. Karamanlis ", this was held in Serres, on May 9, 2017 (Europe Day) with the participation of 23 students of the 6th grade of the Primary Experimental School. The subject matter was decided jointly (students and coordinator) and the agenda included issues of common interest, such as the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the 30 years of implementation of the Erasmus + educational program, the improvement proposals for expanding this program to students below 16 years old, the European Year of Cultural

Heritage 2018, the integration of the archeological site of Amphipolis and the Alistrati Cave in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites and the candidacy of the city of Serres as the Cultural Capital of Europe (Karagkiozis, 2017). The students were divided into four (4) political groups which were fantastic: ecology, solidarity, freedom and tradition. During the discussion, the students presented the views and positions of the groups they represented, which were interwoven with the scenario (Official Website of the European Parliament).

After the presentation of the positions, the members of the Committee were appointed according to the operating standard of the Committee on Culture and Education of the EC and the announcements were made in three languages (Greek, German, English) in order to inform the interested parties. At the same time, four (4) students undertook to represent official roles such as the President of the European Parliament, the Commission, the European Council and the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports (Karagkiozis, 2017). In this context, they participated in various experiential activities, in which they learned how to communicate, negotiate and listen to the positions of others and had the time to prepare the presentations that would take place at the Commission meeting. Thanks to good preparation, the experiment was successful (Karagkiozis, 2017).

Conclusions

Upon completion of the project, the multiple benefits of simulation were identified once again. However, benefits have emerged for both the local community and the School. The students had the opportunity to further immerse themselves in the Communication and Information Technologies, during the information search phase for the execution of the game, while the School was networked with other schools. At the same time, the action was considered innovative and was proposed at the "Educational Offer Awards in Border Areas", announced by the Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO for the 2016-17 school year. Through the whole process, the students came in contact with the policy and the way it is implemented, they understood the political processes, the way of making the decisions, but also the consequences of these decisions. For this reason, this method (simulation) is considered the best for the creation and strengthening of democratic ideals (www.cerebrum.gr). At the same time, they were helped in their sociability, in their communication tactics, while they learned how to manage and resolve conflicts and how to adjust their perspectives (www.cerebrum.gr). It is also estimated that it would be interesting for future research to turn to the comparison of learning outcomes achieved by the traditional teaching method and the simulation method in different student groups (Kanidis, etc.).

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PART V: Creative Learning Methods

5.1. Teaching EU values and rights through gaming and creative activities

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Abstract

The fundamental European values, such as democracy, equality, justice and respect for human rights, documented in the preamble of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, form the fabric of the Union and bind countries, communities and people together. These values as well as intercultural awareness, digital citizenship, democratic participation, civic engagement and critical thinking[6] can be integrated in schooling and promoted through educational experiences that several European programs offer to schoolchildren, such as Erasmus+, Selfie, European Parliament Ambassador Schools (EPAS) and Teachers for Europe (T4E). In the context of the T4E program, during the school year 2019-2020, groups of students of the 2nd Experimental Senior High School of Thessaloniki attended classes devoted to the history, bodies and values of the European Union and created a number of digital objects, fostering a discussion and developing critical thinking at the same time. Additionally, they created short documentaries relating to the EU values and the EU legislation for the rights' protection. The evaluation of both projects in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes show that the participating students gained a great deal of knowledge about the EU history, institutions, principles and values, opportunities and threats. They also developed a lot of skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and digital skills and, according to their answers, their attitude toward citizenship and rights changed and their expectations differentiated. They expressed that they enjoyed performing the creative tasks and that they were motivated to broaden their knowledge about EU values and rights' protection, but they also expressed their concerns for the steps that still have to be made in order to overcome the existing weaknesses.

Keywords: game-based learning, filmmaking- based learning, EU values, fundamental rights

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[6] https://www.european-agency.org/news/et-2020-working-group-promoting-common-values-and-inclusive-education-peer-learning-activity

Introduction

The elections for the European Parliament in 2019 offered a lot of opportunities to schools, especially of the Secondary Education, to participate in a number of programs and connect with other schools all over Europe, and to their students to contemplate on their European identity, perform a number of activities, play games, and develop their European citizenship.

The partnership and sharing of activities and programs between several countries or between schools of the same country promote common values through education and get the students to know the history and the bodies of the European Union.

As recorded in the conference "Promoting Common Values through Education and Culture", which took place in Georgia in 2019, "cooperation in the fields of education, youth and culture can strengthen citizenship, common values and inclusiveness, looking both at policies and practice".[7] Therefore, in order to promote values through education, in the context of the Teachers4Europe program, a teaching program was implemented to a group of students of the 2nd Experimental Senior High School of Thessaloniki during the school year 2019-2020, called '**THE EU SWOT PROJECT'.** The teaching material included activities based on videos and reading texts from a variety of sources about the past, present and future of the European Union, the main European Institutions and the Charter of fundamental rights of the EU. Out of the information provided, the students created a Kahoot game on EU, photo stories and posters on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) regarding the European Union.

In addition to **'THE EU SWOT PROJECT'** a second group of students worked on the T4E project **'Human rights and discrimination, is it getting better?'**. This project aimed to help the students acquire the background required to understand the EU values, how they are laid out in the EU Charter of fundamental rights, so that they would learn to respect them and become aware of the legal framework which protects those values at a European level. The outcome of this project was the creation of short documentaries about specific groups of people and the inequalities they have faced in the past, the comparison to their social status nowadays and the EU legislation for their rights' protection.

European programs for students and the T4E program

Most European programs for young people and school children promoted by European Institutions, such as the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council, focus on specific aims including collaboration, exchange of good practices, transferability of ideas and promotion of the European identity.

To that extent, The ET 2020 framework, based on the lifelong learning approach and covering learning in both formal and informal contexts, offers opportunities for building optimal practices, disseminating knowledge, and promoting reforms in educational policy (European Commission, 2020). Such practices that promote the European dimension of education as well as common values and intercultural competences are programs for school

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[7] Prof. Dr. Jan Wouters (2019), at the Eastern Partnership Conference: "Promoting Common Values through Education and Culture", Tbilisi, 25 June 2019

children, such as Erasmus+, Selfie, European Parliament Ambassador Schools (EPAS) and Teachers for Europe (T4E), to mention but a few.

Specifically, Erasmus+ supports teaching assignments at schools abroad and offers a perspective on exchange of knowledge and good practices.[8] SELFIE focuses on digital technologies[9], while the European Parliament Ambassador School Program (EPAS) networks schools across the EU and raises students' awareness of democratic and European citizenship values.[10] As regards the Erasmus+ KA3 2018-2021 Program (Support for Policy Reform) entitled "Teachers4Europe: Setting up an Agora for Democratic Culture", approved by the European Commission to be implemented from 2018-2021, it is an innovative program that aims at upgrading and expanding the T4E Teacher Network, and at promoting European-oriented best practices implemented in the school environment. This seems quite urgent as large numbers of Europeans do not know basic facts about the EU, did not vote at the European elections, and are not aware of the EU core values and their rights. Among the aims of the program are the fostering of knowledge about the EU, the enhancement of understanding of EU values and fundamental rights, and the development of innovative material and didactic methods (University of Piraeus Research Center, 2020).

This is supposed to be accomplished through teacher training, online support and networking, but mostly through implementing non-formal learning activities and encouraging extracurricular activities relating to citizenship, human rights, and the functioning of the European Union, covering areas, such as knowledge on EU issues to enhance active citizenship and European identity, EU democratic values and human and fundamental rights (University of Piraeus Research Center, 2020).

The Theory behind the Practice

The aforementioned programs offer teachers the opportunity to apply a number of theories to practice while designing and implementing classroom activities, either online or offline.

Regarding the practices implemented at the 2nd Experimental Senior High School of Thessaloniki in the context of the T4E program during the school year 2019-2020, those were based on the theories of Constructivism, Kolb's experiential learning cycle and Multiliteracies.

According to the theory of constructivism, learners are not passive but they construct knowledge based on their experiences by assimilating and accommodating them. What really happens is that new experiences are incorporated into the existing ones and reframed or modified when new experiences cannot be assimilated within the existing cognitive frameworks (Piaget, 1971). The environment, i.e. the teaching and learning context plays a significant role in constructing knowledge in an experiential manner, and the teacher becomes a facilitator and offers the students opportunities to work in groups, do research and gain knowledge. In the same vein, Vygotsky highlights the significance of learners' active participation in the learning process within a social context (Pinter, 2006). The social

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[8] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/school-education_en
[9] https://ec.europa.eu/education/schools-go-digital_en
[10] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ireland/en/youth-outreach/ambassador-school-programme

and cultural context but also the interaction with teachers and peers help learners develop and acquire knowledge (Griffiths, 2008). It is through teacher coaching and peer collaboration that the learning outcomes are achieved. Therefore, in the T4E teaching framework, the teacher's guidance and students' collaboration and group discussion help the students acquire knowledge about the European Union, its institutions and European values, accommodate it and finally rethink about their European identity.

Similarly, In Kolb's theory (Kolb, 1984), new experiences develop new concepts which are turned into knowledge through experimentation and reflection. Kolb's experiential learning theory is represented by a cycle (fig. 1) of: (1) Concrete Experience regarding a new experience, (2) Reflective Observation of the New Experience in order to understand it, (3) Abstract Conceptualization which lets the learner reflect on the new experience, analyze it and draw conclusions, and (4) Active Experimentation during which the learner applies the idea to see what happens so as to result in new experiences. To that extent, the social environment and the educational experiences are significant influential cognitive factors.
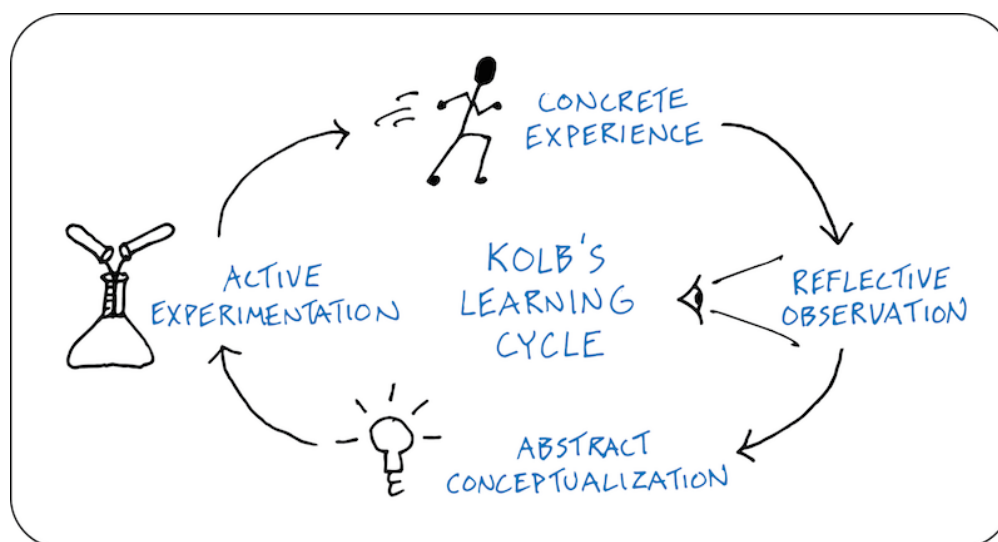

Fig. 1 Kolb's learning cycle (Source:
https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/555279829046454297/)

The digital technologies require the development of new literacies which will help students to become active citizens in the global social and economic community, and apply not only in education but also in leisure activities. Research has shown that on the one hand, teachers can better understand a digital content, while on the other hand, students collaborate more effectively and develop critical and analytical thinking in a digital environment (Rowsell & Walsh, 2011).

The development of multiliteracies in education requires different ways of communicating and teaching, as well as various resources for constructing meaning. Thus, it is not only words that give meaning to a text but also images, sounds, movements, effects and semiotics (Kress, 1997), so that students can construct meaning in different ways (Rowsell & Walsh, 2011). Therefore, the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis 2000, 2003) does not only include the linguistic, pragmatic and sociological analysis but also the understanding of images, diagrams and other visuals which develops the visual literacy.

In a multimodal and multimedia environment (Vasquez, Egawa, Harste and Thompson, 2004), 21st century students can develop many literacies, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills in order to cope with the demands of the modern society and labor (Crafton, Silvers & Brennan, 2009). Within this multimodal and multimedia environment, the pedagogy of multiliteracies focuses on the experiences that students bring to class, enhances critical thinking and reflection, and leads to the negotiation of identities and relations (Μητσικοπούλου, 2019, in ITYE, 2019).

In this context, the multiliteracies that the students are expected to develop include linguistic, visual, critical, functional, social, information and digital literacies by understanding texts and images, asking questions and analyzing texts, collaborating and functioning in various contexts, using and analyzing information, and employing the appropriate media or tools (Kofou, 2020).

Additionally, teachers have long viewed film as an engaging medium and therefore often use it in class. Moreover, the creation of short films by students, which is used during the learning process in order to gain targeted knowledge, can lead to remarkable results along with a creative and joyful atmosphere inside and outside the classroom. The students develop their collaboration skills, use their initiative and appreciate team work achievement. Besides, short film creation helps the students clarify particulars of the subject and set up relations with what had been instructed previously (Kalbadayi, 2012). Maybe more significantly, students cultivate their innovativeness and creative mind – commonly believed to be keys to success (Allam, 2008).

Classroom implementations

Within the project "Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic Culture" (T4E) and the theoretical background discussed above, educational material and activities were designed in order to teach students EU values and rights through gaming and creative activities at the 2nd Experimental Senior High School. In specific, during the school year 2019-2020, a group of students attended classes devoted to the history, bodies and values of the European Union and created a number of digital objects, fostering a discussion and developing critical thinking regarding the EU.

A 6-hour teaching program was implemented to 1st graders, called 'THE EU SWOT PROJECT' (see Appendix 1). The teaching material included activities (brainstorming, answers to questions, filling out tables, etc.) based on videos and reading texts from a variety of sources about the past, present and future of the European Union, the main European Institutions and the Charter of fundamental rights of the EU. Out of the information provided, the students created a Kahoot game on the EU, photo stories and posters on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) regarding the European Union.

Another practice was administered to a different group of students, based on human rights and discrimination. It was implemented in 6 teaching hours to 2nd graders, split into 3 groups. The teaching activities included brainstorming and discussion, studying the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, searching material depicting discriminations before the EU establishment and nowadays, watching short documentaries about relevant social issues and planning the creation of their own documentary.

The deliverables and findings

First and foremost, the students gained a lot of knowledge about the European Union and developed critical thinking. Their reaction to the word cloud brainstorming activity was that of reconstruction, which means that the EU has reached a limit, and new goals should be set and radical decisions taken for all the member states.

After watching videos and studying a lot of material about the EU, the students created a Kahoot game (image 1) including questions about the history, institutions and values of the EU, and digital posters about values and rights promoted in the European structure (image 2).
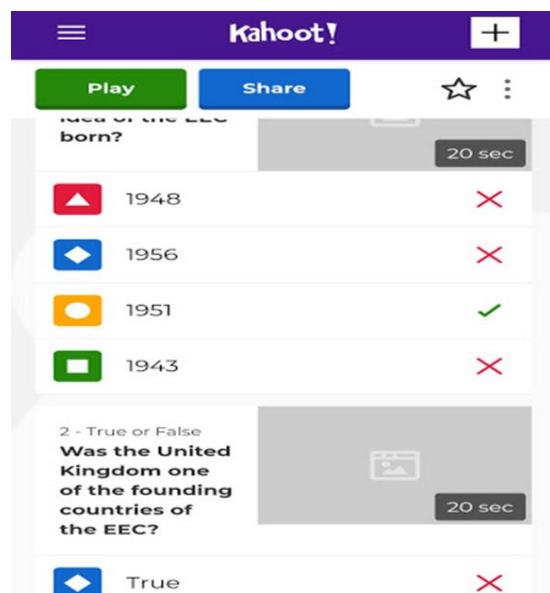

Image 1   Image 2

They also created digital stories regarding the European citizens or other issues related to the EU, such as environmental ones, by employing various animals. For instance, below is the story of Yiotis (see screenshots 1-6), the little pig, who believed in the prosperity and unity of the European Union and, despite the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, feels optimistic about its future and believes that the EU will continue to be the pillar of peace and well-being.
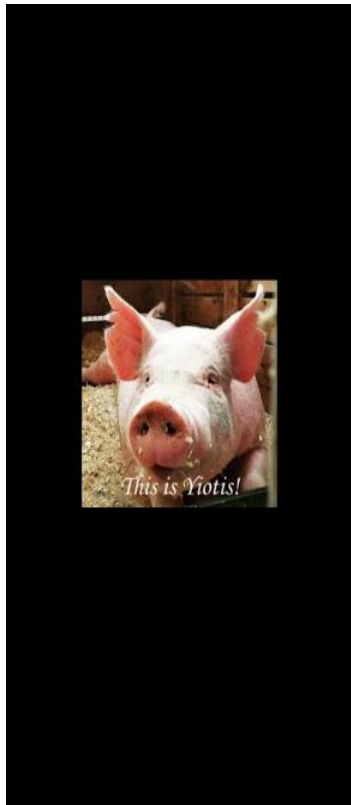
Screenshot 1

Screenshot 2

Screenshot 3

Screenshot 4

Screenshot 5

Screenshot 6

Finally, by using the knowledge the students gained from the tasks performed in class, and by visiting various links, they designed a SWOT digital presentation of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the EU (images 3-8)
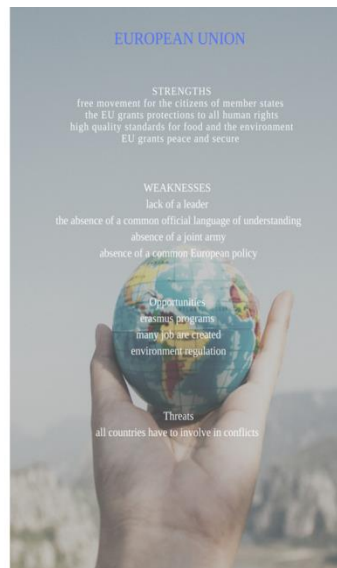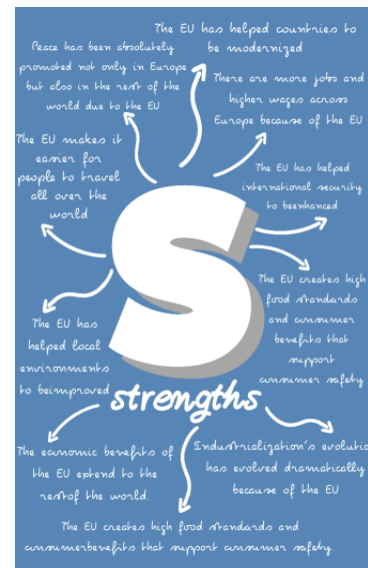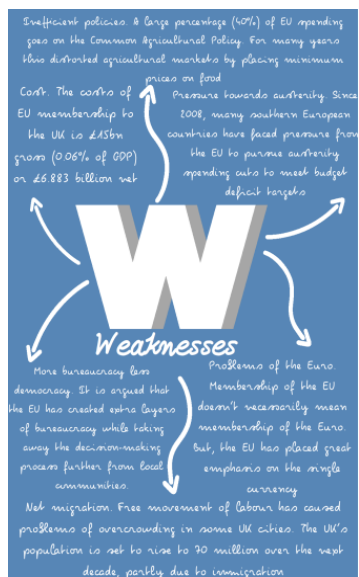

Image 3

Image 4

Image 5

Image 6

Image 7

Image 8

Among the strengths recorded were mobility, protection of human rights and of the environment, common market and grants, and safety. Weaknesses included leadership, the absence of a common language, policy and joint army, migration, the cost of agricultural policy, and austerity measures. The opportunities regarded the European Programs, employability, environmental regulation, funding, peace, cooperation and sustainable goals. Within the threats were conflicts, the undermining of the national identity, terrorism, the refugee problem, the division between north and south, and the response to Covid-19.

The EU SWOT Project was finally evaluated in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude through a Google form (https://forms.gle/K9CU145FNQAUhboMA).

The results show that the participating students gained a great deal of knowledge about the EU history, institutions, principles and values, opportunities and threats (fig. 2).
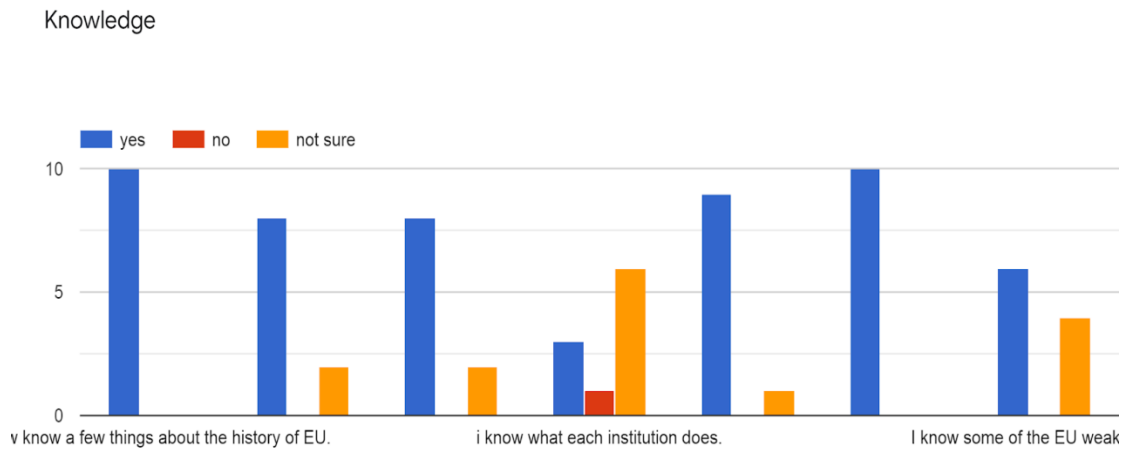
Figure 2: Knowledge about the EU

They also developed a lot of skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and digital skills (fig. 3).
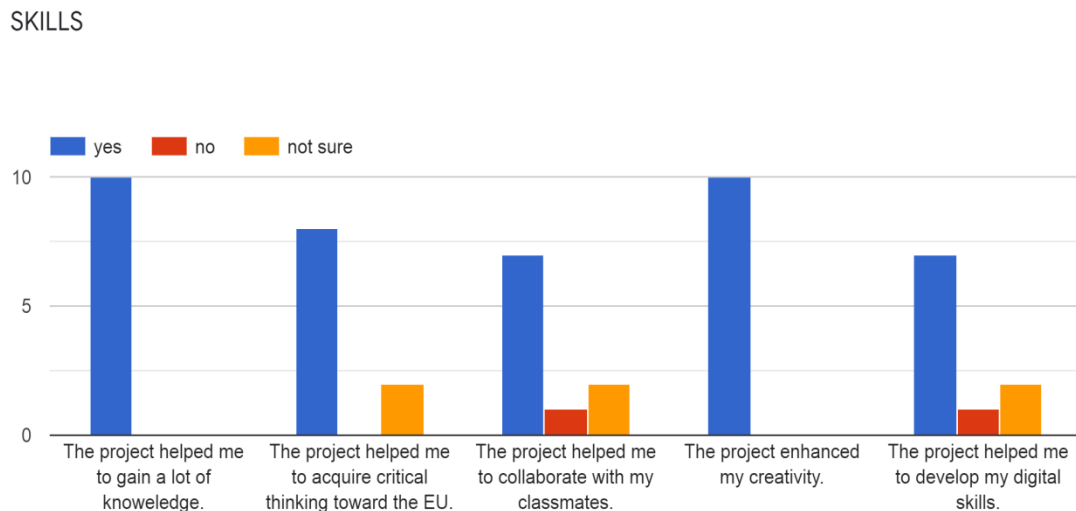

Figure 3: Skills developed

As regards the students' attitude, according to their answers, there were changes in their attitude toward citizenship, rights and expectations. They believe that there are more strengths than weaknesses in the EU, but the community is not really what they have dreamt of (fig. 4).
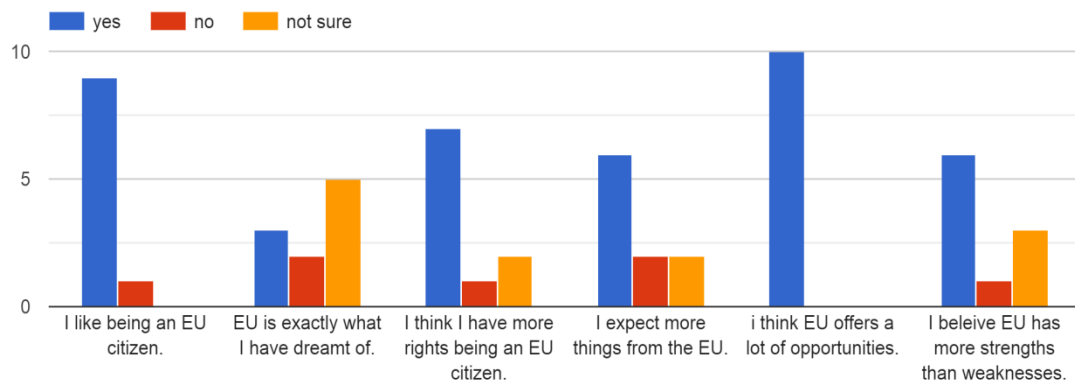
Figure 4: Attitude toward the EU

Concerning the T4E project 'Human Rights discrimination, is it getting better?', the deliverables were short documentaries created by the students about specific groups of people and the inequalities they have faced in the past, the comparison to their social status nowadays and the EU legislation for their rights' protection. The students decided inside their team the structure and the content of their documentary, which should also include material originally created by the team in order to use it in their documentary. Examples of such original material were their own video recordings, text written by team members, pictures and drawings, voice-over narration, interviewing of selected persons. Only one team decided to create the whole documentary with their own material. The other teams also used recordings they gathered from other sources. The student teams chose to create their documentaries about discriminations based on ethnic origin, gender and sexual orientation. The documentaries were finally projected in class within enthusiasm, acceptance and feeling of emotion.

Image 9

The students' feedback was collected with the use of a google doc survey, which included 10 multiple choice questions with a rating scale from 1 to 5, with 1 equivalent to "Not at

all" and 5 equivalent to "Very much". The conclusions concern the specific group of students, since it was a small group of students and it produced a small sample study.

The students were asked about the creation of the documentary, and the large majority found the activity extremely or very helpful in learning about the EU values.
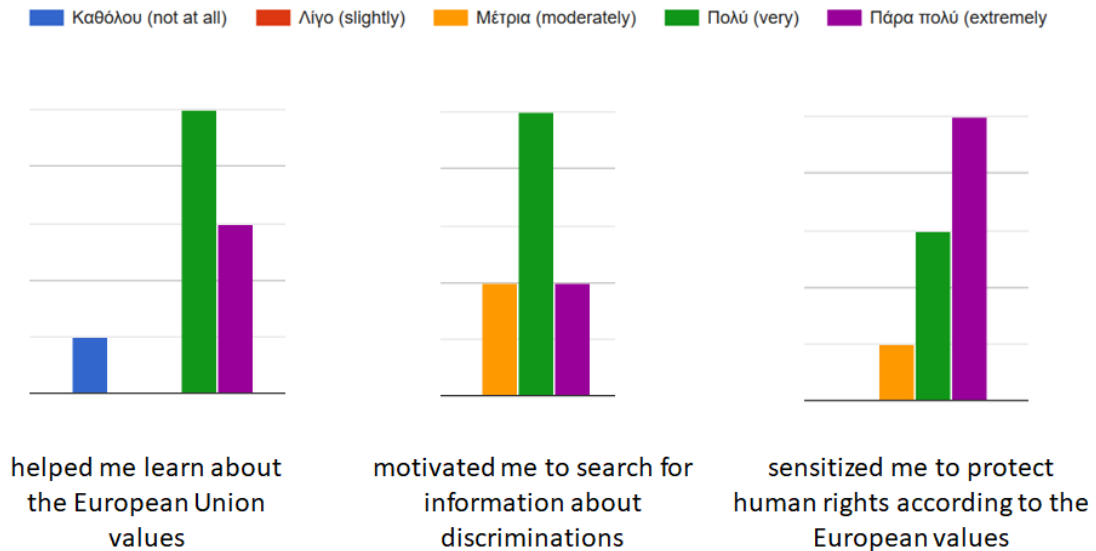
Figure 5: Knowledge Skills Attitude

All the students were positive from moderately to extremely that the project motivated them to search for information about discriminations and that they were sensitized by their involvement in the program to protect human rights according to the European values.
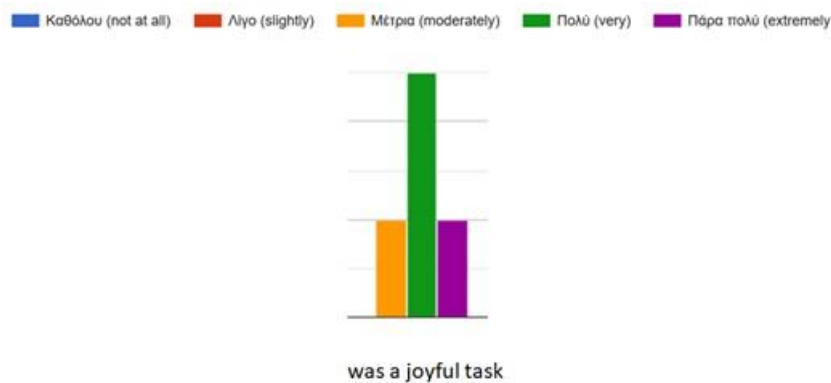
Figure 6: Students' feedback

Probably, the most important conclusion from the survey was that all students found the activity a joyful task.

The students' feedback was also captured during conversations and their written opinions, which again showed that the activities fulfilled the aims of the project. Students learned to cooperate with others, discover useful material, evaluate sources, develop critical thinking, become aware of their own prejudices, recognize the strength of the legal framework, compose the team opinion and express it in a creative way, which resulted in making the

students proud of their effort and the project outcome. The students became aware of the fact that Human Rights and Equality are protected by law inside the European Union. However, they realized that there are still steps to be made in order to achieve the total prevention of discriminations.

Conclusion

The project matched the aims of the T4E program and was based on experiential and collaborative learning in a digital framework which promoted higher order skills (HOT). The whole practice highlighted students' collaboration, involvement and creativity, and the outcomes of the project proved the effectiveness in students' acquiring knowledge and skills in multiple modes. It also explored their attitude to the EU and made them think more critically about what it means to be part of this structure. Since our students are called to be change agents, their participation in such programs enhances their reflection and active citizenship in many fields. The outcomes will be disseminated to the whole school community through social media and the school website, as well as through the T4E network, so that other students could be involved in the whole practice, be thoughtful and reflective.

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Appendices

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5.2. Educational Alternatives in the Period of Homeschooling

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" A quality education means a balance between tradition and innovation, between creativity and routine"
Sir Ken Robinson

Abstract

The proposed study " Educational alternatives in the period of home schooling " aims to investigate the current state of educational policies on the teaching of history in the period oh home schooling. The school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic conditions, and the transition to online schooling determined the teachers to try to implement some digital platforms, as well as some alternative applications to face to face teaching. In the same time researchers of our time continue to have inexhaustible discussion about the purpose of history in the context of the current millennium and the important changes in the science of history. From the new principles that underlie the study of history in the postmodernist period, we chose multiperspectivity, a methodological concept used lately in historical education in school.

Keywords: postmodernity, digital skills, history teaching, key competences, home schooling

Introduction

Researchers of our time continue to have an inexhaustible discussion about the purpose of history in the context of the current millennium and the important changes in the science of history. The idea that history must and can be studied has been emphasized, because people need to know themselves. Contemporary researchers have mentioned for the twentieth-twenty-first centuries three sources of fundamental knowledge of history: school, family, media. At the same time, it should be noted that history can be seen as an object of specialized academic research, and at the same time, as an object of study in school, each of them having specific ways of analysis, rules and working tools. Discussions about education today are ongoing. It is now necessary to bring up the question of whether or not education has entered the postmodern era. According to the assessments made by specialists in the field, phenomena specific to modernity, with safe references to Romanian education. Education is not in the period of authentic postmodernity, he considered, in a university professor. Dr. Emil Păun (Păun, 2012, 13). There is a synchronism with

postmodernity more in terms of theoretical discourse, but in terms of educational practices we are far from postmodernity.

In this context, as new research in the field of education very well points out, the need for clarifications and theoretical pedagogical foundations has increased, both in the sphere of school and non-school activity (Păun, 2017, 14). Recently, new ideas and concepts have accumulated in the field of pedagogy, however, says Professor Păun (Păun, 2017,16), there are still some epistemological ambiguities likely to affect the scientific position of pedagogy, which seeks a new identity within the epistemic space of socio-human sciences in general and education sciences in particular. Current developments in the field of pedagogy attest to his remarkable progress in explaining and scientifically substantiating the new ways of organizing and conducting educational processes. Behind these developments is a whole history that demonstrates the shaping of pedagogy as a science.

As a discipline, history has taken decisive steps in Romania since the early 90's. Associated with the science it expresses and often confused with it, the discipline of history wanted to present itself, after this period, under its four dimensions, which is characterized by most educators who have dealt with its status. These dimensions consist of: the factual-event dimension, the systemic, cultural dimension and, finally, the serial dimension. As a result, as contemporary teachers point out, trying to reconcile the informational aspect of the discipline with the didactic one, the leaders of history came to forms of training and evaluation that produced heated discussions, sometimes leading to real scandals. (Adăscăliței & al., 2010-2013).

Analyzing the recent events, we will find a relative frequency of changes in the field of education in Romania. These concerned the structure of the system, leading to changes in its components, including the curriculum.

The Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning provides for both increasing and improving the level of digital skills at all stages of the education and training process, in all segments of the population, and supporting teachers, as well as of other stakeholders supporting learning processes, including families, in order to improve key competences of learners, as part of the approach to lifelong learning in education, training and learning environments.

In the context of the current pandemic, history teachers have adapted to the new situation and have been able to use digital technologies to carry out their online activities, to collaborate with students and parents, to show their creativity in order to achieve the proposed objectives.

Most voices of education experts appreciate that the living, real classroom cannot be replaced by this virtual framework. They believe that distance learning also has beneficial features for students, because it maintains their appetite and desire to learn further, but also the interest in being connected to school through teachers, colleagues, etc. Another advantage would be that students notice that someone takes care of them, that their qualities such as responsibility, personal autonomy are appreciated.

Research design

A viable alternative for the period of home schooling was the relevant CRED - Curriculum Project, Open Education for All, a Project realised by The Ministry of Education and Research, in partnership with the Institute of Education Sciences. The project has a national coverage. The project provides the elaboration of 18 methodological guides covering all the disciplines.

The CRED project has a blended-learning training structure (which combines face-to-face activities with online learning and development activities), which represents in the conception of education experts the future of school learning. As a history gymnasium training expert within the CRED Project, I appreciate that the trainers and students had an advantage at the beginning of home school.

In carrying out activities with students, for class management, for communication and collaboration with students, we used Google Classroom as a digital platform. The platform functioned as a unitary system for carrying out educational activities at the National Pedagogical College " Spiru Haret " Buzău, where I work as a history teacher. In addition to the classes, a series of activities aimed at promoting European values took place here. Thus, for this purpose a special class was created entitled -European Union at the anniversary clock-, where some students posted their own materials here. The activity dedicated to Europe Day-70 years since the Schumann Declaration aimed to train prospective thinking by understanding the role of European institutions and values in contemporary life.

Competences specific to the activity pursued: -appropriate use of the concepts and terms necessary to describe the process of establishing the EU;

-interpretation within the team work, of the content of a studied document; -cooperation with others in debating local and global issues; -formulation of arguments regarding events in the history of U E

As didactic strategies we used methods and procedures-conversation, problematization, and the form of organizing the activity was in groups. Specifically, the students were organized in groups, each having to make a poster and an essay about the 70th anniversary of May 9, 1950. This topic was announced during a key meeting. The results of their activity were promoted on the Facebook page of the College and were appreciated by the jury.

The presentation of the materials was followed by a debate on the importance of the EU, in which students emphasized that Member States remain sovereign and independent, even if they have decided to share some of their "sovereignty". The students presented the actions and measures taken by the European institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic. High school students expressed their thoughts, emotions, hopes for the future, in the context of the situation facing society during this period.

Conclusions

If we analyze the last decade, we will find a relative frequency of changes in the field of education in Romania. Numerous changes have affected the structure of the system, leading

to changes in its components, including the curriculum (respectively curricula, and textbooks). In the elaboration of the history programs, with one exception (the change from 1999), the stages of change went through all the objects of study.

In Romania, several generations of programs currently coexist. Even if their structure is different, the common element is to emphasize the regulatory role of students' learning in training. Student focus and synchronization with developments at European level remain constants of curriculum design.

The school curriculum tells us best what is the offer of knowledge that an object of study offers to students in a certain period of schooling and how this knowledge is organized. It is a technical document, which requires a certain reading key, applicable to various reading situations. In order to be usable in various contexts, the texts of the programs must be characterized by internal coherence, the accuracy of the language used, development potential (at the level of textbooks and auxiliaries), as well as the ability to incorporate changes.

In conclusion, the current teacher must and can become a digital teacher to support the development of key competencies, which pays attention to the awareness of students and colleagues of the importance of acquiring key competencies and their links with society.

In the current context of online schooling, increasing and improving the level of digital skills at all stages of the education and training process is not a luxury, it is not a fad, it is a necessity. There are solutions, but we must show determination and the desire to combine the resources we have.

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5.3. Integration of the Kahoot! Learning Platform in modern online teaching practices, arising from the need for social distancing

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Abstract

The present proposal presents a teaching tool that integrates in the teaching practice the use of Information and Communications Technologies in tandem with game-based learning. The tool that offers teachers the opportunity to teach and students the opportunity to learn is Kahoot!, an online platform that helps teachers to design questions for quizzes and/or assessment tests. It can be easily employed by all schools in Greece to teach students the values of Europe across a wide range of fields such as research, Geography, Social and Civic courses. In turn, students benefit from the use of such a tool since learning becomes an exciting process that "speaks" the language of the young. Each country can adjust the tool to its own teaching curriculum needs and teachers may integrate it in their practices and use it depending on their individual tenor of teaching. The present proposal, after presenting the issues involved in the use of ICT in the teaching process and learning overall, provides analytical instructions on installing the Kahoot! application and designing the questions teachers wish to include in their quizzes. What is more, the proposal introduces the basic steps involved in the use of the game-learning platform in the classroom.

Keywords: Kahoot! ICT, game-based learning, scaffolding

Introduction

The school-for-all, aka the school of inclusion, constitutes one of the European Union's priorities. Many have been the projects already implemented in that area by a number of European countries. One such project is the Erasmus KA2 "Cap sur l'école" inclusive program which falls under the 'best practices' category in Europe.

Traditionally, all projects have always been destined for in-class learning. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 pandemic brought about radical changes in the school reality. The urgent need to move on to a system of modern online education led to an educational transformation in schools, in the way teachers and students interact, and in the teaching practice itself. In these times of social distancing, modern online learning should turn to new teaching approaches, transfiguring successful teaching strategies so that the interest of students in learning remains unabated. At this stage and given the present circumstances, it is imperative that schools be able to integrate game-based learning in their practices so that they may teach values and include all students in this new form of virtual education, be it synchronous or asynchronous. That can be accomplished via games which are popular with children and adults alike. Simply put, game-based learning is a competitive, structured or

semi-structured, individual or group-oriented activity. Despite its recreational form, game-based learning follows certain rules towards the accomplishment of a goal, ultimately producing one or more winners (Alessi & Trollip, 2001).

Consequently, the present proposal will introduce a creative recommendation and idea accompanied by a thorough explanation and a practical example. Apart from the fact that it can easily be implemented in all schools, it will teach the values of Europe in the framework of research plans, geography courses, social and civics studies while keeping the interest of all students unabated.

Exploring the Kahoot application

The present proposal's idea involves the integration of the Kahoot! game platform in distance learning and today's learning needs as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are invaluable tools in the hands of experienced teachers. Moreover, they combine exciting ways of game-based learning with today's pedagogical theories. According to Woolfolk, it was psychologist Lev Vygotsky who first introduced the concept of assisted learning and supported participation within the classroom, with the main focus being on the scaffolding of students by the teacher (Woolfolk, p. 51). Teachers need to support their students by providing them with information, guiding them, encouraging them at the right time, giving them the right amount of information, adjusting all the while the learning process to the level of the class they teach. Piaget talked of the value that cultural instruments have in the cognitive growth of children and adolescents (Woolfolk, p. 46). Today, those tools include the new environments of learning as created by computers, software, and online use. Thus, it is clear that the use of the ICT available assists students during the learning process in the best possible way.

Kahoot! fulfils the goals of game-based learning, operates online, and allows teachers to create quiz-based games. As such, it becomes an exceptionally effective tool for teachers who can then use it to evaluate levels of student knowledge, attitudes, and skills by posing the corresponding questions at the end of a learning unit or lesson. What is more, teachers will find Kahoot! particularly useful in obtaining feedback from students (and vice versa), all the while maintaining camaraderie and a pleasant learning atmosphere. The Kahoot! platform is highly interactive because it allows the inclusion of images and video clips from YouTube. Admittedly, some planning is involved since teachers must have their quiz questions prepared in advance. Students can play the quiz-based games either individually or in groups. To do so, they can work using their computer, tablet, or cellphone during the online, long-distance learning session. However, at this point, it should be stressed that, so far, schools in Greece do not allow the use of cell phones in the classroom.

Results of how effective Kahoot! is as a game-learning platform will depend to a great extent on the skills the students themselves have and, to a much lesser extent, on pure luck. Kahoot! also gives students the opportunity to engage in organized activities whose goal is to combine recreation with learning and thus include all students in its applications.

1. **Creating an account on Kahoot!**
   To create an account with Kahoot! enter the website https://getkahoot.com/ (Figure 1).
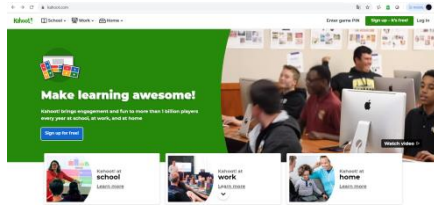
Figure 1

Next, if you already have an account, click on **login** (top right). If this is your first visit to Kahoot! and you have no account, create one by clicking on **sign up for free** (bottom left) so that you can register. The page "**I want to use Kahoot!**" opens up (Figure 2). Once on that page, click on the icon that represents your preference.

Figure 2

You can log in, in one of the following three ways:

- o   through your Google account by clicking on "**Sign up with Google**";
- o   through your Microsoft account by clicking on "**Sign up with Microsoft**"; or
- o   through your own email by clicking on "**Sign up with email**"*

*Note that, if you go by the third option (i.e., "**Sign up with email**"), you must fill in your **username**, **email** account, and **password**

Last, click on "**Create account**".

2. Preparing the items for your quiz

To design a quiz, go back to the **Home** page. We log in entering the data you used when you created an account. Click on the icon   that appears top right. The next screen appears. Select **quiz**. Another screen opens up. Click on **Continue for free** that appears to the left of the screen. When the next screen opens click on **Create**.

3. Creating a new game

Once you have clicked on **Create**, the next screen that appears asks you to enter details under **Description**. Fill in the **title** (required) of your project (e.g., project quizzing students on nutrition), and give a **description** (required) of it.

Next, select:

- o   **Visible to everyone** (required)
- o   **Language** (required)**:** (e.g., Greek)
- o   **Audience** (required): e.g., school
     and, last,
- o   **Add image** (required)**.** In this field you need to upload either an image that is relevant to the questions you are creating; or a video from Youtube in introvideo.

You need to complete all required fields in order to continue.

Once you have completed this stage, click on "**OK go**" that appears right. To create your first question on the next screen, click on "**Add question**".

- o **Enter the question.**
- o **Select the time in which the question must be answered.**
- o **In the field "Award Points"** leave on the default selection **"Yes"** so that, depending on the speed at which students/players answer the question, they are awarded points for each correct answer.
- o In any order you wish, **enter three (3) to four (4) answers to the question.** One of the answers is the correct one and the remaining ones are the distractors. **Mark the correct answer by clicking on the "v" <check> sign.**

To create each one of your quiz's remaining questions click on "**next**" and then click, again, on "**add question**". When you have finished entering all of the questions you have designed for your quiz, click on "**save**" and then on "**I'm done**" and you are transferred to the screen of your quiz.

4. **Downloading Kahoot! on your tablet or cell phone, using the Android mobile operating system**

You can also play on Kahoot! by downloading it on your tablet or cell phone using the Android mobile operating system. To do so, select Play Store on your Android tablet or cellphone. Type "**Kahoot!**" and click on the "**Search**" symbol <🔍> symbol. Click on "**Accept**" and then click on "**Install**". As soon as Kahoot! has finished installing, go to **Apps** and select "**Kahoot!**". You are now ready to play.

5. **How is the game played?**

Teachers upload the game on their computers (Figure 3)
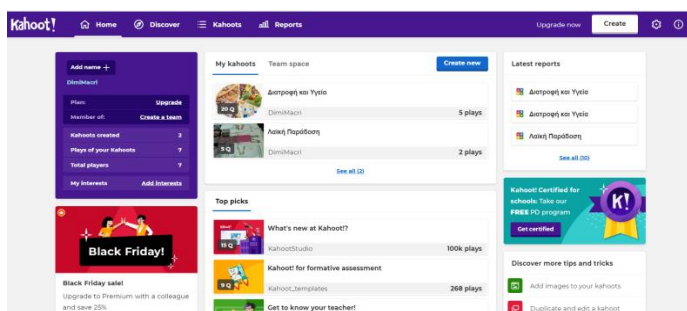
Figure 3. Teacher's PC Screen

Next, teachers click on "**play**" (Figure 4).
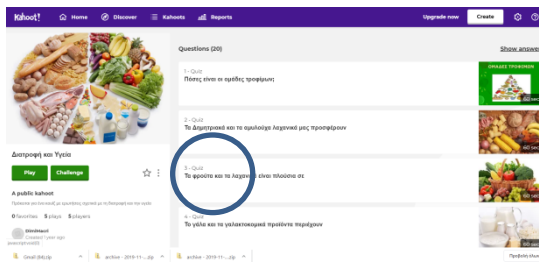
Figure 4. Teacher's Computer Screen

Two choices appear on the screen (Figure 5):

- o Classic (individual/single player); or
- o Team mode (team play)

Figure 5. Teacher's PC, Choice of game mode

Click on **"Classic"**. The game's password is displayed. The password will allow you to connect to student tablets, cell phones, or the IT classroom's terminals (reminder: no cell phones allowed in Greek schools) so that your students can answer the questions. To connect to the game, give the quiz's password (in our example the password is 567270) and a name (example name:, dia) to access the example's quiz.

Once the student's chosen device accesses the teacher's PC, the teacher's name (example name:, dia) is displayed on the screen. The teacher clicks on **Start** so that the quiz's questions may begin appearing on the screen (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Example question

Next, on their chosen electronic device, students need to select as their answer one of the three or four images appearing on the screen and corresponding to the possible answers. Depending on whether they have chosen the correct answer and on how long it took them to respond, students accumulate points.

Game-based learning becomes even more fascinating and attractive when students can read the answers on a large screen. That is easily accomplished by hooking the PC to a large-screen projector.

Conclusions

Teachers must plan the teaching event, organize their lesson and decide what and how to teach the material as well as how to evaluate the results. Consequently, fully aware of the changes in the contemporary learning environment, teachers need to evolve and adjust to the changing needs of their students so that they may become familiar with the ever-developing technological and socio-cultural environment of today. The degree to which students succeed is also indicative of the teachers' own success as educators.

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5.4. Fun with Flags: A cross curricular learning scenario to promote European citizenship education through Vexillology

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Abstact

"Fun with Flags" (꜅FwF꜅) is a cross-curricular learning scenario (LS) inspired by the blockbuster television series "The Big Bang Theory", in which, Sheldon Cooper, a theoretical physicist at the California Institute of Technology launches a YouTube vodcast show with the title "Fun with flags". The show comprises various episodes during which Dr. Sheldon Cooper leads viewers to an adventure in the marvellous world of Vexillology, the scholarly study of the symbolism, usage and history of flags. The general aim of the scenario is to introduce students to Vexillology and promote European citizenship education, that is, encourage young people to think critically, interact effectively and act responsibly and democratically. The LS is intended to help students understand the importance of flags to a community as well as their symbolism. The topic of the LS encompasses different curricular areas (Geography, ICT, Art, Citizenship Education) integrated with the English Language Arts (speaking, writing, listening and reading). During the implementation of the LS students communicated and collaborated with each other, were engaged in group work, researched the topic, compared and contrasted opinions and views, reached conclusions, made digital products, were self and peer evaluated and published their work online. All in all, they developed and exercised 21st century skills and literacies. The LS was published at the Teaching with Europeana Blog and was selected as one of the thirty learning scenarios to win the 2020 Europeana Education Competition.

Key words: Europeana education, learning scenario, cross-curricular, vexillology, citizenship education, 21st century skills.

Introduction

Flags are not simple pieces of fabric waving on top of buildings, ships, vehicles, etc. They are symbols of past struggles, of present virtues and of future aspirations of a country and its inhabitants. They have many similarities but they have also got many differences and distinctive features like etiquettes, protocols and lore. Symbols and shapes in flags come in all sizes and colors, which to the untrained eye may seem meaningless and vague but if we look closer, we will see that every flag is unique and serves a purpose.

The learning scenario "Fun with Flags"

"Fun with Flags" (꜅FwF꜅) is a cross-curricular learning scenario intended for 7th Graders (1st Grade of Junior High school, 13-14 year-old students). The learning scenario was inspired by the blockbuster television series "The Big Bang Theory", in which, Sheldon Cooper, a theoretical physicist at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) launches a YouTube vodcast show with the title "Fun with flags". The show comprises various

episodes during which Dr. Sheldon Cooper leads viewers to an adventure in the marvellous world of Vexillology, the scholarly study of the symbolism, usage and history of flags or, in general, any other pastime, hobby, or passion concerning flags.

The general aim of the scenario is to introduce students to Vexillology, the study of flags. It also aims to promote European citizenship education by encouraging young people to think critically, interact effectively and act responsibly and democratically. It is intended to help students understand the importance of flags to a community as well as the symbolism of a flag. The topic of the learning scenario encompasses different curricular areas (Geography, ICT, Art, Citizenship Education) integrated with the English Language Arts (speaking, writing, listening and reading). The learning scenario was implemented the year 2019-20, before the school closure due to the covid19 outbreak but it can be adapted for online distance implementation as well, with the use of the Greek School's Network online learning platforms (eclass, e-me).

The learning scenario uses established methodological approaches, teaching techniques and tools, such as project-based, collaborative and student-centred learning, gamification, learning materials and various web tools, which shift teaching from textbooks to web resources like Europeana. Its added value lies in the fact that it matches the T4E project objectives such as the promotion of EU values in education, the teaching of European values in school settings either onsite or online, the production of creativity and the dissemination and discussion of good practices already implemented at schools and creative recommendations and ideas that suit the modern educational circumstances.

Curriculum integration

National curricula in all European countries include Citizenship education in their context. The subject is taught in schools independently, cross-curricularly or it is delivered by using a combination of the previous mentioned approaches (Eurydice, 2017). In Greece, it is a stand-alone subject in the 9th Grade. In the 7th and 8th Grades it is usually taught cross-curricularly or as part of other subjects (Modern Greek, Foreign Languages, History, Geography, Home Economics, etc).

The National Curriculum for foreign languages (FL) in Greece is the Unified Curriculum for Foreign Languages (EPS-XG) (Dendrinou & Karava, 2013) and it follows the systematic planning of the FL levels/criteria defined by the Council of Europe (CEFR, 2001). EPS-XG aims at promoting multiliteracies which lead to the overall development of learners by improving their linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and sociocultural knowledge. Teachers are encouraged to use technology approaching FL learning in a multimodal way. It is evident in the teaching of FL that the use of technological tools can increase student motivation and promote achievement of learning objectives. EPS-XG adopts a learner-centered view of FL education and aims at differentiating FL learning by taking into account the learners' needs, preferences and learning styles, linking this way outside-classroom reality to inside-classroom language pedagogy.

The textbook, Think Teen 1st Grade of Junior High School (Beginners) (Karagianni et al, 2008), is the official textbook used for the teaching of English in the 7th Grade. Unit 1, Lesson 1, is aimed at encouraging students to talk about themselves (name, country, nationality, language) and to make friends from around the world (key pals or e-friends).

As a result, this learning scenario fits highly into the EPS-XG curriculum as it teaches citizenship education as part of an EFL lesson and incorporates the methodological approaches of collaborative learning, student centered learning, project-based learning, combining web resources and technology tools, assessment of achievement of learning objectives and outcomes.

21st century skills

The development of 21st century skills in students can be supported by using technology fused in core subjects, firm principles of learning, and standards of assessment aimed at student needs and interests. P21 developed the Framework of 21st Century Learning which comprises three groups of competencies with various sub-skills each (P21, 2019):

- Learning and Innovation Skills: a) critical thinking and problem solving, b) creativity and innovation, c) communication and collaboration;
- Information, Media and Technology Skills: a) information literacy, b) media literacy and c) technology literacy;
- Life and Career Skills: a) flexibility and adaptability, b) initiative and self-direction, c) social and cross-cultural skills, d) productivity and accountability, e) leadership and responsibility.

This learning scenario corresponds to various of the above 21st century skills and competences as it promotes communication [students communicate ideas and messages in a foreign language] and collaboration [students collaborate in groups in order to achieve a common goal], information and technology literacy skills [students search online resources, download digital items, save digital items for later use], creativity [students reuse digital items and create original products], initiative and self-direction [students are self-motivated and take the initiative for their own learning], productivity [students do collaborative work that results in a product], accountability and responsibility [students are accountable to teammates and responsible as a team for the outcome of the project] and social, civic related skills [students embrace themselves and others within their classroom community, organization or nation that share common beliefs, goals, rules and regulations, create a community flag which represents themselves as individuals as well as a unified community working together].

Aims and objectives

The general aim of the lesson is to promote European citizenship education to students through Vexillology.

Citizenship education is a subject which aims to foster a friendly coexistence and promote the mutually beneficial development of individuals and the communities in which they live. At school it supports students in becoming informed, active and responsible citizens, who want and can take action for themselves and for their communities at national, European or international levels. According to the current policy context presented above and research findings, the conceptual framework of citizenship education focuses on four competence areas (Sigalas et al, 2017: 6):

- Area 1: Interacting effectively and constructively with others, including personal development (self-confidence, personal responsibility and empathy); communicating and listening; and cooperating with others.
- Area 2: Thinking critically, including reasoning and analysis, media literacy, knowledge and discovery, and use of sources.
- Area 3: Acting in a socially responsible manner, including respect for the principle of justice and human rights; respect for other human beings, for other cultures and other religions; developing a sense of belonging; and understanding issues relating to the environment and sustainability.
- Area 4: Acting democratically, including respect for democratic principles; knowledge and understanding of political processes, institutions and organisations; and knowledge and understanding of fundamental social and political concepts.

Objectives of the learning scenario:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Talk about countries and nationalities in English
- Identify European union countries and their capitals
- Locate and highlight European countries on an online map
- Identify European union country flags
- Identify and describe key elements (symbols, shapes and colours) in European union country flags
- Incorporate pattern, symbolism, logo design, and layout into a representational work of art (a flag)
- Create a flag which represents students themselves as individuals as well as a unified community of people
- Embrace themselves and others within their community

Teaching sessions

Session 1 (90 minutes)

In the first session, students researched colors, shapes and symbols used in the making of flags. They were introduced to the notions of

- Vexillology: The study of flags
- Vexillologist: A person who studies flags
- Vexilographer: A person who designs flags professionally
- Vexillophile: A person who collects and displays flags
- Vexillonaire: A person who designs or uses flags actively or is occupied with promoting a specific agenda and/or point of view regarding flags.

At the end, students created their group flags by using the web 2.0 tool Scrontch's Flag Designer (https://flag-designer.appspot.com/), following the five basic principles of flag design as they are outlined by the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) http://nava.org/good-flag-bad-flag/. The rules are (NAVA, 2020):

- Keep It Simple: The flag should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory.

- Use Meaningful Symbolism: The flag's images, colors, or patterns should relate to what it symbolizes.
- Use 2 or 3 Basic Colors: Limit the number of colors on the flag to three which contrast well and come from the standard color set.
- No Lettering or Seals: Never use writing of any kind or an organization's seal.
- Be Distinctive or Be Related: Avoid duplicating other flags, but use similarities to show connections.

Students uploaded their flags to the lesson's Padlet and they voted for the best flag!

Group Flags

The leaders
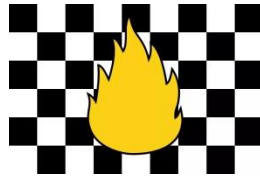
Mean Girls

Sexy Boys

Black Bananas
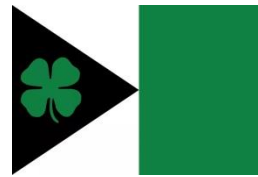
Cute Goats

Session 2 (90 minutes)

In the second session, students researched the European Union countries, flags and capitals at the official site of the European Union (https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries_en) and they matched the countries' flags according to shapes and patterns. Then, they created a map in GeoPuzzle https://geopuzzle.org/puzzle/europe/ and at the Europa EU Learning Corner. GeoPuzzle is an online tool in which one has to drag the shape of the territory to match the right place on the map. This way, in the form of a game, students learn the names and locations of each country and have fun doing it.

Geopuzzle

Later, the students accessed the Europeana platform in order to search, find and download pictures of authentic flags (not a sketch or drawing) for each EU country. They saved the pictures in a folder at the desktop of the computer with the name of their group in order to use the pictures for the project work that followed. As the pictures had copyright issues, they requested permission to reuse them from the Royal Museum of Greenwich.

Europeana Collections
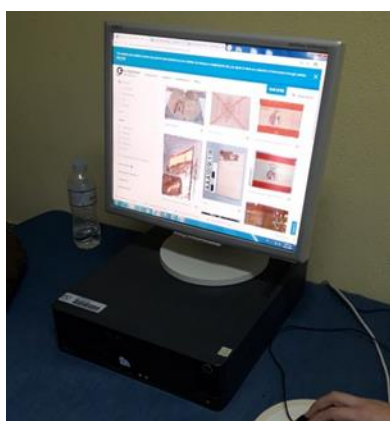
Session 3 (45 minutes)

For the 3rd session students were divided in groups. Each group assumed a role from the ones described previously in Session 1 and started their collaborative project work. The first group were the Vexillographers who were in charge of designing the school's official flag. The flag was made with 3 colors, according to their symbolism and use: Green> stability, safety, peace and harmony, Blue> trust, loyalty, wisdom, harmony, Black> Power and strength. The group also used a heraldic element, the fleur-de-lis, which was adopted as a symbol by various Scouting organisations worldwide for their badges during the 20th century. The flag expresses what the students feel about their school. The second group were the Vexillologists who were assigned the task to set up an extra-curricular school club engaged in the study of flags and create a poster in Canva (https://canva.com) in order to advertise the club and ask for memberships. The third group were the Vexillophiles who

made GIFs (https://giphy.com/) and photo collages (https://www.photocollage.com/) with the flags they had downloaded from Europeana in order to display the collection of flags of their school club. And the fourth group, the Vexillonaires, studied the EU flag and prepared a presentation in Powtoon (https://www.powtoon.com/) which included the following points about the European Union: the flag, its symbolism, the anthem, its values, the currency, and the languages of the EU. These are their products:

School's Official Flag	Poster of the Vexillology Club	GIFs

Powtoon presentation and Photo Collages

Session 4 (45 minutes)

In the final session each group uploaded their products at the lesson's Padlet, presented their products to their classmates, were evaluated by votes and comments on the padlet and received feedback by the teacher. At the Padlet there are also various resources for teaching and learning about citizenship education, the EU, vexillology, worksheets, games and other activities.

Padlet
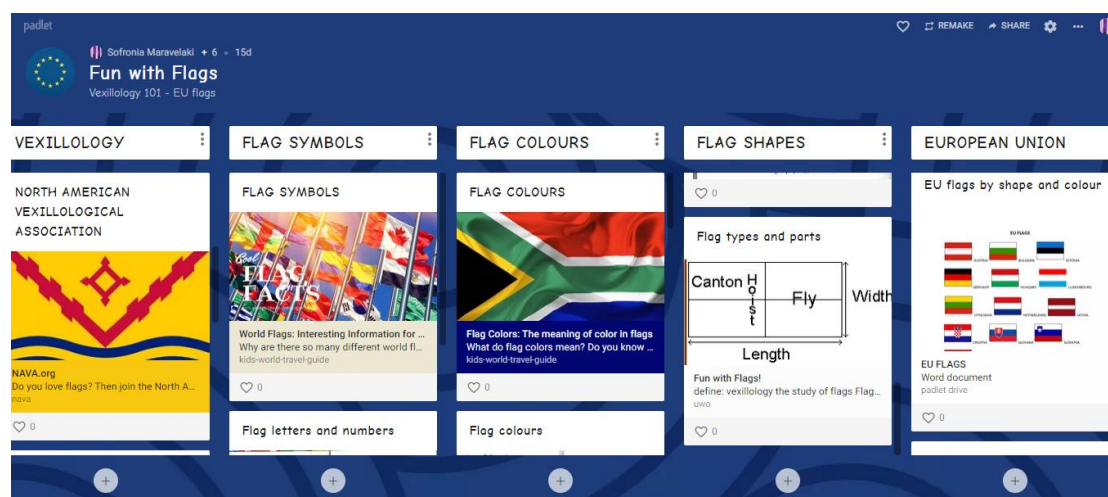
Conclusions

Students communicated and collaborated with each other, were engaged in group work, researched the topic, compared and contrasted opinions and views, reached conclusions, made digital products, were self and peer evaluated and published their work on the internet. They enjoyed the lesson and were very satisfied with their work. Although some of them lacked basic ICT skills, with the help of their group mates and the teacher, they managed to finish their assignments successfully. They were not able to find all the flags of the countries that belong to the EU at the Europeana portal so they suggested that Europeana should add the topic of flags to a collection! In addition, all the images of the flags they had found had copyright issues, so we sent an email to the Royal Museums Greenwich - National Maritime Museum and asked for permission to use the images for the lesson. They granted us the permission to use them and download them free of charge directly from the links, under the terms of their Creative Commons Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivatives (CC BY-NC-ND) licence. Students also had a lot of fun during the lesson and said that they learnt a lot of things about the EU flags and vexillology!

The learning scenario can be adapted for further use in other disciplines or in a different context. For example, P.E. teachers can research the Olympic Games, the World flags, the national anthems, the medals, the sports, etc. R.E. teachers can focus on religious symbols in flags or religious flags. Music teachers can explore National Anthems and invite students to compose their school's or group's anthem. Another exciting idea for ICT teachers would be to use coding in the form of the Flag alphabet and flag numbers in order to narrate a story or an event. Chemistry teachers could make up the periodic table of flags. Students can also research HERALDRY > design, display, and study of armorial bearings, PHILATELY > study of stamps and postal history, collection, appreciation of stamps and other philatelic products and CARTOGRAPHY > study and practice of making maps, using resources from Europeana (https://www.europeana.eu/en).

Europeana is the digital platform of Europe for cultural heritage, which provides free online access to over 53 million digitised items taken from Europe's museums, archives, libraries and galleries. The Europeana DSI-4 project (https://pro.europeana.eu/project/europeana-dsi-4) continues the work of the previous three Europeana Digital Service Infrastructures

(DSIs). It is the fourth repetition of the project with a proven record of accomplishment in creating access, interoperability, visibility and use of European cultural heritage in the five target markets outlined: European Citizens, Education, Research, Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage Institutions. The LS was published at the [Teaching with Europeana Blog](#) and was selected as one of the thirty learning scenarios to win the [2020 Europeana Education Competition](#).

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https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3884/Citizenship%20Education%20at%20School%20in%20Europe%20-%202017.pdf.

Websites

Europeana https://www.europeana.eu/en

Europeana DSI-4 project https://pro.europeana.eu/project/europeana-dsi-4

European Union https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries_en

EU member countries in brief https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries_en

Europa EU Learning Corner https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-puzzle_en

[Europeana (Free to use images)](#)

[Europeana> National flags](#)

[Europeana> Ceremonial artifact: flag, national](#)

North American Vexillological Association https://nava.org/digital-library/design/GFBF_English.pdf

North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) http://nava.org/good-flag-bad-flag/

P21 (2019) Framework of 21st Century Learning https://www.battelleforkids.org/networks/p21

Web 2.0 tools

Padlet

GeoPuzzle

Scrontch's Flag Designer

Canva

Giphy

Powtoon

Photo Collage

5.5. A school full of colours-Rainbow project Teachers4Europe-Senior High school of Moudros, Lemnos, Greece

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Abstract

According to the European Union statistics and analyses, the nature of the diversity, that is found in European societies, is rapidly changing, although the sense of diversity is not a new phenomenon. As regards the reason for such a diversity, that occurs because of to intra-European mobility, international migration and globalization. So, Europe becomes more diverse as time passes. These changes in European societies affect the educational landscape and organization. That means new opportunities and challenges for schools and other educational institutions to be created. As recent studies show, intolerance and social exclusion are increasing both in schools and in society, as the number of refugee, asylum seeker and migrants is growing nowadays. These new-comers in Europe and the need for social inclusion places specific demands on schools and teachers. These phenomena lead teachers to re-consider their everyday practices and strategies, in order to meet the learning needs of these new learners. As our school takes part in the T4E programme, we decided to focus on this topic and create new material for diversity in everyday life, as a part of living together, accepting and respecting people's values, beliefs and self-orientation. So, we discussed about the main differences among people generally and globally and we created a rainbow project, full of colour and full of values. As we had worked together with teachers from other schools in Greece, we implemented this project, which is based on the abilities' chart for Democratic Participation. To make it clearer to all pupils involved, we were discussing via Internet and long-distance and remote school learning platforms about the history of the human rights through the ages, underlining the respect of women's and children's rights. When we came back to school, we worked together and creating a time-lapse of the most important moments and dates of recognition of Human Rights globally. Our aim is to focus on two specific themes: addressing controversial issues at school, so that schools will be able to discuss sensitive and controversial issues in a respectful way, as it is a vital skill in a democratic culture and tackling discrimination, because schools need to prioritise language and cultural competences, multiperspectivity in history and gender equality. Finally, it's important to emphasize through this educational project what is the basis of many policy initiatives and activities. Democracy in action is what Europe today needs in order to secure values, attitudes and skills for all citizens. Our project values human dignity and human rights, provides the value of ambiguity and the tolerance towards it, cultivates learning skills of analysis and critical thinking, abilities of listening and observing, focuses on the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, the

willingness to change or compromise, adaptability and supports knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Key-words: social inclusion, democratic values, diversity

Introduction

The societal changes of today affect the educational landscape and organization, and create both new opportunities and challenges for schools and other educational institutions. T4E project focuses on 6 main subjects and one of them is Diversity.

It's crucial from the beginning to explain why we chose Diversity. The variety that is to be considered, as a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds is to be included and involved. Moreover, diversity includes people of different genders or sexual orientation. So, diversity is a common element among people but, furthermore, in nature.

The recent social phenomena, as they are documented in formal European organizations and sites, show that school leaders and teachers have to re-consider everyday practices and strategies against intolerance and social exclusion. This need occurs due to the growing the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers or migrant children and the increasing percent of the learning needs of these pupils (https://op.europa.eu/en)

Innovation

To start with, we began to discuss about the basic elements of our project, which are crucial for its development as an innovative work. So, we searched the meaning of innovation today, so that our project will be effective and interesting. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2013), Innovation is defined as "the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new."

As regards the innovative aspects of our project, it is based, mainly, on open discussion-listening skills-communication. We discussed about the main differences among people generally and globally. After that, we put into practice and we created a rainbow project, full of colour and full of values.

[1] Two school classes-Two rainbows

In addition to this, we worked during the school lockdown due to pandemic reasons, by using remote teaching-learning by doing. To make it clearer to all pupils involved, we were discussing via Internet and long-distance and remote school learning platforms about the history of human rights through the ages, underlining the respect of women's and human rights generally.

[2]Our webinars and discussion via Zoom platform

[3]A timeline of the Rights and Legal Registration of Women in the 20th Century

Furthermore, another innovative aspect of our project is team work: As we had worked together with teachers from other schools in Greece, we implemented this project, which is based on the Democratic Participation of the Council of Europe.
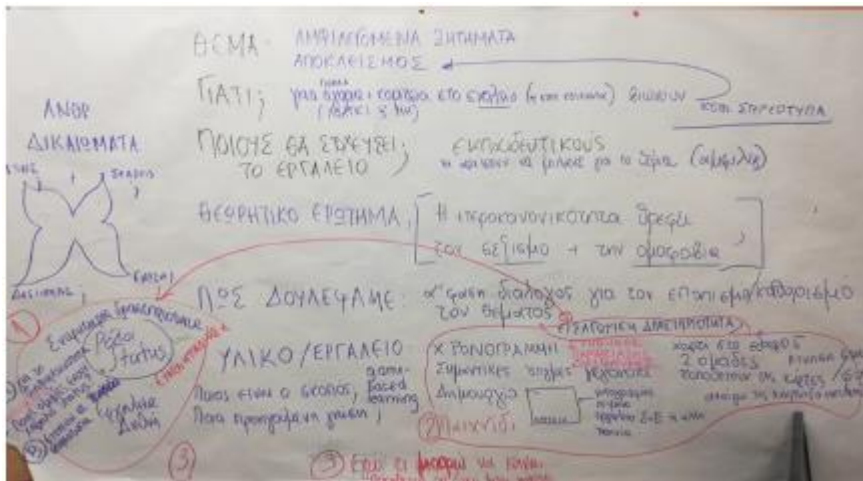
[4] A brainstorm and a chart of our ideas about Human Rights and Diversity

It's important to be mentioned that, we focused on the implementation of new ideas: When we came back to school, we worked together and creating a time-lapse of the most important moments and dates of recognition of Human Rights globally.
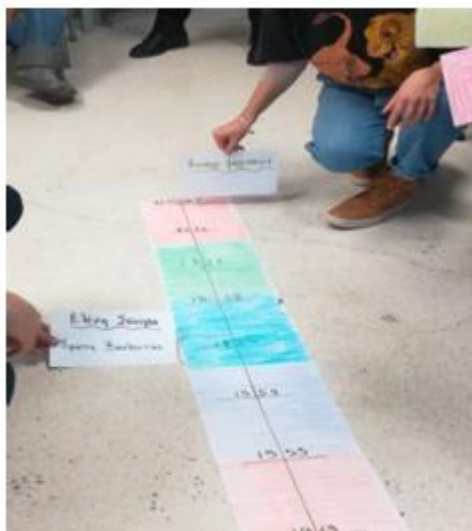
[5] Our teamwork on a time-lapse

Variance of the target group

Our school group consists of pupils, boys and girls, 16-18 years old, who live in rural areas and isolated villages, far from the capital city of Lemnos. Lemnos is the eighth biggest island of Greece and it is situated in the borderland.

This group of pupils was selected according to their previous experience about European projects and their interests about Diversity. So, most of them are already members of our schools' Erasmus plus programme and they also participate in the European Parliament Ambassador Schools Programme. Some of them are immigrants.

Our two different school classes created two different rainbows according to their own beliefs of the meaning of Diversity. Below are shown these two different rainbows and the translation of each one's principles:

[6] Rainbow of Class A: Acceptance of the other/Uniqueness/Respect to other's belief/Values/Acceptance of the difference/Religion/Language

[7] Rainbow of Class B: Racial identity/Social identity/Professional identity/Gender identity/Culture/Political identity/Physical appearance

Scientific-Pedagogical methods

Our project values human dignity and human rights and it provides tolerance of the ambiguity (Cummins, 2005). As regards cultivation, it cultivates not only the analytical and critical thinking skills, but also the skills of listening and observing. Some other significant pedagogical principles that were taken into consideration are empathy, flexibility and adaptability. Finally, our project supports knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

When we prepared the project, we implemented values, attitude, skills and knowledge and critical understanding, according to the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture which are developed by The Council of Europe. A kind of Chart of the main principles that is important to be adapted for use not only in primary and secondary schools, but in higher education and vocational training institutions, also, throughout Europe. These new national curricula and teaching programmes are to be re-considered too. (www.coe.int).

Our project puts forward challenges in implementing citizenship education at national, European and global levels.
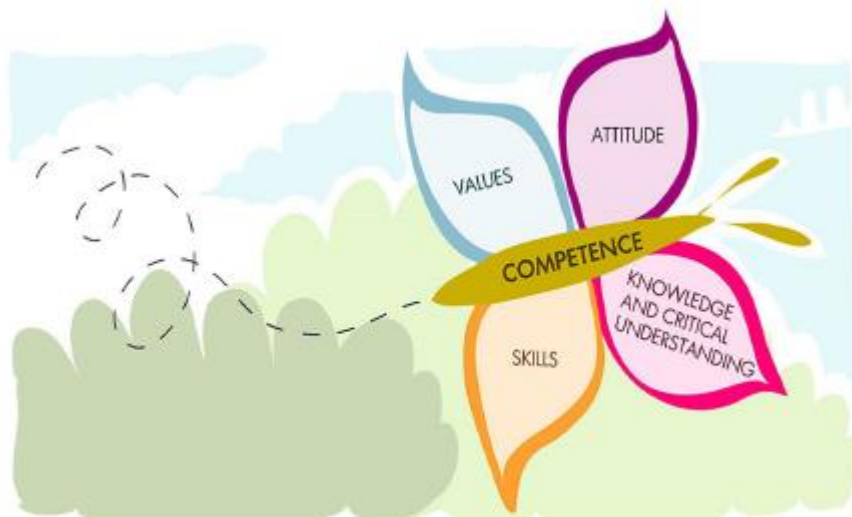
[6] The butterfly of Competences (Council of Europe- https://rm.coe.int/leaflet-of-the-campaign-freeto- speak-safe-to-learn-democratic-schools)
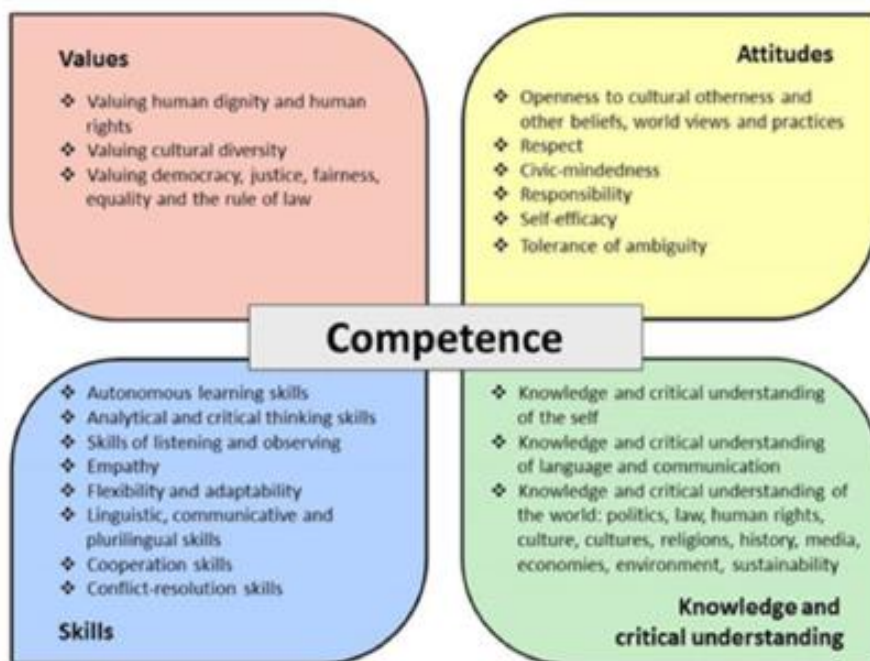
[7] The chart of competences according to the Council of Europe.

Transferability to everyday school life

The aim of our project is to focus on two specific themes:

➢ addressing controversial issues at school, so that schools will be able to discuss sensitive and controversial issues in a respectful way, as it is a vital skill in a democratic culture and

➢ tackling discrimination, because schools need to prioritise language and cultural competences, multiperspectivity in history and gender equality.

Conclusion

Finally, it's important to emphasize through this educational project what is the basis of many policy initiatives and activities. The aim of this project is to provide educational products and support the idea of Diversity in everyday life. It, also, contributes to the main goal of implementing innovative educational methods for integration into the formal education system, which is, also, the aim of many profit or non-profit organizations. (www.elix.org.gr).

Democracy in action is what Europe today needs in order to secure values, attitudes and skills for all citizens.

[8] [9] Groups A and B: Classes A and B (Participants' personal data is protected and the declarations of consent for photography by the parents have been collected)

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https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture

5.6. Promoting EU values and social solidarity through art in the years of COVID-19

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Abstract

In the corona virus context, EU values such as democracy, freedom, equality, human dignity and human rights have been challenged in all domains. The educational system has been affected by school closures which carry high economic and societal costs for people across communities. Their impact however is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalized students and their families. The resulting disruptions intensify already existing disparities within the education system but also in other aspects of their lives. For all the above reasons, three Teachers4Europe, one from a remote island in northern Aegean-Greece (Limnos) and two from a rural area of Epirus region (northwestern part of Greek mainland, prefecture of Arta), are taking part in the current project aiming at empowering students in expressing their viewing of this new reality through art. The project entitled "Promoting EU values and social solidarity through art in the years of Covid-19" will be shared in the T4E platform not only as a result of the collaboration of two schools but it will also give rise to further participation of Teachers4Europe from other countries of the T4E network. The aim of the project is to empower students by enhancing their expression through art to capture the era before, during and after the pandemic. Students can express themselves in writing either in the form of a diary, or through the use of art e.g. collage, painting, photography, video, comics and share it with other European students. There will be interaction between European students, and their works of art will bring to light how they capture their feelings, thoughts and attitudes focusing on social solidarity rather than social distancing between EU countries.

Keywords: Teachers4Europe, EU values, Art, inclusive education, e-Twinning, social solidarity

Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture EU values

In the communication adopted by the European Commission on 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture', the Commission underlines that "education and culture help make Europe an attractive place to live, study and work, marked by freedom and common values, which are reflected in fundamental rights and an open society" (European Commission, 2017). The Charter of Fundamental Rights lays out these shared values upon which the EU is founded: "the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law" (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2000/C 364/01). The Council of Europe report 'Competences for Democratic Culture' highlighted that "democratic attitudes are based on values, which are the measure by which actions are evaluated; opinions, attitudes and behaviours are justified; decisions are made between alternatives; behaviour is planned; and attempts to influence others are made" (Council of Europe, 2016).

In the same report, it is emphasized that "democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot operate in practice unless they are based on a culture of democracy, that is, on democratic values and practices" (Council of Europe, 2016). Nevertheless, "a modern democracy cannot function unless it is able and willing to engage in intercultural dialogue, and intercultural dialogue is difficult to imagine without democratic culture" (ibid, 2016). For this reason, the T4E Program aims to create a long-term, cross-border and sustainable educational network that will promote students' social and political skills and defend fundamental rights, democratic values, intercultural understanding and appropriation. The e-Twinning platform is used as a tool for the development of an active network of schools and teachers, in order to reinforce the innovative ideas and creativity and enlarge the community of schools in Europe.

Aim of the project

The aim of the project is to create a transnational artistic result since art has no borders and at the same time to use ICT to share material, to exchange good practices but also, most importantly, to communicate and get to know our students through their works but also through online meetings with students from European countries. Pupils will gain critical skills through this project such as:

1. Creativity

2. Collaboration: By working collaboratively on a project, students learn to communicate more effectively.

3. Confidence: The use of art, create a safe space for students to explore their talents and build their confidence.

4. Cultural Awareness & Empathy: The arts provide a unique platform to discuss many different cultures, socioeconomic levels, and current events.

5. Critical Thinking: When students are making a work of art, the process includes conceptual and interpretational thinking that helps build their critical thinking skills including observation, reasoning, and problem-solving.

The **specific goals of the project** are the following:

Both teachers and students will be able to:

- Share material

- Exchange good practices

- Communicate

- Engaging students in critical thinking and EU core values: **diversity, inclusion, integrity and respect**

Work Process

The initial collaboration involves two schools from remote parts of Greece aiming at enlarging our network by bringing more partners together to engage in our project (Cyprus, France, Germany, Romania, Malta, and Greece that belong to the T4E network).There will be monthly activities between all partner schools under a common theme (e.g. June 2020, return to school after the quarantine; how have pupils experienced it; they express their feelings and thoughts through work of arts, photos, diaries, etc). The key is to keep track of how pupils experienced, are experiencing, and will experience the change that Covid19 has brought to their lives. To what extent the concept of social distancing is reflected upon pupils? Are there any similarities or shared values among European pupils? How can the EU values contribute positively to the strengthening of democracy, solidarity, and resilience between students?

Expected Results

Through the e-Twinning platform, it will be possible to communicate and collaborate with the schools that participate in the T4E program. This collaboration between the teachers and the students of the school units will result in the exchange of ideas, opinions, and the production of educational material. Students will have the chance to share the project on twin space and interact with other students in English by sharing their feelings and thoughts through the use of art.

Dissemination of the project

The final product would be the creation of an e-book that is designed for groups of students to quickly capture and share ideas on their experiencing the new reality by creating simple pages and linking them together. This facilitates the collaborative creation of a project and the ability to interact with a variety of activities among users. All members involved in the project will disseminate the project on social media platforms, exchanging views and ideas concerning the project.

T4E e-Conference «Promoting EU values in the time of social distancing» (6-7 June 2020)

The main theme of the T4E e-Conference «Promoting EU values in the time of "social distancing" that took place on Saturday 6 to Sunday 7 June 2020 was the on-site and online teaching of EU values in the school environment. Therefore, its main purpose was to discuss and disseminate innovative methodological approaches and teaching techniques and tools regarding the teaching of EU values in current emerging changing circumstances.

Selected projects were presented, including good practices already implemented in schools and creative ideas and suggestions appropriate to the new educational conditions, with an emphasis on how they could be applied to the teaching of EU values.

The term "good practices" is used to describe a number of educational processes aimed at improving the learning process as well as the social relationships and motivation that develop in educational and social context. These are processes that when evaluated -process and outcome evaluation- have proven to be successful, effective in a specific situation or in a specific environment or even exemplary. Some of them are successful examples of interconnectedness between school and local community or cooperation between parents and school (Bonidis, Papadopoulou, 2014).

"Networking" is a term often used in education for groups of schools that work together at different levels, as a network; for the purposes of this article, is defined as the group of school organizations that work together for a common goal. Educational community networks operate through collaboration, teamwork, communication and the mutual interest of all involved. Many schools, within a network, have established partnerships with the parents' association, the local community, organizations and providers of social, financial and psychological support, as well as various other educational institutions.

Networking in education is considered vital, because it is not possible for an individual or a school to grasp the complexity of the modern age and to successfully face all challenges, without utilizing and accepting the contribution, knowledge and the experiences of others (Hatzipanagiotou, Marmara, 2014). Therefore, being part of several educational networks, is a good way to test one's knowledge, to confirm one's professional experience, to enter the process of a continuous course of good professional behavior and feedback in terms of knowledge, attitudes and values - a dimension that is missing from the daily agenda not only of teachers but also of researchers and educational policy makers (Hatzipanagiotou, 2006).

The collaborative T4E project "promoting EU values and social solidarity through art in the years of COVID-19" in which three Teachers4Europe, one from a remote island in northern Aegean-Greece (Limnos) and two from a rural area of Epirus region (northwestern part of Greek mainland, prefecture of Arta) are taking part, aims at helping students express themselves through art, to share their experience in this new pandemic reality, to reach the realization that it is a problem for all of humanity to tackle, to suggest and learn ways to manage the new situation at school, at home, in the neighborhood and to empower and equip students to meet the challenges of real life.

The strengthening of the European dimension within the educational context and the efforts for cross-border collaborations with teachers and schools from all over Europe play a key role in the Greek educational reality. The cooperation for the promotion of European values especially during the pandemic through the T4E program is a unique opportunity for our schools (Lemnos, Neochori) to promote collaboration and exchange of good practices among teachers of European countries. Utilizing Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the e-Twinning platform gives European students the opportunity to learn collaboratively, share their views, experiences and feelings and make new friends.

The essential role of Art in Education

The use of Art in education cultivates the forms of perception that enable students to "decipher" the properties of the visible world, but also enhance students' abilities to conceptualize them in a symbolic and creative way through the metaphorical and symbolic use of language (Eisner, 2002: 123-124). Since students will by no means follow the same path and learn the same things in the same way, art is their way of bringing to light and transforming their ideas. After all, in Art, uniqueness, rather than uniformity, is highly appreciated and the element of surprise is not only allowed, but sought (Eisner, 2002: 166).

However, it is very important that students' initiation into the Arts, in the school context, takes place effortlessly for each student. The teacher should encourage students to express themselves through the use of symbolic, visual language. The ability of students to connect with the Arts is formed gradually, as a result of coming to terms with 'artful' thinking and interaction between physical and social life. In Art, variety and diversity are of utmost significance. There is more than one interpretation of a song, more than one expressive way to describe a painting or a sculpture, more than one appropriate expression for a dance performance, more than one interpretation for the decoding and meaning of a poetic text. When we stand in front of an enigmatic work of art, we are far from referring to the one and only answer that corresponds to a problem in the algebra textbook. Multiple interpretations of work of arts are very likely, as we delve deeper and "unlock" work of arts, even discussing with others (Perkins, 1994: 21).

One of the main purposes of Education through Art is the stimulation of imagination and creativity. Lowenfeld (1947 in Eisner, 2002: 32) and Read (1958 in Eisner, 2002: 32) consider the Arts as a process that liberates the spirit and provides a way out of the creative impulse. Lowenfeld points out that "the child who uses art will acquire an independent way of thinking and will be able to face new situations without difficulty. Through the development of flexible thinking, he will not only deal with new situations effectively, but will also adapt to them more easily" (1947 in Eisner, 2002: 32). Work of arts are much more than simple illustrations or representations taking into consideration that they enable students to gain knowledge from various places and are related to issues concerning the individual and social self, such as morality, peace, friendship, grace, justice, inclusion etc. (Efland, 2002: 105).

Education and Social Solidarity in times of Crisis

While schools have remained closed due to Covid19 outbreak, alternative learning solutions, mostly dependent on digital technology, have been adopted very rapidly. The sudden leap has also given rise to outreach initiatives which included numerous online platforms and other educational resources that became freely available to salvage the situation (Chircop, 2020). As teachers, students and parents experiment with new tools, policy-makers try to understand what can be more systematically adopted in the future to make education more flexible and inclusive, and what needs to be debunked (ibid, 2020). Sharing lesson plans on platforms and developing mechanisms that encourage collaboration for innovation and development rather than simple compliance could improve the quality of the remote and online educational experience.

The pandemic has revealed deep underlying truths about the existing educational gaps concerning "socio-economic disparities and inequalities, greater difficulties of access for those with special educational needs, barriers in communication between school and home" (Chircop, 2020). Nevertheless, the time for social solidarity has arrived as instead of withdrawal and self-interest, all over the world, we see an outpouring of support and solidarity. Despite physical distancing, people are finding creative ways to connect and help one another, reaching out to the most vulnerable members of their communities.

Social solidarity is an integral part of an inclusive society that aims at empowering and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic, or other status. It is an undeniable fact that an inclusive society starts from an inclusive education. Thus, it is important to place the definition of the educational inclusion in a wider context, referring to the right of all learners (including children with disabilities, but also other marginalized groups) to access and benefit from formal and non formal education. Inclusive education applies to learners of all ages, both children and adults (Corps, Ceralli and Boisseau, 2012).

Art is often used to implement inclusive education by helping students delve into the concept of diversity and transform any dysfunctional assumptions they might have (Kokkos, 2010·2013). It is emphasized that in a globalized multicultural world, art provides a means to apprehend this world. In addition, it allows citizens to develop the creativity they need to understand this new environment that always demands more ideas and innovations.

The project will illuminate the fact that there are shared concerns and common ways of dealing with crises in various European countries. It is possible that the Covid19 crisis will result in greater solidarity among Europeans, on the express condition that the requisite decisions are taken on a sufficiently clear and consensual basis, with due respect for national sensitivities and with all the necessary empathy and patience (Bertoncini, 2020).

Could the pandemic reveal a new but more "anthropocentric" reality? A reality that conceives of everything in the universe in terms of EU values such as: Peace, Freedom, Solidarity, Human Rights, Democracy, and Equality. Placing the emergence and strengthening of the tools that give substance to a broad solidarity between Member States of the EU, could definitely encourage EU citizens to value the existence of a reality based on shared human experience and solidarity.

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PART VI: Teaching and learning approaches

6.1. "Approaches to Quality Practice Design in the Erasmus+ Teachers 4 Europe Program (2018-2021)"

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Abstract

In this article, the goals set in Erasmus+ programs, and the objectives and aims set in the Erasmus+ KA3 program "Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture (2018- 2021)" are presented. Then, on the basis of these objectives and of core educational Erasmus+ views and educational theories, six teaching and learning approaches to good project design are presented; namely, the EU-centered approach, the interdisciplinary approach, the crosscurricular approach, the student-centric approach, the competence-oriented approach and the whole-school-approach. Each approach is defined and placed within the underlying framework, and methodological implications are briefly exemplified, with the aim to inform support quality projects and educational policy reforms with added EU value.

Keywords: Erasmus+, project, EU, interdisciplinarity, cross-curricularity, student-centeredness, competences, whole-school approach

Introduction

As a program run by the European Union (EU), Erasmus+ has set the general objective of contributing to the promotion of sustainable development and of bolstering education, training, youth and sport in Europe, in accordance with the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and the ET 2020 (European Commission, 2020c). As such, it aspires to tackle important issues like the reduction of early school leaving and unemployment, the promotion of adult learning, the enhancement of the participation in democratic processes, the advancement of innovation, cooperation and reform, and the increase of cooperation among EU partner countries. With the ultimate aim of achieving the above, Erasmus+ programs are fully exploited in the realm of education, as they are claimed to serve the purposes of the European policy cooperation, the strategic framework of which offers opportunities in education and training for creating best practices in education policy, acquiring and disseminating knowledge, and forwarding educational policy reforms at national and regional levels (European Commission, 2020b).

Likewise, the Erasmus+ KA3 program "Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture (2018-2021)" (henceforth, T4E program) intends to accomplish the four broad common EU objectives over a long period of time; namely, to make lifelong learning a reality for educators and learners, improve the quality and efficiency of education and training and so make education truly inclusive, enhance equity in education, reinforce social cohesion and active global citizenship, and forward creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training (EACEA, 2018). Additionally, it is meant to contribute dynamically to the acquisition and/or reinforcement of a European identity, as well as the development of the key competences outlined by the EU Council that, within the constantly evolving social and economic international and EU context, are believed to serve the demand for updated and new knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior, and the need of individuals for personal fulfillment and development in a peaceful, not radicalized environment, for active involvement in civil, political and social matters, for social inclusion and for employment (European Commission, 2020a).

All the above goals and objectives of Erasmus+ educational programs imply three core educational views that coordinators of Erasmus+ programs (the T4E program included) embrace in relation to the nature of the required projects. The first obvious view is that projects should be the environment in which EU matters and the vision for democracy and for peaceful coexistence of its peoples are to stand at the spotlight so that the culture of democracy is learned and multiplied. Second comes the view that content matter and learning material should be drawn from a variety of different scientific disciplines and school subjects, and should be evaluated and upscaled so as to feed the school curriculum in various ways (EACEA, 2018). Then is the view derived from the Paris Declaration (2017) that sees teachers as the main pillars of education, designing and supporting learning, and students as the heart of the learning process and as major learning actors. Projects are thus perceived as the vehicle for student education and empowerment and, in particular, for helping students become aware of their experiences, acquire new knowledge, work on the acquisition of social, civic and intercultural competences, and on the development of skills that are vital to strengthening national democracies and the EU as a whole (European Commission, 2017), identify themselves with values, assume new behavior models, get involved in local actions, and communicate and connect with others in a multiethnic context. Last, but not least, it is maintained that the acquisition of democratic principles and values should not be an individual matter. Rather, individuals are expected to act as inspiring agents transmitting knowledge, spreading values, modeling behavior, engaging in dialogue with others, getting involved in synergies across borders, and creating networks with a multiethnic, multicultural character.

Moreover, the aforementioned goals and objectives dictate the necessity for program coordinators, program ambassadors and participating educators to take into consideration educational theories and schools of thought during the design of good practices, which have proved to be effective in the attainment of successful positive interventions and changes through teaching and learning. These theories, in turn, in conjunction with the educational viewpoints presented, will inform explicitly the teaching/learning approaches that educators will be required to follow, in the sense of sets of correlative axiomatic principles dealing with the nature of the subject matter to be learned and with the nature of the expected teaching and learning.

In harmony with the required approaches, educators can then develop their procedural methods, i.e. the general plan for the orderly presentation of their instructional materials and for the specification of roles in each part of the project. In this design, which will link approach with procedure and which will be developed to an instructional system, instructors will consider the objectives of the method they will select, how the subject matter will be chosen and organized within the method, the task types and teaching activities the selected method purports, the learners" roles, the teacher"s roles and the role of the instructional materials (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Following the design, and in consistency with the method, they will then have to determine their implementational techniques, in the sense of strategies and contrivances, and their procedures, i.e. how the actual techniques, tasks and activities can be integrated into the lessons and used as a basis for teaching and learning (ibid).

Ultimately, all will comprise an innovative framework and a supporting structure, around which the appropriate tools, i.e. school projects, can be built and implemented in the Erasmus+ school program, in terms of central issues, educational and learning objectives and aims, expected outcomes, activities, tasks and materials. This structure, which is to be designed, upscaled and disseminated as good project practice on democracy and the constituent EU values, is considered of central importance for the training offered by the Ambassadors of an Erasmus+ program (like the T4E Ambassadors; henceforth T4EA), as well as a sine qua non for the teachers designing and carrying out worthwhile, successful projects at schools (like the T4E educators). But most importantly, it is wished that the spread and multiplication of these practices will contribute to the reduction of serious threats to the foundations of the democracies, to the increase of trust in the rule of law, in democratic institutions and in active citizenship, and to the promotion of a common sense of belonging within and amongst European societies (Asderaki & Charalampopoulos, 2018; Council Recommendation, 2018; in EACEA, 2018).

Below, six core approaches to the design of quality Erasmus+ projects are presented; i.e. the EU-centered approach, the interdisciplinary approach, the cross-curricular approach, the student-centric approach, the competence-oriented approach and the whole-school approach. In relation to each approach, it was considered essential to refer to the relevant underlying theories and/or viewpoints, so that it will become more explicit and understandable, and the educators will proceed to the appropriate methodological design of their projects with confidence.

Erasmus+ school-project approaches

1. EU-centered approach

As its name denotes, an EU-centered approach to project planning in Erasmus+ educational projects refers to the emphasis of the project work on issues, challenges and interventions connected primarily with the EU, as areas of study and innovative change at educational contexts. Obviously, this perspective is of central importance to Erasmus+ programs as it prompts projects that start from the heart of these programs, the EU, constantly rotate around it and give the EU back a benefit.

More specifically, it can raise the statistically "low level of knowledge ability of the European citizens on basic European affairs" (Spring Eurobarometer 2016, no 85; in

EACEA, 2018:79), forward the adoption of EU values in practice, and support individuals in acquiring abilities essential for democratic co-existence, employment and lifelong learning, and in developing the European identity of a humanitarian, active citizen with an orientation to tolerance and self-development. In this way, it can mobilize the full potential of education and culture in an area which the European Commission has envisaged as a European Education Area (Asderaki, 2018; in EACEA, 2018) and consequently reinforce the establishment of the EU more firmly locally and internationally.

Embracing such an approach in practice may indicatively mean that the program is inspired by the teacher"s and the learners" wish to get informed about the EU in terms of what it is and does, its goals and priorities, its activities in the world, its institutions and the way they function, and current developments in European integration. Or, the class can set out to work on the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights, with the aim to identify themselves with them, adopt the relevant behavioral patterns, and spread the values within the local community and upscale the community"s profile to that of EU societies characterized by inclusion, tolerance, solidarity, justice and non-discrimination. Similarly, they can address challenges faced at local and/or EU level that can affect the EU citizens negatively and/or threaten democracy, like migration, the rise of populism, nationalistic tendencies, radicalism, xenophobia, social exclusion, bullying, the risk of computer illiteracy, internationalization, and change of moral standards, with a view to thinking about ways to contributing successfully to the restoration of the situation and bringing about change.

In particular within the T4E framework, EU centeredness is reflected by the restricting thematic scheme provided to program participants, which comprises the issues of fostering knowledge about the EU (origins, functioning, policies, strategies), enhancing understanding and ownership of EU values and fundamental rights, and appreciating democratic culture as a basic EU value with the ultimate aim to become mainstreamed in the curriculum. Furthermore, it is mirrored in the six themes given, i.e. that of knowledge of EU issues, EU democratic values, human rights, diversity, global citizenship, and digital literacy and online behavior.

2. Interdisciplinary approach

"Interdisciplinarity" can be defined as the process in which information, methods, techniques, insights and analytical frameworks from more than one academic discipline are used and combined during a task, like that of a project, with the aim to examine a theme, issue, topic and/or question, as well as to draw connections and relations among the content of each discipline, synthesize and integrate all the contents into a more complete, unified coherent framework of analysis, and thus secure a more complete study (Goldsmith, 2018; Matsagouras,2002; Warwick International Higher Education Academy, 2019). As such, interdisciplinary education should by no means be confused with multi- or with cross-disciplinary teaching, since the concentrated effort for the systematic integration of disciplinary points of view is absent from the other two.

Due to its nature, this approach is particularly suitable for the study and elaboration of complex themes that can be understood through the combined perspectives of more than one field (Warwick International Higher Education Academy, 2019), and for the achievement of outcomes that comprise challenging interventions in individuals and viable

policy responses. Its application generally demands informing the project with the knowledge and practices of a number of scientific disciplines, each one of which can contribute to the content matter of the project. It also means supporting learners in combining ideas, framing notions coherently and coming to a more complete rather than fragmental understanding of the issue and theme examined.

In this sense, the interdisciplinary approach answers the question about which academic discipline should undertake the process of informing students about sophisticated issues like the EU, sustainability, bullying, inequality, racism, and democracy, and of preparing them for meaningful participation in democracy. As a consequence, it averts the danger seen by Newton (2009) in that a single disciplinary focus may mislead someone to eschew the teaching of skills and knowledge that are central to teaching democracy, assuming that it is someone else''s job.

For instance, expected project outcomes that consist of the acquisition of new behavior patterns pertaining to democracy, like the skills of empathy, of cooperation, of critical thinking and of powerful oral argumentation, may well require the teaching, deep understanding, and ownership of new knowledge and of new abilities from a multitude of academic fields, like Lexicography (for perceiving new notions correctly), Applied Linguistics (for teaching communication skills), Psychology (for understanding individual negative behaviors and their causes, and for selecting efficient management techniques for intervention), Sociology (for comprehending social behavior, society and social interactions), European Studies (for mastering EU issues), Literature and Arts (for discovering EU culture), and Political Studies (for learning about and comprehending governmental systems and political thinking, and for training in political decision making). Educators should also consider seriously the large contribution of the Pedagogical Sciences and of Education to project design and implementation, since they can provide instructors with theories of learning, of teaching and of material development, as well as of other disciplines that fall under these overarching terms, like Primary Education, Secondary Education, Physical Education, Foreign Language Education, or Music Education, each one of which can guide teaching priorities and/or tell what knowledge to impart, what skills to teach and how to teach these skills, depending on the learners'' profile and the theories of the teaching and learning embraced in each school curriculum.

3. Cross-curricular approach

Cross-curricularity pertains to the use and interconnection of different knowledge learning areas (i.e. school subjects) for the exploration of an issue; in this manner, it draws connections between silos of knowledge and skills as social constructs. As a project roadway, it starts from the belief that all fields and sources of knowledge are significant to learning in a psychological and socio-cultural perspective (NSWDET, 2003; Roy, 2016) and so hold an equal status. Moreover, it represents the view that by drawing links between and across various knowledge domains, the construction of meaning can be built more effectively, understanding can be allowed, and knowledge can be facilitated. Last, but not least, it reflects the view that it is necessary to engage learners in looking for, acquiring and using knowledge that comes from a variety of sources in a realistic (and not artificial) way, as well as to encourage them to merge experiences into their notional schemes in order to broaden and deepen their understanding of themselves and of the world (Beane, 1995).

Teaching experience has proved that cross-curricularity has the potential to restrict the segregation of knowledge silos and the continuation of the traditional precedence of certain school subjects over others in the hierarchy of knowledge. Besides this, it can also result in procedures that raise subconscious awareness in learners and teachers of the need to observe development in discrete life areas and, in their role of the future entrepreneurs, to adapt to new changes in technology, laws, regulations, and culture. Additionally, learning can be made more meaningful and more motivating, and learner development can be reinforced, not to mention the fact that teachers can enjoy the luxury of not having to re-teach what their learners have already learnt and acquired in other school subjects (Roy, 2016).

In practical terms, from this perspective, the project structure should not result from accidental choices, but have an inherent cohesion in terms of issues, themes, aims and activities/task. According to Matsagouras (2002), it means placing the theme (issue) as a part of the real world in the center, breaking it down to the aspects of real life in which it can be studied, relating each of these aspects with a relevant knowledge area, integrating the distinct pieces of information and examining the topic globally. The class is expected not just to cooperate with the teacher in selecting the issue, but also to participate in a fruitful learning environment by identifying how each theme dimension relates with the others, recording these relations in various forms (e.g. in spider graphs, mind maps, or Tables) and doing a series of activities and tasks that encourage the continuous search for the acquisition of new knowledge, the development of new abilities, and the creative use of both.

4. Student-centric approach

A simple, comprehensive definition of student-centeredness in project design may be placing the learners‟ profiles at the forefront of teaching (e.g. age, interests, needs, feelings, emotions, abilities, hindrances) and informing the teaching and learning procedures accordingly, with the aim of gradually passing the balance of responsibility to the learners and making them the principal actors of the project and thus of their development.

Embracing the learner-centered approach in an Erasmus+ program like the T4E program has emerged from the program goals to inspire learners towards the long-lasting acquisition of knowledge and skills and support them in developing the new identity of the active democratic citizen, not just as a pedagogic process, but mainly as a modus vivendi and a worldview (EACEA, 2018). Following this, one can see the theoretical underpinning to this approach in a number of major theories and schools of thought dominant in educational psychology and related with the wish of the coordinators of the Erasmus+ program for constructive, autonomous, motivated learning and acquisition for a lifetime.

Specifically, first we recall Skinner‟s claims (1957, 1987; in Williams & Burden, 1997), which remind us of the importance of environmental factors for learning (the classroom environment being an obvious case of these) and of the need to facilitate and improve learning, adapt procedures to individualized learning pace, and provide positive reinforcements to success. Then, we think of Piaget‟s constructivist view to learning (Williams & Burden, 1997; Wood, 1998), which confirms the central place of learners in the learning process by providing a meticulous account of the decisive developmental stages that explain what learners can and cannot do at certain ages, and emphasizing

individual action during the learner-driven construction of personal meaning from experiences, the employment of mental strategies to sort out the systems to be learnt, self-directed problem-solving and the discovery of the way(s) they can control the world and of the consequences of their actions. Bruner (Williams & Burden, 1997) adds value to this approach by emphasizing the importance of the purposeful education of the whole person in a project, so that learners can become better adults, of learning how to learn as a "key to transferring what was learned from one situation to another" (ibid: 24), and of a flexible balanced lesson plan that "allows learners to discover principles, concepts and facts for themselves" (ibid: 26).

To the above, Vygotsky"s social integrationist theory can be added (Wood, 1998), which explains successful learning as the outcome of meaningful interaction with people, of instructive mediation by the adult and of the learners" realization about how they manage can their own activities to learn. Information processing theorists as well (e.g. Atkinson and Shiffrin, Schank and Abelson; in Williams & Burden, 1997) turn the teachers" concern to learning factors, like attention, perception and memory, that they should consider while planning, and provide explanations and solutions to the encounter of related problems. Of course, we should not fail to mention the contribution of humanistic approaches to the studentcentered project approach offered here, as these viewpoints underline the enormous significance that should be attached during projects to the learners" inner world and individual needs, thoughts, feelings and emotions (see more in Williams & Burden, 1997).

Practically speaking, the instructional structure derived should provide strong evidence in the project record of teacher decision-making adapted to the „how my learners learn" question. To highlight this, mention could be made to evidence showing students doing complex thinking, drawing links between school subjects, interacting with others, constructing meaning out of their experiences, making queries, making choices for themselves in what/how they will learn, applying knowledge and abilities to new contexts, making suggestions, communicating and amplifying their voices, debating, taking initiatives, working at own pace, doing field research, creating, reflecting, evaluating, doing purposeful formal and informal activities, carrying out differentiated tasks, making mistakes, being assigned roles, being positively reinforced, and last, but not least in a list that can be very long, working autonomously.

5. Competence-oriented approach

Developments in theories of learning, which give rise to the student-centric approach to project design and overall to learning, coupled with the continuous appearance of new developments in Europe and the whole world, signal the need for individuals in the EU (and beyond) to get equipped and display, individually and collectively, competences in learning throughout their life so as to be able to adapt to new challenges and support Europe in recovering and reinforcing its strengths in the world (Lakerveld and Zoote, 2013); where, in light of the definitions given by European bodies and educational experts, a competence is a holistic synthesis of the interrelated components of knowledge, of skills (as overt behavioral repertoire) and of value (including values, beliefs and attitudes), which can be learned and acquired through systematic effort.

The above views lead to the competence-oriented approach to project planning in Erasmus+ educational programs, which places high value not merely on what learners (as future EU

citizens) will learn, but also on what they will be capable of doing with this knowledge and whether they will be able to continue developing themselves. Consequently, project design should involve selecting the knowledge areas classes will work on (see EUcentered approach above), abilities and tactics (respectively called „skills" and „strategies") the learners will need to develop and acquire to understand the learning task or the problem they are confronted with and learn, as well as values, beliefs and attitudes they will need to adopt to become active, democratic citizens.

Within the domain of this approach, European bodies have specified eight key competences for lifelong learning and for personal fulfillment, active citizenship, social inclusion, and employability (European Commission, 2010), on which the instructional design of Erasmus+ participants should focus; namely, communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression. Nevertheless, since each of the above competences entails certain skills and/or sub-skills, either generic or transversal, educators are further expected to cater for the development and acquisition of these too.

This plan for learner training in skills ought to be differentiated and tailor-made to student needs, on the basis of Bruner"s claim that individuals do not use the same way to reason and solve problems, but adopt various strategies "that differ in scope, power and efficiency" (Wood, 1998: 9). Moreover, given that Piaget accepts "the importance of a fluent, articulate command of language to foster the transition from concrete to operational thinking" and claims that "verbal reasoning is a major vehicle or medium upon which logical operations operate" (Wood, 1998: 183-184), in an Erasmus+ project plan, educators should put "language and communication (and, hence, instruction) at the core of intellectual and personal development" (Vygotsky, 1962; in Wood, 1998: 11) and, as follows, give priority to the acquisition of knowledge about the language one thinks in and to the development of communicative competence in this language.

Especially in regard to the acquisition of EU values and the development of democratic citizenship, which comprise the keystone of the Erasmus+ T4E program, the competenceoriented approach generates the demanding teacher task of breaking down each wished behavior type into the competences it entails and then designing a meticulous training program for the acquisition of each competence. This could be illustrated with the competence of engaging with friends in democratic dialogue, which is found to be essential as a training focus for a large number of students at all ages. So, the acquisition of this competence should involve practice and learning at the following levels (based on Council of Europe, 2016):

Level 1: Knowledge, critical understanding and appreciation of the notion „democracy" (e.g. what it is, why it is crucial, what are the pros, what dangers it entails).

Level 2: Skills; i.e. the development of abilities overtly exhibited while performing the specific complex pattern in terms of thinking and behaving, in order to adapt to situational demands (e.g. listening and speaking skills like giving time to others to express themselves, avoiding interruption, and giving and taking the floor in appropriate ways, and affective skills like empathy).

Level 3:Values; i.e. general beliefs about the behavior type in focus learners should get acquainted with, accept and adopt, as well as use them as guiding principles for deciding how to act (e.g. learning to value human dignity, cultural diversity and equality).

Level 4: Attitude, as a general orientation towards someone or something (e.g. openness to other opinions, respect, and tolerance of ambiguity).

Similarly, teachers should also include learner training in learning strategies, which are important for active, self-driven and rewarding learning too, like the memory strategy of creating mental linkages, the cognitive strategy of analyzing and reasoning, the compensation strategy of overcoming limitations in speaking and writing, the metacognitive strategy of centering learning, the affective strategy of taking one"s emotional temperature, and the social strategy of empathizing with others (Oxford, 1990).

6. Whole-school approach

The principal characteristic of the whole-school approach to project design is that it promotes and facilitates cooperation, the exchange of practices and networking within a school, and/or between schools located in the same or different catchment area. It can involve neighboring classes and schools, teaching staff, regional community teachers, parents and families, local authorities, and even stakeholders, educational authorities, policy stakeholders, and NGOs.

The approach has developed from the necessity to address a challenging issue that relates to systemic problems at school level and/or community level, like bullying, stereotypical notions, gender issues, racism, and limited awareness of EU issues. As such, by definition, it directs intervention towards the wider context the school belongs to, rather than just to individuals in a classroom, with the aim to achieve intervention and policy change, and raise quality and standards across the entire institution and/or community. Additionally, it has been dictated by the objectives of Erasmus+ programs like the T4E program, because it can contribute to inclusive and equal active, democratic citizenship at a more global level, reflecting thus organic, real life conditions.

Project practices involving the whole school community can prove to be successful for instance in multiplying EU knowledge, spreading values through joint activities, reinforcing interpersonal communication, encouraging teacher collaborations across and beyond a school and, consequently, laying the foundations for "cross-border, sustainable and long-lasting teacher networks", promoting "social and civic competences in students" (EACEA, 2018: 79), and supporting the adoption of democratic behavior patterns that enhance mutual understanding, respect and intercultural dialogue. But what is more, they can also create the conditions for applying a bottom-up approach to the formation of educational policy, with schools playing a crucial role in this.

Conclusion

This article has been addressed to educators, teacher trainers, and ambassadors and coordinators of Erasmus+ educational programs like that of the Erasmus+ KA3 program "Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture (2018-2021)", who wish to design, implement and disseminate innovative project practices that provide increased

opportunities for learning about the EU, spreading EU democratic values, acquiring skills and knowledge for a lifetime, becoming conscious democratic citizens and contributing to policy reforms in education.

Having seen the goals set in Erasmus+ programs, and the objectives and aims set in the specific T4E program, readers were provided with details on the core educational Erasmus+ views and the educational theories that underpin the six basic teaching and learning approaches to quality Erasmus+ projects; namely, the EU-centered approach, the interdisciplinary approach, the cross-curricular approach, the student-centric approach, the competence-oriented approach and the whole-school approach. The definition and evaluation of each approach, the specification of the underlying scientific parameters and the brief methodological implications provided are understood to help readers to perceive the nature of each approach clearly and to proceed with confidence to the design of innovative instructional structures (i.e. projects plans) transferable to daily school life.

The approaches presented are claimed, on the basis of teaching experience and experience with Erasmus+ programs, to satisfy program requirements and contribute to the high standards set by program coordinators. They can also ensure positive results in the internal and external evaluation of the program by fulfilling the criteria which we believe pertain to high quality practices in education; i.e. relevance to the educational aims set within the Erasmus+ program (e.g. relevance to EU challenges, issues and themes selected, to EU values, to the methodological frameworks and techniques embraced, and to the promotion of networking and school collaborations), pedagogical quality (in terms e.g. of pedagogical formulation, construction and strategies, teacher and learner evaluation, project aims, learning outcomes, competences to be developed and development of ICT skills), didactic quality (in terms of e.g. scope and sequence, curriculum connections, methodology, relevance to learner needs, learning activities, learning content, coherent lesson planning and motivational power), project efficiency, effectiveness and impact (e.g. quality of results achieved, project contribution to EU-oriented pedagogy, learning and education policy making, real-world applicability, and immediate value for teachers, students and communities), project sustainability (i.e. likelihood of forming the basis for the design of more classroom projects and being continued within the same/similar or divergent classroom settings), project dissemination, and academic and technical quality, where applicable (i.e. respectively, richness of information, information reliability and information relevance, and integrity in the design, browsing and technology selected).

In conclusion, the six approaches proposed as the foundations of Erasmus+ programs are very likely to ensure successful classroom applications addressed to various target groups, which can create a bottom-up EU - "as a counter model to the top-down Europe, the Europe of elites and technocrats" (Delor et al, 2012)-, where students and teachers decide, design, try out, and upscale, and finally are enabled to make effective, tried-out proposals to their local program coordinator for the improvement of the current educational policies. At a larger scale, the decentralized evidence-based recommendations can be put together to comprise a proposal for policy making at EU level, with the aim to confront current EU challenges successfully and strengthen the position of the EU.

Hence, we can respond successfully to what Jacques Delors et al (2012) wrote, by paraphrasing J.F. Kennedy: "Don't ask what Europe can do for you but ask what you can do for Europe – by doing Europe!" (ibid).

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6.2. EU- funded projects on online Education

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Abstract

The main purpose of the present survey is to present the main EU- funded projects that have been developed in order for pupils and educators to face the new challenges emerged due to Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, the paper will shed light to the recent developments, in online Education and the prospects for a successful treatment of this global crisis. The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 made the need for preventive and corrective measures in Education imperative for Member States, in order to prevent disruption to the provision of education and training services. The estimates emerged from this survey show that the speed of a recovery based alone on the national efforts of the Member States would be insufficient to address the urgent mobility problems and for learners and educators. This survey concludes that the EU's role in facing the current crisis is crucial, in order for Member States to overcome the recent challenges in Education and Training. Thus, a top down – driven recovery plan in these fields is crucial for the crisis to be withdrawn and in this context, EU will prove its determination and ability to deal with and prevent any challenges arises within its borders and beyond.

Key words: EU policy, Online learning, Educational resources and tools, Covid-19,

Contents: 1. Introduction, 2. The European Commission's reaction in the Covid-19 emerged crisis, 3. EU-funded projects, 4. Conclusions, 5. References.

1. Introduction

EU Member States, having the main responsibility in the fields of national education and training system, daily undertake actions in line to the need for design and further exploitation of educational issues during the pandemic period. During the worldwide spread of COVID-19 pandemic, it was made for Member States clear that they should impose preventive and corrective measures in Learning, in order to prevent disruption to the provision of education and training services. Lot of research has been conducted so far in the Education and Training fields, reflecting the need for enhancement of the competences and the methods used for online Education, which is the protagonist in the times of social distancing.

Issues such as "creativity theories and related teachers' beliefs" (Saracho, 2012), creative problem solving in Education (Hu et al., 2017), "teaching styles and achievement" (Hidalgo- Cabrillana and Lopez-Mayan, 2018) and "creative teaching methods" (Rong et al., 2019) have already concerned the academic community in recent years. Nowadays, the emphasis has been given on more recent challenges on education and in particular, on

creative alternative teaching methods and perspectives for teaching methodology in time of social distancing. It is obvious that the pandemic created challenges, but also perspective for teaching environments. Developing teaching skills in time of social distancing is nowadays in the agenda of Education in times of Covid-19. Much of the recent research has dealt with the modern methods of education need for Learning and several researches has been conducted, during the last year, as regards the teaching methods and learning practice, mostly in the fields of education (Di Pietro, et al. 2020; Azevedo, et al. 2020) and health/medicine (Zhou, et al. 2020; Sandhu, De Wolf, 2020).

In these difficult times, EU member states were called to take the appropriate reforms in order to overcome the impact of COVID-19 on education and to face all challenges raised. The estimates emerged from this survey show that the speed of a recovery based alone on the national efforts of the Member States would be insufficient to address the urgent mobility problems and for learners and educators. In the fields of education and training, EU holds a supportive role and contributes to the enhancement of such competence areas. In particular, aims to create initiatives focusing in several education-related areas, such as "early childhood education and care", "school policy", "vocational Education and Training", "adult learning", "higher education", "international cooperation and policy dialogue", "multilingualism" and "education and migrants" (About education and training policies, n.d.). This survey will shed light to the actions that EU has predicted and applied in this field and in particular, aims to present the EU online sources and tools and mainly the EU- funded projects that have been developed in order for pupils and educators to face the new challenges emerged due to Covid-19 pandemic. Particularly, in the next section is presented the Commission's reaction on Education during the outbreak of Covid-19.

2. The European Commission's reaction in the Covid-19 emerged crisis

Recently, a new strategy at European level has been developed by 2025, consisting of a first package of measures reflecting the need for enhancing key competences for lifelong learning, digital skills and common values and inclusive education The Commission has proposed also a second package of initiatives highlighting the key role of Education and Training, youth and culture in building the future of Europe. (European Education Area, 2020). The reform of the Digital Education Action Plan implemented in mid-2020 further supported the online learning at different education levels across Europe (Coronavirus: online learning resources, n.d.) - and why action is needed in this field? Through this EU policy will be given access to computers and broadband to several low-income homes, a basic level of digital skills will be achieved for all European citizens and the online learning and the use of digital technologies will further be enhanced.

Due to the recent challenges emerged by the COVID-19 pandemic, EU was forced to take more action in order to enhance member states to overcome the difficulties in remote Education. The European Commission supports innovation in education through a series of initiatives, such as University Business Cooperation and the University-Business Forum; Heinnovate; Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Higher Education, HEInnovate reports; Knowledge Alliances; Higher Education for Smart Specialisation (HESS); Digital Education Action Plan, Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment; European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT); Entrepreneurship Education (About innovation in education, n.d.). In this terms, several

online and offline digital tools could contribute to overcome the emerged challenges. In particular, these digital tools could serve a series of educational purposes, summarized in the following aspects: a) an interconnection among learners and educators when they are stated in different locations; b) facilitation of information access that are not easily available for learners and educators and c) a flexible pedagogical educational support of educators (Coronavirus: online learning resources, n.d.).

In this context, aiming to reassure continuity in education and training activities within all educational institutions, EU take advantage of mostly two categories of online learning materials: online platforms and EU-funded projects. (Coronavirus: online learning resources, n.d.). Before proceeding to the presentation of the EU-funded projects, which is the main topic of the present paper, it is appropriate to make a brief reference to the EU online platforms. In particular, there is a range of online EU-supported platforms for teachers and educators during the outbreak of COVID-19. These are: School Education Gateway, eTwinning, Learning Corner, SALTO-YOUTH, Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), EU Code Week. (Coronavirus learning resources: online platforms, n.d.). In the following section are presented the EU-funded projects created.

3. EU-funded projects

The EU-funded projects utilized during the outbreak of COVID-19, provided several online resources and tools for learners, teachers and educators provided, the majority of which are presented below (Coronavirus learning resources: EU-funded projects, n.d.):

1) EduHack

The "EduHack" programme is a capacity-building programme, consisted of free online courses. It is designed to help university educators to produce digitally-supported learning acknowledge and to provide them with creative models and approaches, which would foster collaborative learning and student engagement. (The EduHack Toolbox, 2020). The online workshop for the EduHack took place on July 7th, 2020.

2) Penji protects the planet

The "Penji protects the planet" project is a game-based learning activity for primary and secondary students, in order to teach them the importance of environmental sustainability.

3) Bio talent

The "Bio talent project" is an e-learning platform, offering a free course for science educators, nature guides and anyone interested in biodiversity. This project has been created in terms of the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy and in particular the goals for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

4) BINGO

"Bingo" project provides two educational videos on bio-control methods in Agriculture

5) Yummy Physics

"Yummy Physics" project provides one video series as regards the physics of food.

6) Sundial

"Sundial" project provides five online lessons on various astronomical issues. Those lessons are developed for children between 8 to 12 years old and teachers of primary education.

7) Open Mind

"Open Mind" project is created to provide a Massive online open course (MOOC) on "Social Entrepreneurship". It refers mostly to female learners and students without a business theoretical background. This MOOC and the related innovative gamified online platform will enhance skills that will help participants to overcome the recent challenges.

8) Code n' Social

In the framework of the "Code n' Social" project has been created an interactive learning platform, which aims to enhance technological and ICT learning skills. It refers mainly to those at risk of social exclusion and poverty.

9) CREATIONS project

The "CREATIONS" project provides tools and links for those interested to facilitate in creative science education.

10) Go-Lab Initiative

The "Go-Lab Initiative" project aims to promote the utilization of science education in schools through online laboratories and inquiry learning applications.

11) Scientix

"Scientix" is the community for science education in Europe, aiming to promote and support collaboration among STEM teachers, professionals, policymakers and researches. Through "Scientix" are organized several courses and a series of webinars on STEM education.

12) Up2U

"Up2U" project aims to enhance and promote online learning in these challenging times. It refers to all educational institutions, aiming to offer tools and educational material for remote learning.[11]

13) Together Old and Young (Toy)

"Toy" project is referring to an online course which aims to develop skills in intergenerational learning. In particular, its purpose is to bring together children 4 to 8 years old and older adults, in order to share knowledge, values, etc.

14) Mutual Open and Online Skills (MOOS)

"MOOS" project aims to improve the use of ICT, in high schools level in order to stimulate new learning approaches, through open education resources.

15) European Distance and e-Learning Network (EDEN)

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[11] https://up2university.eu/open/

"EDEN" project aims to facilitate understanding amongst e-learning professionals and distance, sharing knowledge and promoting practice and policy across Europe.

16) European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)

"EADTU" project, is supporting teaching in line with higher education institutes in order to enhance online education, in order to face any challenges emerged due to Covid-19 pandemic.

5. Conclusions

Passing to the results of this research, it could be pointed out that the recent Covid-19 pandemic brought to light new perspectives for online Education. It became clear that several adjustments should be made in educational national and EU strategies, which would have a significant impact on students' learning experience (Hill, Fitzgerald, 2020). Both national and EU policies on Education and Training seek not only to explore new educational methods but also to improve the initiative of students to learn independently and enhance their competences in order to deal with these challenging times. Improving and modernizing education is a key priority for the EU and its member states (About innovation in education, n.d.). Digital technology is considered the key component of this effort. (Digital technologies - actions in response to coronavirus pandemic, n.d.).

The Covid-19 pandemic forced all of us to find alternatives ways of working, interacting and living. The European Commission has been working to coordinate, complement and initiate measures to deal with every aspect of the pandemic, taking advantage of digital, media and telecoms, aspects that play a vital role in times of social distancing. This paper concludes that the EU's role in facing the current pandemic crisis is crucial, in order for member states to overcome the recent challenges in Education and Training. Thus, a top down – driven recovery plan in these fields is crucial for the crisis to be withdrawn. In response to the immediate emergency challenges, many acts were adopted in EU level, nevertheless, in the years to come, EU shall take more action and prove its determination and ability to deal with and prevent any challenges arises within its borders and beyond.

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European Commission (2020). The EduHack Toolbox (2020). Available at: https://eduhack.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EduHack-Toolbox-v5-FINAL.pdf

Relevant material:

Open EU Educational resources

"EduHack" online courses: https://eduhack.eu/course/

"BIOTALENT" e-learning platform (the blended e-learning biodiversity training programme): http://penjiithegame.com/

"Penji protects the planet" game-based learning activity on environmental sustainability: http://penjiithegame.com/

"Bingo" Biological Control in Agriculture educational videos: https://www.bingo-itn.eu/en/bingo/show/Biological-Control-in-Agriculture-educational-videos.htm

"Yummy Physics" video series. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTzDRqEBy03-BjKkBIYFt8w

"Sundial H2020 Innovative Training Network" Educational materials: https://www.astro.rug.nl/~sundial/outreach.php

"Open Mind" online platform and available Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) http://open-mind-project.eu/project-outputs/

"Code n' Social" interactive learning platform: https://codensocial.eu/en/learning-platform

"CREATIONS" Developing an Engaging Science Classroom- the project : http://creations-project.eu/resources/

"CREATIONS" Developing an Engaging Science Classroom- Portal on Open Discovery Space: https://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu/en/creations

"Go-Lab Initiative" – the project https://nextlab.golabz.eu/initiative

"Go-Lab Initiative" - Ecosystem for teachers: https://www.golabz.eu/

"Scientix" the community for science education in Europe – resources: http://www.scientix.eu/resources

"Scientix" the community for science education in Europe – the moodle: http://moodle.scientix.eu/

"Scientix" the community for science education in Europe – the webinars: http://www.scientix.eu/live/scientix-webinars

"Up2U" project - learning platform: https://learn.up2university.eu/

"Toy"online course: http://www.toyproject.net/project/toy-online-course/

"MOOS" learning platform: http://www.moos-online.eu/

"EDEN" webinar series: Education in time of a pandemic: https://www.eden-online.org/covid-webinar-series/

"EADTU" online teaching resources: https://empower.eadtu.eu/coronacrisis