George A. Koulaouzides & Dina Soeiro (eds.)

REIMAGINING TRANSFORMATIVE AND EMANCIPATORY ADULT EDUCATION FOR A WORLD TO COME

Proceedings of the 1st Conference of the ESREA Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education Network (5-7 July 2023, Hellenic Open University, Patras, Greece)

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CONTENTS

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The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (www.esrea.org)

ESREA is a European scientific society. It was established in 1991 to provide a European-wide forum for all researchers engaged in research on adult education and learning, and to promote and disseminate theoretical and empirical research in the field. Since 1991 the landscape of adult education and learning has changed to include more diverse learning contexts at formal and informal levels. At the same time there has been a policy push by the European Union, OECD, UNESCO, and national governments to promote a policy of lifelong learning. ESREA provides an important space for these changes and (re)definition of adult education and learning in relation to research, theory, policy, and practice to be reflected upon and discussed. This takes place at the triennial conference, network conferences and through the publication of books and a journal.

ESREA Research Networks

The major priority of ESREA is the encouragement of co-operation between active researchers in the form of thematic research networks, which encourage interdisciplinary research drawing on a broad range of the social sciences.

   These research networks hold annual/biennial seminars and conferences for the exchange of research results and to encourage publications.

   The current active ESREA networks are:

1. Access, Learning Careers, and Identities
2. Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning
3. Adult Educators, Trainers, and Their Professional Development
4. Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Communities
5. Education and Learning of Older Adults
6. Gender and Adult Learning
7. History of Adult Education and Training in Europe
8. Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education
9. Life-history and Biography
10. Migration, Transnationalism, and Racisms
11. Policy Studies in Adult Education
12. Working Life and Learning
13. Spaces, Times, and the Rhythms of the Education of Adults and its Movements

ESREA Journal

ESREA publishes a scientific open access journal entitled The European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA). All issues of the journal can be read at www.rela.ep.liu.se. You can also find more information about call for papers and submission procedures on this website.

The Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education Network (TEAE)

Facing crisis confronts us not only with the challenge but also with the possibility to learn, grow, change and at times even transform our deep structures. In times of crises – such as the climate crisis, structural racism, or a pandemic – there is a need to transform our taken for granted ways of knowing and being in the world, this promises an opportunity for emancipation. The idea of adult education (lat. *educere*) as a way forward, *leading out* from the crises we currently experience, is at the heart of our network. As such, the ESREA Network Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education is concerned with researching and promoting ways of learning and "leading out".

The mission of the "*Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education*" ESREA Network is to promote a space for enhancing international dialogue and research on transformative and emancipatory adult education. Our aim is to co-create a vital community in Europe that is devoted to cultivating research, scholarships, and projects about how learning can promote personal, societal, and global transformations.

Potential themes (but not limited to) that will be explored are:

- Critical traditions of transformative and emancipatory adult education
- Theories of and research methods for transformative and emancipatory learning
- Theory and practice of transformative and emancipatory adult education

Having as a basis the theoretical framework of transformative learning that was developed in 1978 by Jack Mezirow, the "*Transformative Processes in Learning and Education*" network, which recently ceased its operation, focused on the processes of transformative learning, and organized several conferences (in Athens in 2014 and 2016, and in Milan in 2018), where it brought together researchers and scholars from different countries. The "*Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education*" Network is also rooted in the idea of transformation and the tradition of transformative learning, and will emphasize the emancipatory potential of adult education. Our aim is to establish a vital community of researchers, scholars, and practitioners that will cooperate in order to increase the impact of transformative and emancipatory learning in the community of adult educators in Europe and in the rest of the world. Our scientific, ethical, and community principles, such as our co-creative and collaborative approaches, sociocratic leadership, openness, and transparency, as well as inclusion, diversity, and equity, provide our common ground for continuing to build a community of research and practice.

Convenors of the Network

Saskia Eschenbacher, Akkon University
George Koulaouzides, Hellenic Open University
Alessandra Romano, University of Siena
Dina Soeiro, Polytechnic University of Coimbra

THE THEME OF THE CONFERENCE

Reimagining Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education for a World to Come

In times of crises – such as the climate crisis, structural racism, social inequities, or a pandemic – there is a need to transform our taken for granted ways of knowing and being in the world, this promises an opportunity for emancipation. How can we re-imagine transformative and emancipatory adult learning to co-create a world to come? The idea of adult education (lat. *educere*) as a way forward, leading out from the crises we currently experience, is at the heart of our TEAE network. When we experience something truly transformative, deep, fundamental change, whether it is collectively or individually, we are losing our sense of (self-)direction and our way in the world. How can we regain a sense of (self-)direction? How can we lead ourselves -individually and/or collectively – out? What are possible pathways forward?

One way forward is concerned with radical questioning. In the midst of this global crisis, searching for ways forward it is "terrifying because it means giving up the familiar banisters and guidelines that we normally accept in orienting our lives; dangerous because, when such questioning is truly radical, it seems to leave us with nothing; liberating because it frees us from illusions and enables us to confront our subjectivity and inwardness without illusions" (Bernstein, 2016, p. 121)[1]. What motivates our efforts to learn in a transformative and emancipatory way? It is our quest for self-knowledge and our hope to imagine and co-create a new, more sustainable, inclusive, and just world. Facing crisis confronts us not only with the challenge but also with the possibility to learn, grow, change and at times even transform our deep structures. Starting from those questions, the conference invited theoretical and empirical contributions that attempted to shed new light on this topic.

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1   Bernstein, R. J. (2016). Ironic Life. Polity Press.

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Dear Participants of the 1ˢᵗ TEAE Network Conference,
Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure to present to all of you the Proceedings of our 1ˢᵗ Conference that was held in July 2023 at the premises of the Hellenic Open University at Patras. In these pages, you will embark on a journey through the diverse and dynamic landscape of contemporary knowledge, where leading minds have converged to explore, interrogate, and redefine the boundaries of transformative and emancipatory adult education. This collection of papers serves not only as a repository of the innovative ideas presented during the conference, but also as an invitation to join in the ongoing conversation that shapes the ever-evolving tapestry of understanding our complex field of theory and practice. As you immerse yourself in these proceedings, we encourage you to engage deeply with the nuanced perspectives, transformative practices, and groundbreaking research that collectively contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the fostering of intellectual curiosity.

The Proceedings of the 1st Conference of the ESREA Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education Network Conference are representative of the diverse geography of adult education. A geography where various themes interact and interfere with each other through a dynamic exploration of the intersections of individual learning, collective growth, and mutual transformation. In these pages you will have the opportunity to read about art and ecology as formative and transformative practice, about work and training transitions and the profound impact of Covid-19 on adult learners, especially in the context of smart working. You will encounter a fascinating array of topics, each contributing to the broader discourse on adult learning. From examining homeless people's career trajectories to discussing the outcomes of literacy interventions for adults with low literacy skills, the proceedings provide a platform to explore the multifaceted dimensions of adult education.

You will also read about the way that neighbourhood stores emerge as informal areas for learning and transformation, while you will also have the opportunity to critically examine and reconceptualize models of learning related to higher education. The role of critical thinking in teachers' engagement with gamification, the expansion of the Venetian civil society, and the dysfunctional assumptions in refugee parental involvement are among the critical discussions encapsulated in these proceedings. Second Chance Schools and migrant integration processes, Pasolini and his Manifesto Theatre, performative methodologies, spirituality, and transformative learning, all add depth to the exploration of alternative narratives for transformative and emancipatory adult learning.

Changes in self-directed learning due to the fast-growing internet and perspective transformation through adaptive teaching unfold as crucial areas of consideration. Moreover, the Kakalidis method, computational thinking, critical reflection through STEM education, and the ethical and political dimensions of critical reflection showcase the evolving landscape of adult education methodologies. Transformative learning theory in talent development processes, intercultural awareness in the community, and the experiences of refugee children take centre stage in addressing the challenges of our global society. From reflecting on the differences in motivation of adult migrants to participate in educational programs to women refugees confronting their past and regaining their future in a transformative way, these proceedings spotlight the transformative emancipatory potential of adult education.

These proceedings also offer an opportunity to explore how transformative pedagogy informs adult and higher education, how graffiti may become a tool for transformation, to develop an un-

derstanding of the way students reimagine themselves in relation to lifelong learning, but also an opportunity to discuss radicalization and violent extremism prevention through Freire's theories. A wonderful view on the power of education to foster dialogue, the role of embodiment in education and liberation is also discussed, while papers on the opportunities for transformation in dialogic spaces remind us that education is not just about acquiring knowledge but also about transforming our lives and our societies.

Join us on this intellectual journey as we explore the myriad facets of adult learning, seeking to inspire, challenge, and transform the way we think about adult education and its role in shaping our collective future.

Once again, we would like to thank all those who supported our effort to organize with such a success this conference. First of all, we would like to thank all the participants who came to Patras and presented their ideas. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Scientific Committee of the Conference and the Reviewers of the proposals, but also to express our deepest thanks to the Team of the Hellenic Open University that supported us during the days of the Conference.

We would also like to thank the Presidium of ESREA and the Italian Transformative Learning Network for their contribution to the success of this event. Finally, we would like to recognize the genuine support that we had from the Dean of the School of Humanities, Prof. Manolis Koutouzis and the President of the Hellenic Open University, Prof. Ioannis Kalavrouziotis. Thank you all for supporting us!

With these Proceedings, we would like to welcome you to our network!

Join us in a world of intellectual discovery and discourse!

The Convenors of the TEAE Network

Saskia Eschenbacher | George Koulaouzides | Alessandra Romano | Dina Soeiro

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic crisis has been considered by some pedagogists not as a destructive event of a functioning educational system, but as the possibility of participating in the transformation of learning models. In 2021-2022, the Department of Human Sciences of the University of Verona promoted the training course "Practices and cultures of difference in educational and care work" which was attended by 35 professionals of social-health and educational services. The course proposed to move away from 'expertism' to rethink the care of oneself, of places and of others, as a common good, thanks to an ecological perspective that questions the link between learning and the environment, between daily work and community life, art-based methodologies as levers for processes of transformative learning. The third module of the training course was titled "Know how: community art practices" and was held at the Mare Memoria Viva ecomuseum in Palermo. The artistic workshop of intensive two weeks contributed to the creation of a new space for cultural fruition: an Ecodom structure in Superadobe in the shape of a nest.

Key words: Community Art Practices, Caring and Learning, Ecomuseum, Adult Education.

Introduction

The pandemic radically challenged our understanding of interpersonal relationships: the bond between the corporeal dimension, emotional life, and spaces for living and learning. We were all suddenly expected to find a personal measure between risk, health, fragility, self-care, and the care of others. The strenuous and often unresolved search for this balance also manifests itself if we consider this shared experience as a widespread learning process, which results in two primary forms of collective conscientization regarding educational standards.

The first form involves educational systems which have actually been in a stagnant state for decades. Some pedagogists have come to consider the pandemic "crisis" as a breakthrough in possibilities of participating in the evolution of learning models rather than being a destructive event for an educational functioning model (Fullan 2020). The second showcases the pandemic as a form of awareness of human vulnerability, of an inevitable interdependence, and the uncertainty that is intrinsic in scientific knowledge. In the post-pandemic era, the dimensions of *"learning"* and *"caring"* have proven to be unquestionably connected. According to Formenti, the affinity between

caring and learning reveals that the core of adult (self) education is "the art of learning to care and caring to learn" (2009, p. 1). This convergence of horizons between learning to care and caring to learn opens a space of experience and knowledge that is largely relational and ecological. This means that neither learning nor care can be considered property: namely, the ability, competence, or success of the individual. Instead, they must be interpreted as qualities that co-emerge from systemic processes and from a certain type of dynamics of interaction with the self, with others, and with the living environment (Formenti, 2009). Which theoretical tendencies and methodologies can translate these widespread learning practices into training practices for adults who are involved in the cultural and socio-educational fields?

Feminist and transformative pedagogy: an ecological perspective

Feminist philosophy (Zamboni 2009; bell hooks 1994) and transformative pedagogy (Formenti 2017; Mortari 2003) have elaborated a prolific reflection on the themes of caring and relationships in formative processes. These theoretical visions advocate towards shifting away from "expertism" (Illich 2008) and rethinking self-care and the care of places and of others as a common good. Instead of a training and learning logic that is reduced to objectives, needs, gaps to be filled, namely based on repairing what does not work, it is a question of approaching a "systemic wisdom, which requires understanding the complexity and intrinsic circularity of the world, of things, of situations, of relationships, before (and instead of) wanting to change them." (Formenti 2017, p. 35)

In this sense, a valuable indication is given by the ecological perspective on learning and knowing (Ferrante, Galimberti & Gambacorti-Passerini 2022; Mortari 2003, 2007; Mannino 2017). The ecological paradigm distances itself from any form of learning that breaks down reality into a series of separately knowable entities and individuals, isolating them from the contexts and relationships in which they are involved. In relation to this concept, Mortari proposes to investigate reality in light of a sort of ontology of relationality: entities are involved in a single, infinite, and mysterious pattern of reciprocity and retroaction, and this network of relationships not only involves them but also contributes to forming the quintessence of their being. Understanding this radical interdependence means adopting a systemic approach towards searching for the connecting pattern. This pattern should be interpreted in vital and dynamic terms, like a "dance" between forms that come together, joined by processes of a constant reaction and generation. It is a dance of complexity that involves polarities, where what is apparently in contradiction comes into contact: relationship and separation, order and disorder, coexist outside the logic of cause-and-effect, immersed in multiple connections. Therefore, any gesture of knowledge in light of the ecological paradigm is anchored in the principle of contextualization, according to which each and every phenomenon must be considered both in its own logic as well as in dynamic relations with the logic of its environment. In this regard, the relationship between the active subject of knowledge and the known object falls through: the basic units of cognition should not be identified in the individual but in the unit of co-determination and the self, the other, and the environment. In the perspective of radical constructivism, the subject-object relationship is resolved in a structural pairing of co-emergence (Ferri 2021).

According to Bateson, being "responsive to the pattern that connects" is the aesthetic dimension par excellence that arises when I ask

myself: "How are you related to this creature? What pattern connects you to it?" (Bateson 1979, p.9). From this point of view, artistic practices, therefore, help shape the conditions for formative experimentation.

Community art practice as a chance for adult learning

The artistic dimension should be regarded as an aesthetic experience of complexity. As the Greek word "*aisthesis*" (perception) suggests, this pedagogical orientation refers to paths of embedded knowledge that avail themselves of perceptions and senses, resonances, and differences, and of the connection between the material, emotional, and intellectual dimensions involved in the learning process, recognizing existing interrelations and recurrences.

Formenti's "spiral of knowledge" (2017) proposes one of the formative approaches that integrates aesthetic-sensory elements. The spiral of knowledge is a model structured in four steps: The first is *authentic experience*, which allows us to come into contact with experience through narration, memory, philosophical practices, and bodily experiments.

The second is *aesthetic representation*, namely, the practice of transforming the authentic experience into a symbolic one, through which we attempt to restore more feeling than reason. The third, *intelligent understanding*, is the process of sense-making and meaning, starting from different representations to formulate a satisfying theory. It is on the basis of this theory that the fourth step, *deliberate action,* is taken. This consists of implementing the learning that developed from the process. For the purpose of reasoning, we will especially focus on the pedagogical value of the first two steps.

Experiential knowledge, intended as that fundamental level of connection with the world that makes us act and perceive its traits and ours, is the only one that allows us to find, introduce, and seek some truth and validity in our knowledge.

(Formenti 2017, p. 55)

Experience bases every desire for knowledge and transformation on the contact with a radical presence and memory: perform an act, rediscover a scent, work with materials, or sketch a drawn shape, are examples of actions that make the body feel and sense the beginning of a process. This authentic experience unpredictably spurs images, metaphors, intuitions, and stories, since they are not the result of reasoning nor of set goals. These will be the living materials of the second step: the aesthetic practice that gains leverage on what is perceivable and on the resonance of stories.

> The interacting body – perception, movement, feelings – is the foundation of all experiences. But what are the conditions for learning? Our theory is that the aesthetic experience may be educational, even transformative, for an adult if, and only if, it develops through a specific process; pedagogy where the subjective and the embodied are woven together with the relational and dialogical dimensions.
>
> (Formenti, Lusaschi & Del Negro 2019 p.126)

Highlighting the importance of the relational dimension in learning brings us back to the ecological dimension that holds together the intrasubjective, the intersubjective, and the transubjective: seeking and creating forms to

embody experience has the power to connect, create bonds, arouse resonances, and reveal traits of the pattern that connects us. This is indeed the primary meaning of the aesthetic gesture in a formative setting: weaving the relational dimension, entering into dialogue with the materials, acknowledging correspondences and distances, consonances, and dissonances, and always nourishing the feeling of our need for others.

Tracing the essence of art back to common, everyday experiences, through sensoriality and the relationship with the living environment, is the theoretical foundation for turning artistic practices into authentic learning incentives in formative contexts. In concrete terms, it means paying attention to how space and time is set up as a learning environment, how the senses are involved, and through what codes and what materials relationships are shaped. This is from where the idea of a relational aesthetic stems, of a form of art that takes as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interaction and its social context rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space. Overcoming the individual creative dimension is undeniably one of the most interesting aspects of community art, along with the question of the use of open and public spaces. This means shaping the need for a responsible and creative relationship with the places one inhabits and the desire to give value to community life.

More precisely, by "community art" (Sossai 2017) we mean a form of art that, starting from a shared inspiration, initiates a collective process of creation. In this kind of practice, the creation site is public and open. It is found in spaces visited by those who have helped envision the work and who want to participate in making it real. This implies that its creation is not only entrusted to a stable nucleus of people and artists who have conceived it, but also to all those who, for various reasons, are called to take part in it. What happens unpredictably in the space-time of the creation of the work acquires a fundamental value. The experiences of those who participate are named and described in the informal spaces of dialogue that accompany working and resting moments. They are also re-elaborated and documented through a shared daily journal or through poetry, photography, and videos. Accordingly, the learning of certain techniques that are required for creating the work goes hand in hand with the exchange of sensations, memories, stories, and reflections. What especially stirs emotions and enlivens discussions, analyses, and the re-elaboration of the process is a set of elements: the relationship with the materials and techniques that are being learned and used; the beauty and effort of teamwork, often carried out at a very intense pace; the difficulties and the technical, material, and economic decisions of the project; the introspection and contemplation of questions that emerge from group relationships and from the symbolic power of the form of the work; the shared transformation of the environment in which the object materializes.

A nest for the community that will be

Between 2021 and 2022, the Department of Human Sciences of the University of Verona initiated a continuing education program called "*Practices and Cultures of Difference in Educational and Care Work*", which 35 professionals from social-health services and educational services attended. The training course focused on the fact that the established practices of social work often fail, therefore, exposing professionals to the unexpected, to crises, and to the need to create.

The Covid-19 pandemic made this impact even more blatant, and it made relationships in work and life environments increasingly complex, threatening the already fragile social fabric of many Italian cities. This, therefore, made

it necessary to propose formative methodologies that could address the widespread experiences of loss and vulnerability, and the need to nourish trust in community bonds and hope in the present.

The third and final module of the program, "*Know-how: Practices of Community Art*", was held at the Ecomuseo Mare Memoria Viva in Palermo. It was not merely a temporary alternative preferred over the confined and hardly inhabitable academic spaces of the lecture halls during the pandemic, but rather a precise pedagogical choice that aimed at expanding the sometimes-narrow models of social work to a community horizon.

An ecomuseum is a cultural space founded on the agreement of citizens who choose to look after a territory in which the notions of care and sustainable transformation are central. Selecting the word "transformation" over "development" emphasizes an adhesion to those movements that aim at radically problematizing the model of neoliberal, colonial, and patriarchal development which led to the present-day mood and social crisis. An ecomuseum is a community place where processes of co-creation and shared care take place. What an ecomuseum values and protects are living heritages.

Along with those enrolled in the course and with several who volunteer in the ecomuseum, or its visitors, we have created a new space for cultural fruition: an ecodome structure in SuperAdobe[1] in the shape of a nest. *Building a Nest* is, in fact, the title of a community art workshop that was held at the Ecomuseo in June 2021. The project originated after the pandemic with the idea and need to promote one of the green areas of the Ecomuseo by setting up a symbolic and material space for hospitality, gathering, rebirth, and meditation. The shape of the nest refers to caretaking and caring as practices that create bonds and identities, but it also refers to movement, to coming and going.

Touching and giving meaning to the connecting pattern

How does the formative context change when the reflective action and the relational work with the group take place starting from a sensory experience, from an immediate corporeal implication, with the practicality of the process of creation? Metaphors and narratives spring from sweat, from the silence of gestures, and from the consistency of materials. By establishing a circularity between the dimensions of theory, gestures, and actions, the conditions for knowledge are created, which fosters an awareness of oneself, of one's ways of learning, of social ideals, and of the relational schemes and conceptual frameworks that guide social and educational work. In the experience of those who participated in building the Nest, this happens through coming into contact with the materials, through our body and its limits,

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1   SuperAdobe is a green-building technique invented by the architect, Nader Khalili. It employs the ancient method of earth architecture with the integration of modern materials. "The architect devised this technique in order to find a solution for the many evacuees during and after catastrophic events, such as natural disasters, or in war. [...] Emergency shelters made in SuperAdobe are not just capable of being built quickly, but they also provide shelters that are much less susceptible to changes in temperature than tents or containers. Furthermore, they are also earthquake proof and bulletproof. In addition to being used for emergency shelters, the applications of SuperAdobe are varied: it can be used to build actual houses (round, linear, or domed), as well as create urban furnishings, interior decor, landscapes, tanks, curbs, arches, and much more." From: Vide Terra website (https://www.videterra.org/superadobe.html)

through relational dynamics, and in the bond with the environment.

> *Working with the earth was special because it has the ability to bring us back to our roots, to a deep connection with ourselves, which is the foundation for a deep connection with others. Working the earth takes a great deal of effort. We sweated a lot together under the sweltering sun at the end of June.*
>
> (Gloria, social worker)

> *Giving back to pedagogy its nature of practical science. What fills entire manuals in the academic environment was experienced first-hand during this journey. Caretaking as a practical act, which manifests itself in concrete gestures and in sensations and perceptions of the body, mind, and soul. The movement of one's body in space, the narrative that gives meaning to experience, that creates relationships, and that helps understand one another... grappling with doing, doing things together, setting in motion hands and the imagination.*
>
> (Clara, researcher)

> *We found ourselves putting our bodies and muscles out there in a highly challenging manner, moving a lot of weight, and implementing construction tools that I did not know how to use. It was very easy to reach the limits of my know-how and effort, but we can rethink limits if we imagine we can share and support burdens through a common commitment.*
>
> (Leila, social worker)

Taking part in building the nest, and in moments of rest and contemplation, led many participants to elaborate questions and thoughts about themselves and teamwork: from specific situations regarding the Nest building process, to broader issues related to professional daily life. The most thought-provoking situations were often the "extreme" ones that, by bringing into play intense feelings such as fear and beauty, disruptive emotions such as nervousness and tension, or polarized ones such as agreement and disagreement, opened conditions for "transformative steps" (Mezirow 2003).

> *The effort and silence that came with it gave rise to stories that intertwined and made us feel very close, as if we recognized ourselves in each other's stories: life experiences that are certainly unique but also part of the collective experience of human beings. In doing so, this bond of solidarity can be perceived.*
>
> (Silvia, social worker)

> *Talking about care means understanding how to work together in moments of extreme tension, both physical and mental, and managing rather complex situations. Our most vulnerable part is exposed. In these moments, we ask too much of ourselves and much more of others. We sometimes talk back, but this is also when everyone shows their true character. How do we manage when we're really tired or stressed? How do we treat others? Extreme situations are good occasions for learning, and they're not necessarily negative, precisely because others sometimes show us what we never want to see in ourselves.*
>
> (Mery, artist)

Chiara explained how she experienced an extremely difficult and frightening situation.

There was an extremely difficult moment that scared me. As we gradually went up the circles that formed the dome, my legs started trembling whenever I had to lift the bags and continue going around. I was really worried. I thought: "I can't go any further." The following day, I went up and sat on the bags. Sitting down allowed me to have a calmer view. There, I thought, it was like in life: when you want to do something that requires an effort, there is an important dimension of fear, of being or not being able to do it. So, when your legs tremble, it's important to look for connections that allow us to support an extremely open and grand vision, to hope for grand visions, and be able to support and fulfil them. In this sense, the community is essential because it's scary when you have these moments where you feel that your body can't make it. In this sense, the community is able to support grand visions.

(Chiara, artist)

The public space in the southern coast of Palermo, with its living heritage, was the setting for a process of creation, learning, and community regeneration. The green area of the Ecomuseo now houses a Nest, a symbol of hospitality, rebirth, and care, especially for those who have become politically and sentimentally connected to this avant-garde place of education.

The ability to transform the environment around us and, therefore, the power to act for its change [...] is an inborn disposition human beings have towards improving the environment that surrounds them. And this might

be the purest and highest conception of what work is, and to the value we are placing in the creation of the nest, and in a community art activity, which is the desire that it can then accompany us as an experience in our future daily routines.

(Silvia, social worker).

Figure 1. The teamwork.

Figure 2. The Nest at the Ecomuseum, Palermo (Italy).

23

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ABSTRACT

The topic of labour transitions calls loudly for the issue of training in adulthood and specifically all those strategies and tools useful to reconstruct a tortuous pathway from outplacement to reintegration, to the transition to another role. The transformations imposed by the complex society have raised not a few problems and critical issues, fuelling a demand for a training and education more in keeping with the configuration of the society itself, characterized by a high degree of subjectivity, autonomy, and responsibility, but also by the relevant role played by practice, experience, and artificial intelligence. Work, therefore, must necessarily characterize itself by its formative scope, beyond its characterizing specificities. Hybrid work and its new formulations (remote and work at home), although largely removed from physical locations, must regain a strong formative connotation.

Key words: Training, Work, Pedagogy, Transitions, Hybrid Work.

Introduction

The pairing of education and work is a foundational construct in labour pedagogy. Several research areas can be traced, including adult education, organizational pedagogy, social pedagogy, and the broad cradle of fundamental pedagogy (Bellingreri, 2017). The topic of work transitions opens the way to the issue of lifelong learning. *Soft skills*, in this sense, also become a useful means to respond to a future in which transitions will be central, in a perspective of substantial changes in jobs, hybridization of work, and substantial revision of organizational logics.

The crisis, or perhaps it would be appropriate to speak of multiple crises (human, social, values), are asking us to respond by raising educational standards, both at school and in higher education (Kogler et al., 2023); learning, growing, changing, and sometimes even transforming our deep structures is the recipe that can be used in several contexts.

The transformations imposed by the complex society, however, have raised quite a few problems of a pedagogical, social, and economic nature. From an exquisitely educational perspective, we wish to emphasize that a job that is truly a place of growth and training cannot disregard and ignore the real educational possibilities it offers; nor, secondly, can it avoid promoting them. One cannot, therefore, disregard the fundamental dimension of the work experience that represents the first scene of any formative process that is rooted in individual history and at the same time becomes a weave of inner resonances. The thesis is that work, even in the extreme case of so-called sta-

ble (or flat) types, must necessarily be characterized on the one hand by its formative scope, and on the other by a constant increase in this specificity. Further, the new jobs and the different forms this has taken and will take soon.

The need for training at work

There is in work, in addition to various and multiple technical issues concerning the task and personal growth, a need that is central to pedagogical knowledge: training. An issue that concerns, more specifically, the *formativity* of work.

The Italian debate on *formativity* finds important arguments in the scientific production of Umberto Margiotta and Massimiliano Costa. The latter specifies that 'the educational dimension of work is represented by its *formativity*, that is, by everything that makes a working action aimed at creating value for man "meaningful"' (Costa, 2011, p. 70). Furthermore:

> the formativity of work in the digital ecosystem of machines qualifies as the possibility of giving and taking shape-action, starting from the energies and potentials that the set of links makes available, thus generating not only products and results, but paths of development, freedom.

> (Costa, 2019a, p.63)

The principle of *formativity* was first studied by Pareyson (1985), who identifies it with structure, character, and the inherent capacity to form. The Italian philosopher believes that:

> human activities cannot be exercised unless they are concretised in operations, i.e. in movements destined to culminate in works; but only by being formed does the work come to

be such, in its individual and unrepeatable reality, now detached from its author and living a life of its own, concluded in the indivisible unity of its coherence, open to the recognition of its value and capable of demanding and obtaining it: no activity is operating if it is not also forming, and there is no successful work that is not form.

> (Coppolino, 1976)

Formativity is exercised on oneself and on the meaning of the learning contents, and establishes a relationship with them. If, in formative and educational work, one is active to the extent that one is receptive and one is receptive to the extent that one is active, this means that the person becomes formative and capable of forming only by welcoming and developing the impulses of the meaning to be formed, and forms meaning only by developing and exercising one's forming capacity (Pignalberi, 2020, p. 342).

Formativity is a category that allows one to look far ahead, to find value even in new work contexts and transformations. As Costa (2017) points out, "human formativity is the key with which to investigate the transformation of labour action. Through the analysis of work action, the sense of the link between formativity and work is made explicit in connection with those changes that characterise the realisation of the new industrial models".

If, therefore, *formativity* represents the structure, the character, the inherent capacity to form and to form, therefore, means 'doing', poiein, but a doing in the unfolding of things and drawing them to the form they demand and which is their due,

> to promote a new pact between human development and training means to qualify the link between formativity and work as one of the key elements

of the changes that characterise to-day's multi-referential nature of work immersed in the challenge of digital-isation and robotics

(Costa, 2019b, p. 20)

Increasing and qualifying the training experience and learning opportunities is the key to constructing a centrality of the training dimension of work, thanks to which man interprets the connections emerging from the interactions between himself and the learning and working contexts, thus conferring meaning and human design. This view interprets work, similarly to the knowledge process, as an active process of signification (Costa, 2011; Margiotta, 2015).

In a study of a few years ago (Marcone, 2018) that, in work-based learning processes, structures a taxonomy of five indicators interrelated in determining formativity (reflexivity, participation, agentivity, capacitation, generativity), the final indicator, called *generative learning*, would represent the last step in identifying *formativity*.

Formativity as professional action aims at qualifying educational work within life projects involving relationships, practices, and action systems capable of involving the symbolic and cultural meanings of change and innovation. It follows that educating cannot coincide in the mere attribution to the other of a pre-established form and meaning, but rather in its capacity to generate a relational plot that leads to knowledge of oneself and the world, revealing to individual freedom one's real 'talents'.

In this perspective, the *formativity* of educational work qualifies as the possibility of giving and taking *form-action*, thus generating not only products and results, but paths of development and freedom. Here, then, is an initial point of contact between the latter category and generativity, which is inextricably linked

to the production of value that training can and must produce. Innovation, training, and generativity are united, therefore, by a logical nexus like a 'watermark' of work action. For Costa (2011):

the recursive movement that transforms productive action into generative action is, therefore, to be traced back to our acting understood as an enactment of our collective experience and which, through this enactment, becomes experience, and thus meaning and sense of our human identity and design.

This is for Margiotta (2015) "the paradigmatic key to a theory of work as generative action".

The person becomes formative and capable of forming only by welcoming and developing the impulses of the meaning to be formed, and forms meaning only by developing and exercising his or her own forming capacity. Pareyson points out, in fact, that the person is such a relation with itself that it is constituted as such only insofar as it is, at the same time, a relation with something else. Thus, the formative dimension of educational work emerges through the interaction between self and context. Learning, moreover, presents itself as a situated activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and as a zone of proximal development (Vygotskij, 1992) to put in place scaffolding practices at the basis of the educational relationship.

Through social interaction and joint participation, processes of self-negotiation and self-poiesis are activated in the territory, whereby, by virtue of the relationship between the various educational and social agencies, the socio-cultural construction of personal identity is achieved between the sense and meaning of *multi-participation* and *social participation in a practice.*

Generative competences are, in fact, oriented towards enhancing educational intervention in the direction (and self-direction) of personal and professional development in a combination of *hard* (technical) and *soft* (transversal) skills.

A European vision of training, work, and labour transitions

The raising and updating of qualification levels is nowadays strategic for working contexts, both from a European perspective and with reference to the continuous evolution of work and the transitions involving an increasing number of people.

We are witnessing a curious trend: that of reducing investment in training on the one hand, justifying this with the current economic and social crises, on the other hand, the incessant demand for specializations, certifications, validated skills. In organizations, moreover, the scarce availability of resources, despite the conspicuous post-Covid investments, leads training to be a mere endowment of basic tools and techniques, rather than an orientation towards specific skills.

> Education in general, and training in particular, is assigned an essential role; not only to support workers' adaptation to flexible work processes, to acquire multi-functional skills, autonomy, decision-making capacity and personal responsibility, but also to promote employment security by preparing workers to behave with confidence and security in repeated occupational transitions. *And yet, the shortage of required skills has increased overall since 2005.* In addition to quantitative shortages, qualitative shortages are also emerging, stem-

ming from the increased importance placed by employers on social skills such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, initiative, creativity, entrepreneurial skills, leadership and management skills, presentation skills and learning skills.

(Baldacci et al., 2012, p. 126)

In addition, there is the issue of individualization in working contexts, an issue that also affects training, since this represents a sort of lifebelt, a protective tool to stay afloat in the face of the uncertainties of one's working and social condition, capable, therefore, of offering both skills to stay employed and cognitive resources to self-diagnose one's situation. However, from the background rises to the surface a *training turbulence* with which the individual is forced to deal, responsible for a probable depreciation of the value of investments in training and thus, a growing depreciation of the social capital of a territory, a nation or, better, of Europe. From here, from the criticalities stemming from the transformation of work, from the crises of work models, the idea of training that is considered as a form of work, thought out in the long term and a real opportunity for empowerment, "an inclusive vision, of social investment in people's potential, beyond their employment status" (Ibid., p. 134).

There is a need for a cultural redefinition of the subject-man-person that, by strengthening and promoting the cultural and spiritual energies of individuals, makes everyone capable of being an active protagonist in associated life. Once certainties have evaporated, those deriving from job stability, there are new conditions to face: the trauma of losing one's job, the management of the condition of being unemployed, existential questions on what to do with one's life in the future, questions (economic and otherwise) linked to the family (Loiodice, 2012).

The possibility of lifelong learning being able to offer a permanent opportunity for the recovery and development of new competences, skills and knowledge rests on the construction of an educational system that at all levels and in all pathways guarantees the development of those continuous learning skills that will be necessary to counter the dynamics of exclusion produced in the knowledge society over time.

(Baldacci, et al., 2012, p. 135)

Therefore, the best hypothesis appears to be that of a *learnfare* understood as a model of active welfare is enabling, supplementary (not substitutive) for that of welfare to work and above all supplementary to workfare; in this furrow training, or rather *lifelong learning*, represents a social right, a right of citizenship. It is necessary to guarantee equity in starting opportunities and above all throughout active life, seeking to restore the means permanently to get back on track (Esping-Andersen, 2005).

In the education system, the problem of equity must be located not only in the resolution of inequalities between individuals, but also in the resolution of inequalities between groups and categories. It is not necessary and not sufficient to invest in training that enhances those who are already advantaged in a position in the market, but rather it becomes necessary to broaden training contexts by aiming at a systemic cultivation of talents, with the awareness that there are more intelligences and more possibilities of declining talent and therefore merit.

Transitions, changes, restructurings have a considerable impact on a person's well-being and for this reason they assume relevance in the pedagogical discourse. "Supporting change means abandoning previous behaviour before,

or at least, at the same time as learning new procedures: a process called unlearning" (Piazza, 2019, p. 274-275). An additional and useful competence for the design man. A goad to build a pedagogy of transition, starting first of all from projectuality and, therefore, from orientation for an authentic life project (Balzano, 2022, p. 92).

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Covid-19, Smart Working, and New Perspectives on Meaning: a case study

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ABSTRACT

This paper is set within the theoretical framework of the studies of transformative learning studies (Mezirow, 2003), work and organizational pedagogy (Rossi, 2008; 2011) and of reflexivity studies (Schön, 1993; 2006; Fabbri, 2007). An empirical research is presented with the aim of investigating how and whether the change due to the Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the perspectives of meaning (Mezirow, 2003) of professionals within work settings. The study was conducted over the three-year period 2020–2023. The methodological framework of the research is characterized by being qualitative; a case study involving a medium-sized organization based in Italy is illustrated. Data were collected through the administration of focus groups. The final reflections are placed on two levels: the first concerns structural transformations (spaces, work, and communication), the second encompasses the learning of professionals not only in physical workplaces, but in an expanded space.

Key words: Learning, Post-pandemic, Smart Working, Transformative Learning.

Introduction

The pandemic advent due to the spread of the Covid-19 virus has been a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2003) in both the everyday lives of individuals and in working places. In the face of this, numerous changes have occurred: geopolitical, demographic, commercial and technological. In most of the countries affected by the pandemic, governments implemented strategies to contain or at least not fuel its spread. Some of the measures imposed were the prohibition of gatherings, the use of distance learning for schools and universities and — where possible—the adoption of smart working in work settings (Aristovnik et al., 2020). All this has led to multiple challenges (Aslam, 2020) for individuals, both on a professional and person-

al level. We can argue that the complexity that already characterized organizational contexts (Mowles & Norman, 2022; Pendleton-Jullian & Brown, 2018) has been further accelerated by the occurrence of Covid-19 (Faller & Marsick, 2023). Organizational contexts are therefore characterized as being highly unpredictable; the pandemic has required professionals and organizations to cope with unpredictable situations and to know how to manage change (Watkins & Marsick, 2023).

By introducing and extending flexible forms of smart working, organizations themselves have been forced to rethink how they manage their work practices (Brino et al., 2020). At the same time, professionals were constrained to reshape their work activities according to the new context (Cigna, 2021). The unquestioned assumptions with which professionals interpreted their professionalism and their work have been proved fragile (Mezirow, 2003) in the face of this new scenario. The present research therefore aimed to study if the change due to the Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the perspectives[1] of meaning (and eventually how) of professionals within a medium-sized organization in Italy.

Smart working in Italy: context analysis

In Italy, the consequent restrictions imposed since March 2020 have produced a significant acceleration in the adoption of smart working by private and public organizations. To highlight the extent of this disorientation and how it has impacted the lives of professionals, it is sufficient to look at the pre-pandemic data: data from the Smart Working Observatory of the Politecnico di Milano shows that in Italy only 50% of large companies had adopted these forms of work, with an average of no more than two days per week. For small companies and public administrations, the percentage did not even reach 20%. Istat data (2020) further bring the change to light: in 2020, five million professionals worked from home, compared to one million in the previous year. In the second quarter of 2019, people who commuted to work were 95.5% of the employed, in the second quarter of 2020 this dropped to 81.5%. The use of smart working affected 21.3% of companies with at least 3 workers immediately after the outbreak. The data reported, albeit in summary form, confirm that the scale of change has been considerable.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical conceptual anchors to which the research is linked are transformational theory (Mezirow, 2003), work and organization pedagogy (Rossi, 2008; 2011), and reflexivi-

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1   The term perspective of meaning (Mezirow, 2003) refers to the structure of assumptions within which prior experience assimilates and transforms new experiences. A perspective can be defined as a habitual set of expectations that constitutes an orientational frame of reference that operates in the projection of symbolic models and outlines the belief system that enables one to interpret, evaluate and attribute meaning to experience.

ty studies (Schön, 1993; 2006; Fabbri, 2007). Transformative theory emphasizes the

> progressive shift towards reflexivity in adulthood as a function of intentionality and argues that reflexivity improves with increasing skills and experience, which can be significantly influenced by educational interventions.

> (Mezirow, 2003, p. 159)

Mezirow focuses his attention on what occurs in relation to important events in existence and makes probable connections between adult life situations and the disorienting dilemmas that characterize everyday life (Melacarne, 2011). Disorienting dilemmas initiate a process of transformation that may arise in response to a momentous event (Mezirow, 2003).

The organization is characterized by being a place that is able to offer multiple opportunities (formal and non-formal) for growth and change, both professional and personal, and therefore, multiple opportunities for learning, training and developing skills and critical knowledge (Rossi, 2008; 2011).

Professional knowledge is constructed in the process, conversing with the situation, it does not pre-exist action (Schön, 1993; 2006). Reflection is characterized by being a device that, interacting in and with the situation, initiates a conscious heuristic process, mediated by reflection; it can be defined as an interlocutory attitude that is implemented in the solution of an undefined situation that is expressed in the transaction between doing and thinking To reflect means, in a certain sense, to validate the experience, to ascertain the correctness of the systems through which the experience has acquired meaning and the probability of the conclusions to which the elaboration has led (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2022).

Changing perspectives of meaning. The ten steps.
Disorienting dilemma
Self-Examination
Critical assessment
Recognition of Shared Experiences
Exploring Options for New Behaviour
Planning a Course of Action
Acquisition of Knowledge
Trying New Roles
Building Confidence
Reintegration into one's own life perspective

Table 1: *Changing perspectives of meaning. The ten steps. Source: Mezirow, 2003*

Research design

A qualitative research, with convenience sample has been adopted as a method (Creswell, 2012; Corbetta 2014). The research process used was circular and recursive (Creswell, 2012). The objective of the research was to answer the following question: *How and if the change in smart working, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has transformed the perspectives of meaning for professionals in an Italian ICT company?*

The sample is represented by an Italian company based in Central Italy, which placed 95 per cent of its professionals in smart working in early March 2020. Three years later, the organization has opted for a hybrid mode (not mandatory) — three days in presence and two days in smart working per week.

The data collection tool adopted was the focus group. N=3 focus groups were conducted (N=2 in November 2020 and N=1 follow-up in March 2023). The study consisted of three levels: *history of learning and practices; learning*

patterns and working practices; comparative analysis of pre- and post-pandemic.

The participants were chosen to represent the production areas and their role in the company:

- n=2 Information Technology professionals;
- n=2 Human Resources professionals;
- n=2 professionals in the General Services.

Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to analyse the data, specifically the 'systematic' and 'sophisticated' approach used by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic Analysis refers to a data analysis methodology that enables the identification and analysis of qualitative data patterns. Using TA, it was possible to systematically identify and organize thematic information through a dataset that will be illustrated in the following section.

Results

The results of the data analysis will be explained below. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) resulted in the construction of three key themes and eight sub-themes.

- Theme 1: Reorganization of spaces
- Sub-themes: formal; non-formal

Theme 2: Job

- Sub-themes: flexibility; time management; aims

Theme 3: Communications

- Sub-themes: asynchronous; written.

For the sake of synthesis, some of the textual units considered significant that emerged from the focus group dialogues will be reported.

The ways in which professionals inhabit organizational spaces have been transformed. A reorganization of all spaces, formal and non-formal, has become necessary. The advent of the pandemic meant that in early March 2020, physical organizational spaces had to be recreated and rethought. Examples are the meeting room and offices.

Before we might have met in the meeting room, now we meet in a virtual meet (Participant A, 2020).

I felt the responsibility to say, "we are here and this is our office" then virtually…to them I make jokes "look I missed the office so much that I set up my dining room with the office panels" I'm actually at home, I mean it was a way of saying "you see me here, you recognize your office" (Participant C, 2020).

There are technical aspects and management aspects that all need to be investigated, e.g. how to run a meeting and communication (Participant E, 2020).

Three years later, this new 'blended' arrangement of spaces and the new way of inhabiting workplaces has become an established practice.

Meetings are unlikely to be held all in the same room (Participant B, 2023).

Today there is a lot of ease in sharing screens, having online or blended meetings (Participant D, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, the places where informal exchanges took place were also repurposed, an example being the redesign of the physical area used for refreshments, such as the coffee machine.

In this virtual room you enter to stand in front of the coffee machine, I am in there in the morning, if someone talks about work they are censored, they talk about everything [...] some people enter, some people never enter [...] there is a lot of fluidity, it's very funny, it helped a little, some people are isolated, some people are very social, because you can put pictures there (Participant C, 2020).

The redesign of this space has helped to maintain, or at least not completely lose, the informal moments.

Professionals have flexible ways of working (alternating office presence and smart working). However, office presence is essential.

This that we are experimenting with could be the right mix because it allows us to regain relationships because with meetings and everything that happens even on an informal level, the best agreements the best ideas can come out even the coffee machine we also have the canteen, so it is a transversal space where we meet every day and this is fundamental (Participant D, 2023).

The transition from physical office work to smart working did not only involve the redesign of space but also a rethinking of the way of working. One of the first changes was a scheduling of work by objectives. This led to a certain amount of disorientation of professionals (across each professional profile and job position held) — especially in the early periods—both in the organization of the working day and in work tasks.

Sometimes it happens to me that people dedicate themselves to doing a task that is priority three while I may be waiting for priority zero, or at this particular time when we are working in such a different way than usual I realize that even organizing the day for a person who may not have an established professionalism [...] it can be disorienting to have the whole day to be alone at home (Participant B, 2020).

On the one hand, there has to be an ability on the part of the worker to take responsibility, to give himself his own time and above all to achieve objectives, this implies that the work, the production process is completely different from what was done previously, i.e. one has to work by objectives, by projects (Participant C, 2020).

Being a technology-intensive organization, some practices were already established.

From a professional point of view, we were already structured, we had grasped all the benefits of the Google world, shared folders and files, the fact that we could continue to make use of these already made the physical distance less distant, we clearly tried to replace, to compensate for the physical lack with a series of video meetings, we have a WhatsApp group, everything non-verbal is missing (Participant F, 2020).

Smart working can facilitate the organization of family life and professional life. The boundary between these two worlds becomes more blurred and less marked.

Sometimes it happened to me that I was working on the weekend while the kids were doing their homework, I turned on my PC and started working for two hours, this is something that I wouldn't have been able to do three years ago, I didn't even have the equipment to be able to do this, I feel like I work with greater professionalism, with greater autonomy, compared to managing times regarding tools" (Participant A, 2023).

In addition to the reconciliation of family and professional life, smart working saves money and time.

There are colleagues who every day undergo 2 hours round trip, having been given this possibility... there are great advantages in terms of time and cost savings (Participant D, 2023).

However, the meanings that professionals attach to smart working are manifold, what does smart working mean? What does it mean to be flexible? Does working by objectives allow you to organize all your activities independently?

This combination of three days in the office and two days in smart working, I find a very good compromise to be able to do what you need to do here and from home without the constraint of office hours [...] it allows you to differentiate activities (Participant D, 2023).

If I make tickets, stay at home, optimize my work and press the button while cooking pasta, what do I care? That is, if there is maximum efficiency (Participant A, 2023).

Smart working does not mean staying on the beach during working hours, the colleague or superior calling you on the phone does not have to hear the sound of the sea in the background. It means that you can do your work from home or in other places, at more flexible times (Participant E, 2023).

Ways of communicating have also been transformed. Communication has become more asynchronous. Before the outbreak of the pandemic, professionals used to confront each other and talk face-to-face, and this made professionals reflect and rethink how to manage internal communication.

Maybe until now it was enough for the boss and the team leader, which is not my case, to say to the person in the next desk "you have to do this and you have to finish it tomorrow, you have to do this and I have to finish it the day after tomorrow" now that they are all far away, they are not in direct contact with him and there is the possibility of not understanding each other well, it is even more important to take care of all aspects of communication management, from communication in the sense of operational communication, technical communication, communication on why we are doing certain things and why we are doing things in a certain way (Participant A, 2020).

The non-verbal communication part was missing, mainly two channels were used to

communicate, one more formal (email exchange, video conferences) and one more informal (phone calls and use of instant messaging applications).

> *It is different to make the phone call […] there was a contact, there was a much more immediate presence (Participant A, 2020).*

Three years later, professionals say that communication skills have been consolidated, although presence is essential to maintain a sense of community within the organization.

> *I think I have learnt to be clearer and more concise than before (Participant C, 2023).*

> *Communication has become more asynchronous, presence, however, helps (Participant E, 2023).*

> *Having to write, people have improved in this respect (Participant A, 2023).*

> *Presence in the organization is important, it is important to experience the corridors, to experience the offices, to see colleagues (Participant D, 2023).*

Concluding reflections: professionals in "transition"

The contribution aimed to investigate how and whether the change due to the Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the perspectives of meaning of professionals within working contexts. It is clear that this research and the results produced cannot be generalized to any extent[2], since it was a case study carried out in an organization located in Central Italy. However, it has been reported because it allows us to discuss and develop reflections on certain aspects.

Initial reflections are developed around the three themes — *reorganization of space, work, organization* — that emerged from Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The advent of the pandemic triggered a questioning of the perspectives of meaning through which subjects had hitherto interpreted their surroundings, leading to more comparative and reflexive frames of reference for interpreting the new context (Mezirow, 2003). The transformation in the early months of March 2020 was quite sudden, both of organizational spaces and of ways of experiencing working reality. Formal and non-formal places have been rethought and reshaped according to the new requirements. The way of conceiving work activity has also undergone transformations, a new organization of working time has taken place, time schedules have become more flexible, and work has been reorganized by objectives. Finally, communication has become more asynchronous, there has been an increase in written communication, resulting in a greater focus on content and writing methods. Three years later, these changes have become established working practices, the multiple ways of expe-

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2 Moreover, recent studies note that it is unclear whether this post-Covid-19 scenario will be permanent or transitory of a stability preceding another crisis (Faller & Marsick, 2023).

riencing organization, work organization and communication are taking root within the professional community. However, to maintain the spirit of belonging to the organization, physical presence (even if it is three days a week) is considered fundamental.

What has been described so far allows us to develop further reflections on a second level. For professionals, this phase is characterized as a transitional phase, which requires them to develop reflexive devices (Fabbri, 2007) to converse with the situation (Schön, 1993). The workplace, unlike before, is characterized by being expanded, from presential work the professional community has moved to smart working; there are therefore different workspaces, physical, virtual, hybrid. Consequently, the networks that develop are characterized by being immaterial (Fenwick, 2008), networks develop (also) in the absence of physical boundaries. Rules, norms (tacit and explicit), tangible and intangible artefacts, culture, and practitioners' perspectives orbit within this expanded organizational space. Consequently, professionals learn in an expanded space (Engeström, 1987, 1999).

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ABSTRACT

Various studies have explored how adults learn, develop, and prepare themselves for work and education or training. Career development theories approach decision-making by linking the ability of individuals to make beneficial choices for themselves to interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects. This empirical study identifies key experiences and influences in the career stories of homeless adults and enhances understanding of their career journeys. The Systems Theory Framework of career development (Patton & McMahon, 1997) integrates both contextual and individual systems, demonstrating the recursive interaction between the individual and the context. It also captures the dynamic nature of individuals' career development by referring to aspects and ideas such as influence, reflection, recursiveness, and interactions. This empirical study explores the subjective perceptions of homeless adults, regarding the aspects that affected/affect their career development. The results of this research underscore the contribution of the STF as a practical tool to the qualitative assessment of career trajectories of homeless individuals.

Keywords: Homelessness, Systems Theory Framework (STF), Career Development, Decision Making.

Introduction

Career development, in the complex and ever-changing 21st century, entails many challenges as well as opportunities for adults. Rapid changes in the social and societal context affect everyday people's lives, decision-making, the way adults learn and develop. In this respect, constructivist views of career development emphasize the personal and contextual nature of career and encourage a narrative and storytelling approach to career development. Career development and learning have maintained a longstanding connection. Patton and McMahon (1999, 2006) utilized the thematic of learning to explore the practical application of the Systems Theory Framework for Career Development in career counselling, career assessment, and career education. They proposed that by

emphasizing learning and positioning the individual at the core of the learning process, the gap between theory and practice may be bridged (Patton & McMahon, 2006). They suggested that establishing a constructivist learning environment may be facilitated by applying the principles of adult learning (McMahon et al., 2013).

The STF is a metatheoretical framework that illustrates the influences affecting an individual's career development (McMahon et al., 2004; McMahon et al., 2013; Patton & McMahon, 2017). This metatheory has its origins in both practice and research (Patton & McMahon, 2017) and acknowledges the contributions of all career theories, promoting the convergence of theory and the integration of theory into practice (McMahon et al., 2013; Patton & McMahon, 2017). At the core of the STF stands the term *influence* which is deliberately chosen by the metatheory's developers due to its dynamic nature and its ability to encompass both the content and process aspects of career theory (McMahon et al., 2004, p. 13; Arthur & McMahon, 2005, p. 212). The concept of *influence* encompasses all the structural components which constitute the STF, including content and process influences. The concept of *influence* is not associated with positive or negative connotations; instead, it empowers individuals to attribute specific meaning to each of their influences (McMahon et al., 2013).

The STF consists of several interrelated systems. At the heart of STF lies the individual system, which encompasses content influences, such as personality, age, values and health, among others. The individual system is depicted in a circle, and the content influences/intrapersonal variables are represented in smaller circles within the larger intrapersonal system

(s. Figure 1). Individuals do not exist in isolation; they are embedded within both the social system, including family, peers, and the workplace, and the environmental-societal system, encompassing factors like geographic location and socioeconomic status (McMahon et al., 2013). In addition to the content (individual system) and context (social and environmental-societal system) influences, (s. Figure 1) as complex and interconnected circles– there exist also process influences that complete this metatheoretical framework. These process influences encompass a) recursiveness, which denotes the recurring interaction between and within influences and systems, b) change over time and c) chance, capturing thus the dynamic nature of individuals' career development (McMahon et al., 2013).

The concept of recursive interaction is depicted with broken lines on the visual representation of the STF (Figure 1).[1] The first process influence is situated within the individual, as well as between the individual and the broader context. The second process influence highlights how recursive interaction contributes to both the micro-process of career decision-making and the macro-process of change over time. The third process influence is related to chance events. Content and process influences are considered within the context of time, taking into account past, present, and future factors in clients' career development (McMahon et al., 2004, p. 14). Change over time is visually represented on the map as a circular depiction, illustrating the nonlinear nature of career development and the significant role of past, present and future influences (McMahon et al. 2013). Given the intricate role of change over time and its impact on individuals' decisions, career development cannot be

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1   The term "map" is used to refer to the visual representation of the STF.

predicted with certainty. Conversely, chance events, which individuals may not anticipate – e.g. accidents, illness, disability, economic trends etc–, are portrayed on the map as lightning flashes.
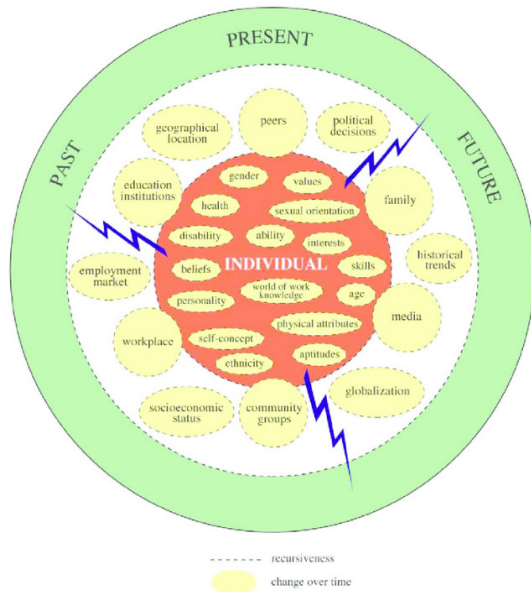
Figure 1: *The Systems Theory Framework of Career Development (from Patton & McMahon, 1999)*

Although no study has directly addressed the STF's application to the homeless population, prior research involving different vulnerable groups has highlighted the importance of this theory to assess career development, to reflect on career decision and transforming past experiences to meaningful future aspirations. The STF and the practical tools named My System of Career Influences (MSCI) (McMahon et al., 2013) for adolescents and adults have been applied to a range of cultural groups and settings. The MSCI tool was employed as a qualitative career assessment instrument to investigate the influences on the career development of disadvantaged South African adolescents residing in a children's home (McMahon et al., 2008). This study revealed the factors that af-

fect the adolescents' career aspirations, identifying interpersonal, social and societal influences.

Bimrose et al. (2013) investigated the career trajectories of older women, highlighting the role of concepts such as self-confidence, personal values, personality traits, and age awareness in influencing these women's career choices and work satisfaction. A recent study conducted by Magnano et al. (2020) examined the career development needs of migrants and refugees using the STF, it illustrates positive relationships and networks that facilitate inclusion. In this context, the study highlighted the impactful role of storytelling in shaping significant influences and emphasized the significance of family members and relationships within the host community as valuable sources of autonomy, enabling individuals to self-determine their future.

Employability, Homelessness, and Housing Exclusion

In the field of career guidance and counselling, there are a few studies that examine aspects related to the vocational behaviour of homeless or housing-excluded individuals, their job search efforts, challenges faced in the workplace, and their need for upskilling or reskilling. Specifically, when it comes to individuals excluded from housing, living on the streets, or enduring insecure or overcrowded conditions, research tends to primarily focus on assessing their employability aspects alongside their housing status and living conditions. However, aspects related to career development, decision-making, and the influences shaping the career trajectories of this population remain relatively unexplored. Studies concerning the homeless population have primarily centred on identifying the challenges that hinder their access to the labour market, often categorizing

these challenges as individual, structural, or social limitations (Olech, 2007).

Ideas such as 'prevention,' transitioning homeless individuals into employment, are suggested as good practices and potential pathways out of homelessness (Gerrard, 2017). However, access to employment may not be sufficient to end homelessness. Additional factors, such as specific labour market conditions, including inadequate work, inconsistent pay, and relationships with employers, directly influence people's housing situations (Shier et al., 2012). Furthermore, studies have explored the impact of working conditions on the health and overall well-being of homeless individuals. Gray (2020) suggests that good work conditions can enhance health and well-being. However, it is worth noting that obtaining work for individuals on the periphery of the labour market can be challenging, and even when they secure employment, it may remain precarious and offer low wages.

Jones et al. (2020) challenge the overly simplistic policy assumptions that suggest employment alone can solve homelessness. They do so by exploring the related terms of "in-work homelessness" and "in-work poverty." Their study illustrates the difficulties faced by individuals who are employed and simultaneously grappling with homelessness as they find it challenging to make ends meet due to their low and unstable incomes, and they perceive themselves as having limited options, and they often lack access to the support needed to transition away from homelessness.

Traditional views and interpretations of homelessness support the idea that the con-cept of homelessness is linked with images of people living on the streets or in shelters, that homeless people are addicted, mentally ill, that they belong in marginalized minorities (Arapoglou et al., 2021; Deleu et al., 2021). There are many definitions and attempts to define this heterogenous and multidimensional social phenomenon[2] whose causes can be categorized into two broad categories: structural/socio-economic –such as poverty, labour market forces, social services etc– and individualistic –personal characteristics and behaviours of people experiencing homelessness– factors (Neale, 1997). The homeless population is typically characterized as invisible or unrecognized. The fact that this affected population is excluded from housing also means that they are not included in official statistical data –e.g. Eurostat– which has a negative impact on data collection (FEANTSA, 2020). However, –despite the absence of comparable European data on homelessness– it is estimated that 700,000 homeless people are currently sleeping rough or living in emergency or temporary accommodation across the European Union. This marks a 70% increase over the course of ten years (FEANTSA, 2020).

Although Greece lacks an official and established data-collection strategy on homelessness, numerous studies have highlighted the increasing prevalence of this phenomenon in the country (FEANTSA, 2017; FEANTSA 2018; FEANTSA 2022). The census of the Greek Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) in 2011 indicated a 25% increase in homelessness within two years, from 2009 to 2011. Nevertheless, the reliability of these data is highly questionable

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2   This article adopts the approach definition of the ETHOS typology of FEANTSA (2005), according to which homelessness is not only defined as the condition of people who leave on the street. In ETHOS, there are four conceptual categories for the roofless (those who live rough on the street), houseless (those who live in social facilities), insecure accommodation and inadequate accommodation facilities such as temporary and unsuitable accommodation.

due to methodological limitations (FEANTSA, 2018). According to Arapoglou and Gounis (2014), a total of 17,800 people in the wider metropolitan area of Athens were estimated to have been categorized as roofless or houseless according to the ETHOS classification during 2013. In 2018, homeless people were counted through the street-work approach in seven major Greek cities in a one-night and one-day survey conducted by Panteion University and the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity. According to the initial survey figures, 691 persons were living on the streets (353 or 51% in Athens), while 516 persons were residing in shelters and 438 in flats. The total number, including those living in shelters and supported housing, reached up to 1,645.[3]

This research – The scope

The scope of this study is twofold. Firstly, it aims to identify the key experiences and influences in the career stories of homeless adults. Secondly, it seeks to enhance participants' understanding and reflection on their career journeys. More specifically, this paper is part of a broader research project, and focuses on showcasing the career map of influences of one of the interview participants. This specific story was chosen to illustrate how the Systems Theory Framework (STF) can be effectively employed as a tool for the qualitative assessment of career trajectories and to provide an in-depth presentation of the qualitative characteristics of the STF.

Methodology

The semi-structured interview tool was used for the purpose of conducting qualitative research. As for the analysis of the qualitative data, thematic analysis was applied to identify codes and establish meaningful patterns/themes (Braun et al., 2014). Furthermore, visual representations of the career story were created and presented in the form of a career map.

Participant

Anna, aged 53 and originally from Bulgaria, is a divorced mother with one young adult child. As for her educational background, she has completed upper secondary school. At the time of her interview, she was experiencing unemployment and working unofficially part-time, as a street journal seller. Her previous work experiences included a decade of self-employment in the sewing sector in Greece, as well as employment as a cleaner. Anna has faced instability in the past, as well as challenges related to housing and has resided in a shelter for homeless women. During that period, she received support and assistance from professionals at a day centre addressed to homeless individuals. At the time of the interview, Anna was actively participating in a Housing First program, which provided her with subsidized housing in a flat, for a duration of 18 months.

Results

Based on the thematic analysis and aligned with the attributes of the STF, the career story

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of Anna can be represented in a map encompassing two overarching thematic categories: a) content influences –intrapersonal and contextual variables such as social, and environmental/societal system–, and b) process influences–recursiveness, change over time, and chance.
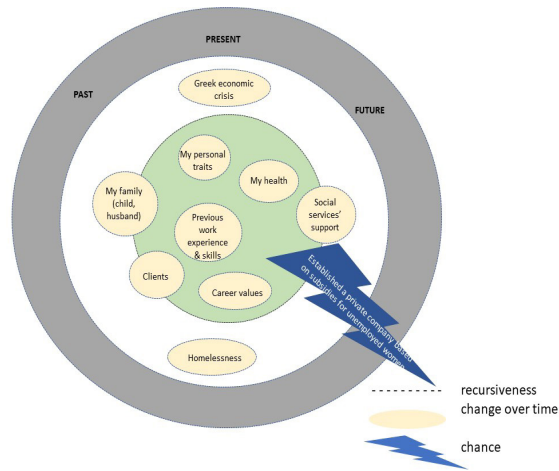
Figure 2*: Anna's career trajectory – visual representation of influences*

Content Influences

Within Anna's intrapersonal system, the following influences are highlighted:

- Health: Anna mentions her struggle with alcohol-related health issues.
- Personality Traits: She self-identifies as an introvert; she values taking responsibility and ownership; additionally, she possesses a strong sense of independence, preferring not to rely on others.
- Previous work experience and skills development: Drawing from her prior self-employment in the sewing sector, Anna has developed

entrepreneurial skills through this experience.

In her social system, Anna's influences can be categorized as follows:

- Family members and clients: This includes her family members, with her husband having had a negative impact on her career due to his abusive behaviour. Conversely, her child served as a positive source of support. In addition, her neighbourhood clients played a positive role when she was actively self-employed with her established sewing company.
- Social Services Support: Anna received assistance and guidance from a range of professionals and organizations, such as career counsellors, social workers, and the professionals at the shelter where she resided during her homelessness. She also benefited from the services provided at the Day Center she attended and participated in the Housing First program. Anna viewed these experiences as valuable sources of support during her period of homelessness.

Regarding the environmental/societal system, Anna points to:

- Greek economic crisis: Anna discussed the Greek economic crisis and its influence on her career and life.
- Impact of homelessness: She highlights how homelessness had a significant impact on both her career and personal life. Additionally, she mentions that after her private company went bankrupt, she temporarily relocated to Bulgar-

ia. Upon her return to Greece, she was provided accommodation in a women's shelter.

Based on Anna's perspective and her reflections on homelessness, as outlined below, she attributes her experience of homelessness to several factors:

- The ease with which someone can become homeless: "*It is easy to be driven to homelessness. Some people say that it only takes one or two monthly wages for any one of us. If you don't have your own house, and you rely solely on your salary... If you don't receive one, two, or three-monthly payments, this might lead you to homelessness.*"
- Her personal experience of unemployment: "*I did not have a job.*"
- The limitations of her social support system: "*I did not have close friends.*"
- The lack of support from her family members during that challenging period: "*My family was not supportive.*"

Despite the negative impact of housing exclusion on her past, Anna sees a positive and hopeful influence on her future goals:

[In terms of future goals] "*I never stopped dreaming, but I had to prioritize and take it step by step. First, I found the flat. I had a job, but I am still looking for more working hours.*"

[When I was living in the shelter] "*I did not have the freedom. It was difficult, and it affected my psychology as well. But I learned a lot. I believe that if I had not faced housing problems, I would not have developed, and my life would not have changed. And I really appreciate this change!*"

Process influences in Anna's story (recursiveness, change over time, chance):

Anna's trajectory reveals three instances where process influences are prominently at play. The first instance pertains to her prior work experience –the establishment of a private company– and illustrates the interplay of chance and recursiveness, highlighting how these elements interact and impact her decision-making. First comes a pivotal aspect of her career development journey, the occurrence of chance. Specifically, her decision to establish a company in the sewing sector was affected by the opportunity to participate in a subsidies program offered by the Greek Public Employment Service named OAED which was designed to empower and financially support unemployed women. Anna seized this opportunity and subsequently initiated the establishment of her private company. However, recursiveness, in this respect, is manifested through the influence of environmental variables and health issues –intrapersonal influences. The economic crisis, which had a significant impact on the region Anna resided, created an environment where entrepreneurial opportunities were scarce. This economic backdrop influenced the feasibility and sustainability of her private company. Moreover, health issues, particularly alcoholism, added a layer of complexity to her career journey. It created challenges in terms of personal well-being and potentially impacted her capacity to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the sewing sector.

"*It was an opportunity; I had skills in sewing. OAED provided allowances for women to start small businesses. However, it came with immense stress, long working hours just to make ends meet, and managing orders. This undoubtedly took a toll on my mental well-being. I began to struggle, and alcohol consumption increased, which had a negative impact on my behaviour. I became more anxious, and I even lost some clients. It wasn't solely the economic crisis; it was*

a result of my own poor choices and behaviour. Absolutely!"

At the time of the interview, Anna had set a clear educational goal for herself: to obtain the certificate for attainment in Greek for professional use. In pursuit of her educational aspirations, she also considered further studies in translation. This was a continuous educational aspiration and over time was affected by aspects such as Anna's parental responsibilities. Anna acknowledges the support she has received from social services when she was homeless as a crucial element in her career development as they have provided her with guidance, resources, and assistance, further highlighting the significance of recursiveness in her journey.

"Many years ago, I had this dream. However, I couldn't pursue it at that time; I had to focus on surviving, working hard, and raising my child. Now that I've come to a point where I have more free time and support, it feels like the right moment. In a way, the professionals of the program guided me toward a specific path. She also emphasizes the aspects that influenced her decision to pursue her educational aspirations: *"I also received psychological support, as they don't have only teachers but also psychologists who work with vulnerable groups."*

Her future professional goal encompasses Anna's past and current experiences, her personal traits, her skills, her decisions over time: she aims to establish herself as a self-employed translator. This aspiration reflects her desire for autonomy and independence in her career, with translation serving as the chosen path to realize this goal.

"I would confidently open a business again, this time as a translator. Being my "own boss" grants me more freedom in making choices. I understand that it comes with added responsibilities and challenges, but having experienced it before and now having support from various organizations, I believe I'll do better this time.

[...] My professional goals include development, building a network, acquiring clients."

Discussion - Conclusions

Anna's career journey depicts the key elements of the System's Theory Framework: the recursiveness, change over time and chance are underscored by the interplay of her individual system such as personal traits, career values, by the skills she has, her social influences and by her envision to be self-employed in future. Anna has encountered both "in-work poverty" and "in-work homelessness" (Jones et al., 2020), and her career journey underscores that escaping homelessness is not solely contingent on gaining employment. Prior research has underscored the significance of individual initiative and personal capabilities when confronted with challenges (Lindstrom et al., 2011). As shown in Anna's comments, reflecting on her personal career-life story and on the housing challenges she experienced, she discerns a positive and optimistic impact on her future aspirations, she transformed her homelessness experience positively, and she successfully cultivated the belief that she can overcome her current challenging circumstances and chart a positive course for her future.

The examination of influences reveals that Anna's career development unfolded within the framework of various social systems, a perspective that aligns with the STF theory. Within these social systems and their influences, Anna's inherent qualities, including a robust sense of responsibility, independence, and a dedication to delivering high-quality work, seamlessly align with her career values. These attributes have been honed and fortified through her past experiences as a self-employed individual, further solidifying her journey toward becoming a successful translator. While there has not yet been a study that spe-

cifically focuses on the STF and its application to the homeless population, the significance of individual influences has been emphasized in previous research involving other vulnerable populations. McMahon et al. (2008) applied the STF to disadvantaged South African adolescents residing in a children's home, and their findings revealed that personality traits played a crucial role in shaping career decisions. Bimrose et al. (2013) reveal as main intrapersonal influences on older women's trajectory the concepts of self-confidence, personal values, personality traits and age awareness which impacted on the women's work choices and the work satisfaction of the women.

In summary, Anna's career development story exemplifies the principles of the STF, highlights how chance occurrences, such as the establishment of a private company, intersect with environmental variables and personal health issues in a recursive manner. Through these interactions, her sewing skills emerged as a resilient asset in her career journey, emphasizing the dynamic and interconnected nature of career development within the Systems Theory Framework.

There is a significant limitation to consider in the present paper: it focuses solely on the narrative of a single interview participant, which cannot be assumed to be representative of the entire homeless or housing excluded population. Thus, it is crucial to emphasize the substantial research opportunities within this field, as the STF can potentially be utilized as a tool to a broader population. Furthermore, research could be conducted on homeless individuals who are employed, with a focus on assessing their working conditions, job types, income levels, and comparing these factors with housing costs and living expenses. This comparison analysis could help establish correlations between the needs of this population group and the services offered by organizations, such as support for service-re-

lated issues, skill development, and enhancing self-awareness.

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Discussing the Outcomes of Literacy Interventions for Adults with Low Literacy Skills Through the Lens of Transformative Learning

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ABSTRACT

Low literacy in adults remains a global issue. On average, one in five adults in the OECD countries has low literacy skills (OECD, 2019). To shed light on the state of knowledge on adult literacy interventions, a systematic literature review is carried out. When preliminary results of the review are viewed through the lens of transformative learning theory, especially regarding intervention outcomes, an interesting picture emerges about learning opportunities and chances for transformative learning.

Key words: Low Literacy, Literacy Intervention, Low-literate Adults, Adult Basic Education, Transformative Learning.

Introduction

Low literacy in adults is a worldwide issue effecting many people and hindering them in their participation in society and their everyday life. The Survey of Adult Skills by the OECD Programme for the international Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) revealed, that on average one in five adults in the OECD countries reaches a literacy level of 1 or below, indicating low levels of proficiency (OECD, 2019). Yet, despite the scope of this issue, peer reviewed literature about reading and writing interventions for adult learners appears to be scarce. To summarize the state of knowledge on adult literacy interventions, a systematic literature review is carried out. Preliminary results from this review will be analysed through the lens of transformative learning, asking about learning opportunities and possible transformative changes achieved through the various reading and writing interventions identified so far.

Transformative Learning

The term *transformative learning* is often used to specifically refer to Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, describing learning processes that lead to a profound change in people's meaning making, making them more open and reflective about internalized assumptions (Hoggan, 2016a; Merizow, 2000).
Transformative learning can however also refer to other, distinct theories of profound change in a learner's way of thinking, sense of self, or behaviour, leading to the not complete-

ly unjustified accusation, that the term's meaning is too broad, addressing almost any type of change due to learning (Hoggan, 2016a; Hoggan, 2023). Hoggan (2016a) offers a solution to this problem by advocating that transformative learning is considered a metatheory, while Mezirow's theory, being one of many transformative learning theories, remains referred to as *perspective transformation* (Hoggan, 2016a). He defines the term transformative learning as follows: "Transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world" (Hoggan, 2016a, p. 71). Such changes have to be deep and broad, affecting many contexts of a person's life, as well as relatively stable, which excludes only temporary changes (Hoggan, 2016a). Based on a literature review, Hoggan (2016b) classifies transformative changes along the following six categories:

World view

- A significant shift in one's understanding of the world and how it works, e.g., changes in assumptions, beliefs, values, or ways of interpreting experiences.

Self

- Changes in the way learners experience themselves and their sense of self, e.g., changes in their identity, their personal narratives, a greater sense of empowerment or responsibility.

Epistemological

- Changes in learners' beliefs about the definition and construction of knowledge
- New ways of gaining knowing (shifting from passive acceptance

to critical assessment, using extra-rational ways of knowing, etc.)

Ontological

- Changes in the way one emotionally reacts to experiences, e.g., more mindfulness, or changed attributes, like generosity, compassion, empathy, etc.

Behaviour

- Changes in behaviour, such as taking actions consistent with new perspectives, or taking social actions working toward more justice.

Capacity

- Systematic, qualitative changes in abilities, like an increased capacity of cognitive development, consciousness, or greater maturity.

Systematic Literature Review of Intervention Studies

The state of knowledge on adult literacy interventions is summarized through a systematic literature review, following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Page et al., 2021). Five databases (ERIC, ProQuest, Wiley, PubPsych, PubMed) have been searched for peer-reviewed studies, based on the commonly used terms in the field in English and German. Quantitative and qualitative studies are considered. The screening process is done by two independent raters to reduce the risk of bias. Preliminary results of the review are reported, following a discussion of the results through the lens of transformative learning.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary results of the literature search indicate that studies on interventions for low-literate adults are rare, yet some studies could be identified as matching the inclusion criteria. An overview of the studies analysed thus far can be found in Table 1 (See Appendix A).

The interventions evaluated often focus on improving specific literacy skills or sub-skills such as decoding, word recognition, naming speed, reading fluency, or higher ordered skills like reading comprehension (Greenberg et al., 2011; Rodrigo et al., 2014; Sabatini et al., 2011, Scarborough et al., 2013). Different teaching or training methods applied to improve these skills include *Corrective Reading*, teaching word structures in a systematic way, with students moving from a phonological focus to word level reading over time (Sabatini et al., 2013), and *Guided Repeated Reading*, consisting of rereading short texts or passages for fluency training (Sabatini et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2011). A modified version of the *RAVE-O* program, originally designed for children with reading difficulties, has also been evaluated (Sabatini et al., 2011). RAVE-O targets different components of reading, attempting to support learners with difficulties in naming speed or a double deficit (difficulties in phonological processing and naming speed) (Sabatini et al., 2011).

The training of literacy skills can be combined with the training of additional aspects through comprehensive programs. An example of such a program is *Alpha plus* (Rüsseler et al., 2013). Alpha plus consists of reading and spelling training, the training of perceptual skills necessary for the development of literacy, and social activities such as buying groceries, cooking, or playing sports. On top of that, participants receive job search assistance and take part in a three-week-long vocational internship.

Apart from these explicit and directive approaches to literacy instruction, implicit approaches like *Extensive Reading* are also used

(Greenberg et al., 2006; Greenberg et al., 2011; Rodrigo et al., 2014). Extensive Reading seeks to improve literacy skills as well as literacy practices, by offering adult learners reading material at their level of competency, which they can choose based on their interests. Greenberg et al. (2006) have described Extensive Reading as simulating a library for low-literate adults to practice pleasure reading, discuss books, and borrow reading material. The teacher serves as a model of a reader, rather than taking on the traditional teacher role (Greenberg et al., 2006; Greenberg et al., 2011).

Overall, Purcell-Gates et al. (2002) have shown that interventions for low-literate adults can have varying degrees of authenticity (i.e., the degree to which real-life literacy materials and activities are employed) and collaboration (i.e., the degree to which students and teachers make decisions together), by looking at a variety of interventions, including Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), classes for adults seeking their Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED) and family literacy programs (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002).

Outcomes of Interventions

In line with the focuses of interventions described above, two main outcomes are reported: the development of literacy skills, and the development of literacy practices. As shown in Table 1, increases in literacy skills are possible, although effect sizes tend to be modest. Greenberg et al. (2011) analysed the effectiveness of different approaches, some being more explicit and some being more implicit, including Extensive Reading. Participants were able to make small but statistically significant gains in letter and word identification, decoding, passage comprehension, and reading fluency across all interventions. Explicit, more directive approaches showed stronger outcomes in

decoding than the exclusive Extensive Reading intervention (Greenberg et al., 2011).

No difference between approaches was discovered by Sabatini et al. (2011), who analysed the effects of a Corrective Reading program, and an adult version of the RAVE-O, as well as a Guided Repeated Reading program. Letter and word identification, decoding, passage comprehension, reading fluency, sight word efficiency, and phonemic decoding efficiency could be improved. Effect sizes were once again significant yet small. Scarborough et al. (2013) analysed data from the same study, but focused on the development of individual participants instead of group gains. To identify individual gains, they questioned how many participants increased their reading related competences by at least half a year in grade equivalency level (GE) in at least two areas. Similarly, they asked how many participants showed a decline by at least half a year in GE in at least two skill-areas. The results showed, that 46% of participants made individual gains as defined above, while 7% of participants showed significant declines (Scarborough et al., 2013).

A study of the Alpha plus program showed a significant, moderate increase in reading and spelling for participants in the experimental group (Rüsseler et al., 2013). The study also reported the number of participants who found employment after completing the course. All 36 participants in the experimental group were unemployed prior to treatment, with 11 of them i.e., 30.56%, being placed in jobs after the end of the course (Rüsseler et al., 2013).

Literacy practices were analysed in three studies (Greenberg et al., 2006; Purcell-Gates et al., 2002; Rodrigo et al., 2014). Purcell-Gates et al. (2002) found authenticity of class, but not collaboration between teacher and students, to have a significant effect on reading and writing practices. Rodrigo et al. (2014) showed that both explicit, directive approaches and implicit

approaches, consisting of Extensive Reading, can have an impact on participants' likelihood to visit bookshops or the frequency with which they visit libraries. It should be noted, however, that implicit approaches have a stronger and longer lasting effect on the latter. Participants of implicit approaches were also more likely to complete books they read and develop a reading habit, meaning they read more books than participants of explicit approaches (Rodrigo et al., 2014).

Another study on Extensive Reading describes the development of selected individual participants (Greenberg et al., 2006). One of them is B.G., who was often late to class, or did not show up at all, being visibly bored and only slowly beginning to investigate the available books. During the time of the course, he started taking books home to read to younger children in his neighbourhood, wanting to share with them, that books are "cool" (Greenberg et al., 2006). Another participant, J.A., initially declared his hatred for reading, before engaging with the reading material more and more independently. In the end, he engaged in pleasure reading and proudly shared his experience with the rest of the class (Greenberg et al., 2006). Perhaps more ambiguous was the development of N.O., who wanted to study for her GED and wondered if the course could help her (Greenberg et al., 2006). She began to enjoy the reading process and thought that the course could help her relax during her GED-exam, making it nevertheless questionable if the course was entirely suitable for her.

Chances for Transformative Learning in Literacy Interventions

When looking at the different outcomes of literacy interventions, the question arises whether they are transformative, or whether they yield chances for transformative learning. Courses

that exclusively focus on improving specific literacy skills, or that attempt to move participants to a higher GE level, may require particularly critical consideration. Improvement in literacy skills or sub-skills does not necessarily change how a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world. Depending on how these skills are used, however, such changes can occur. Transformation, in the way Hoggan (2016b) describes it, may be found in applying literacy skills and engaging with literature as a new way of perceiving, gaining knowledge, understanding, and interacting with the world, and potentially changing one's world view (i.e., epistemological and world view transformations). As Rodrigo et al. (2014) have shown, participants of implicit, less directive approaches, such as Extensive Reading, are more likely to finish books and develop reading habits. Such outcomes appear to be closer indicators of a transformative learning process, although the depth and sustainability of such positive developments need to be further explored.

The potential for transformation is even more apparent in the study conducted by Greenberg et al. (2006). As described above, individual participants showed significant qualitative changes in their interactions with literacy and their attitudes toward literature (Greenberg et al., 2006). B.G., who began taking books home to read to younger children, may be an indicator of a behaviour transformation in the form of social actions, following Hoggan's (2016b) typology. On the other hand, J.A. is a good example of how much one's attitude toward literature and their sense of self as a reader (self-transformation) can change through authentic literacy practices.

The benefit of authentic, rather than school-like, materials is also underlined by the findings of Purcell-Gates et al. (2002). And although they did not find a correlation between student-teacher collaboration and liter-

acy practices, they did not suggest that such a collaboration was undesirable (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). Hoggan (2016a) explains, how scholars who have a social emancipatory perspective on transformative learning, often build on the works of Freire, who advocated for a shift in authority from teacher to students. By breaking the teacher-student contradiction and making both teachers and students at the same time, real, active learning and change can occur (Freire, 1993). This may lead to more agency and a sense of empowerment for low-literate adults who typically face many obstacles in their lives, like poverty, unemployment, or various forms of social exclusion (Grotlüschen et al., 2021; Nickel, 2002). Collaboration can also happen among the students themselves, making adult literacy classes places where learners find a community of people who share their struggles, make progress together and lift each other up.

Additional Thoughts

One study reported on changes in the employment status of participants. 30.56% of the participants of the Alpha plus program found employment after the course (Rüsseler et al., 2013). There is not enough information given about the type of work they found, how it changed their quality of life, or how independently they conducted their job search. Courses that support low-literate adults in the labour market may be transformative, depending on the course content and the changes that arise in the learners' lives. Such courses may help them find a job that raises their standard of living or support them in fighting unfair working conditions by teaching them their rights as workers or methods of organizing, such as joining a union. This indicates chances for transformative learning, especially when applying a social emancipatory lens to the issue. Nevertheless, the literacy interven-

tion studies reviewed thus far did not report on such outcomes.

Conclusion

Interventions for low-literate adults can lead to positive learning outcomes. It became clear that the improvement of literacy skills is not the only intervention goal. While the improvement of such skills can open doors and increase the ability to participate in a literate world, it is the use of these skills that has the potential to truly transform a person's life. Taking on literacy tasks, discovering new ways of learning, achieving empowerment, and being able to support others; this is where transformation lies. Placing greater focus on these goals may be a way forward, if we are to help low-literate adults not only develop their skills but apply them in a meaningful way.

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Appendix A
Table 1

Study	Sample Size	Type(s) of Intervention(s)	Results
Greenberg et al. (2006)	27	Extensive Reading	Cases of individual participants: N. O. — mid-twenty, female — high school dropout — wants to get her GED — wonders how course can help her — starts to enjoy reading — thinks course can help her relax during the GED exam J. A. -50, male — stated his hatred for reading — began reading books of his interest — chose books more independently over time — proudly shared his reading experiences B. G. -18, male — was often late, or skipped class — only slowly developed interest in reading — started to enjoy reading — took home books, to read to younger children -wanted to let them know, that reading is "cool"

Study	Sample Size	Type(s) of Intervention(s)	Results
Greenberg et al. (2011)	198	Decoding and Fluency (DF); Decoding, Comprehension and Fluency (DCF); Extensive Reading (ER); Decoding, Comprehension, Extensive Reading and Fluency (DCEF); Control Condition (generic literacy program) (CC)	Significant results across all interventions: — Letter and Word Identification: $\eta 2 = .05$ — Decoding: $\eta 2 = .03$ — Passage Comprehension: $\eta 2 = .06$ — Reading Fluency: $\eta 2 = .18$ — stronger decoding outcomes for CC, DF and DCF than ER
Purcell-Gates et al. (2002)	159	Different Literacy Classes Rated Along two Dimensions: à	Authenticity: significant effect on literacy practices Collaboration: no significant effect on literacy practices

Study	Sample Size	Type(s) of Intervention(s)	Results
Rodrigo et al. (2014)	181	Explicit Approaches without Extensive Reading (Decoding and Fluency (DF) Decoding, Comprehension and Fluency (DCF)); Implicit Approaches with Extensive Reading (Extensive Reading (ER); Decoding, Comprehension, Extensive Reading and Fluency (DCEF))	Attitude toward reading: - was maintained - no group differences Reading enjoyment: — was maintained — no group differences Reading habit: — increased for participants of implicit approaches — significant group differences Media reading for being informed: — was maintained — no group differences Book-completion: - increased for participants of implicit approaches — significant group differences Visiting libraries and bookshops: - more participants of both groups had visited bookshop after treatment — participants of both groups visit libraries more frequently (implicit approaches have stronger and longer lasting effect)

Study	Sample Size	Type(s) of Intervention(s)	Results
Rüsseler et al. (2013)	46	Alpha plus Control Condition (generic literacy program)	Significant results for the experimental group: — Reading: d = .59 — Spelling: d = .57 Changes in employment status for experimental group: — before the course: all 36 participants unemployed — after the course: 11 (30.56 %) participants employed
Sabatini et al. (2011)	148	Corrective Reading; RAVE-O; Guided Repeated Reading	Significant results across all interventions: — Letter and Word Identification: d = .21 — Decoding: d = .46 — Passage Comprehension: d = .20 — Reading Fluency: d = .34 — Sight Word Efficiency: d = .18 — Phonemic Decoding Efficiency: d = .19 — No significant effect of training approach

Study	Sample Size	Type(s) of Intervention(s)	Results
Scarborough et al. (2013)	148	Corrective Reading; RAVE-O; Guided Repeated Reading	— 46% of participants made meaningful gains (at least .5 GE increase in two reading sub-skills) - 7 % of participants showed serious declines (at least .5 GE decline in two reading sub-skills)

Table 1: *Results from Intervention Studies.*

Multicultural Horizons: Neighbourhood Stores as Informal Arena for Learning and Transformation

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents some of the results of a multiple-case study interested in investigating the types of learning that emerge from frequenting intersubjective places with high socio-relational density located in high multiethnic settings. Using an interdisciplinary framework that links informal learning theory, the everyday multiculturalism perspective and contact theory, it is thematized how contact practices that originate from frequenting stores in high-multiethnic neighbourhoods, within the informal learning perspective, are equivalent to the expedients that allow for the display of those forms of knowledge that arise from socialization in a contingent and incidental way. The research has a qualitative structure and combines data from 22 semi-structured interviews with data from in situ observations.

Key words: Informal Learning, Everyday Multiculturalism, Multiple-case Study.

Introduction

This article presents some of the results of a research project developed within the Doctoral Program in Learning and Innovation in Social and Work Contexts at the University of Siena. The empirical basis on which the research was based was that derived from the results of the F.O.R.w.A.R.D. Project - Training, Research and Development of "Community Based" Strategies to Facilitate and Support Coexistence Practices in MultiEthnic Contexts[1]. Among its macro-objectives, the Project wanted to understand how to support and facilitate coexistence in high-multi-ethnic contexts, adopting a focus centred on the learning processes that structuring high-multi-ethnic societies imply (Amiraux & Fabbri, 2020; Fabbri & Melacarne, 2023). In particular, one of its research efforts aimed to investigate whether and under what conditions people living in a neighbourhood that has become structurally multiethnic learn to manage the ethnic-cultural differences that characterize it (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2020). Emerging

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results indicate that daily casual contacts between individuals who do not share the same ethnic or cultural background can stimulate informal learning that facilitates the reworking of one's interpersonal patterns toward more inclusive perspectives (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2020, 2023).

Building on this starting point, the underlying thesis of the study presented here is that some urban spaces, in particular, are characterized by specific properties in terms of relational potential (Semi, 2009; Amin, 2002) and learning (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2020). Starting from this assumption, the object of the research was the types of learning that emerge from frequenting intersubjective places with a high socio-relational density located in two neighbourhoods with a high multiethnic rate in Italy and Germany. In this perspective, the neighbourhood store — that is, a small outlet run by an independent merchant and often having a proximity pool (Fleury et al., 2020) — was identified as an emblematic case of those contexts that elicit informal learning, through processes of socialization and contact, among individuals who do not share the same ethnic or cultural references.

How have shopkeepers with a migrant background inserted themselves into a new social and work context? To what extent do the socialization processes prompted by frequenting neighbourhood stores accelerate the informal learning processes of merchants with a migration background? A multiple-case study was used to answer these research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2018) using a multidisciplinary approach in which sociological, adult education, and psychological perspectives are integrated.

The study was positioned within the constructionist perspective (Benhabib, 2002; Colombo, 2020, 2015), which thematizes the construct of difference by highlighting its situational, discursive, historical and sociocultural nature. While the process of social production and reproduction of difference, through which the meanings attributed to difference are recursively oriented and negotiated, remains central, what the constructionist framework considers relevant is the practical and material aspect of difference. That is, questioning how, by whom, in what contexts and for what purposes difference is concretely used in social interactions (Colombo, 2020). It also highlights how differences are the result of routines, implicit or explicit choices, mixing, mediations, conflicts, and repertoires of action, positioned within power relations (Wieviorka, 2013; Colombo, 2020).

In light of this conceptual framework in the following sections, the areas of literature that composed the theoretical framework of reference, the methodological choices made and the main results that emerged in terms of learning will be explored.

Theoretical framework

The construction of the theoretical framework of reference was organized keeping in mind the construct of intersectionality that arose from gender studies (Crenshaw 1989, 2017). For this study, taking an intersectional view expresses the idea that in order to thematize the complexity of multiethnic high-density societies, it is possible to work on the meeting points — on intersections—between disciplines and areas of focus. For this reason, three areas of inquiry were referred to:

- Intercultural relations sociology;
- Social psychology;
- Adult education.

For decades, cities have experienced increasingly constant daily exposure to complex forms of diversity and an increasing rate of differentiation (Vertovec, 2023). In superdiverse

cities (Vertovec, 2007; 2019; 2023) — that is, structurally characterized by a high percentage of cultural and ethnic differences that dynamically intersect and interact on multiple dimensions and at multiple levels—these phenomena produce unprecedented hierarchies of power and stratification, new patterns of inequality, and original spatial experiences of encounter and contact. Thus, the concept of superdiversity intercepts that set of ambiguities, contradictions, value and interest conflicts, complex situations and collusions that are grafted by the ongoing multiculturalization processes and that invest not only current urban landscapes but also small towns, neighbourhoods and suburbs.

From the analysis of the paradigms useful for reading multiethnic societies, the perspective of everyday multiculturalism (Colombo & Semi, 2007; Wise & Velayutham, 2009) is the one deemed most significant for this study. Attributing value to the everyday dimension means pointing the spotlight toward the set of micro-phenomena and micro-practices that take shape during everyday life. This perspective urges a paradigmatic and epistemological shift, and urges thinking about multiculturalization as the result of situated, concrete and ordinary processes (Amiraux & Araya-Moreno, 2014). It distances itself from those multicultural traditions that often take on an ideological and abstract character, reifying the concept of culture. On the contrary, it is the empirical analysis of small spaces — sidewalks, stores, flat buildings, parks — of the emergent meanings and repertoires of micro-actions that are enacted in these places by individuals who experience difference in its most direct and concrete form that assume relevance (Amiraux & Fabbri, 2020).

In this trajectory, studies on the processes that regulate the ways in which difference is managed in urban spaces with a high rate of multiethnicity do not reveal concordant results regarding the constructions of meaning and repertoires of practices that are generated from what takes place within the neighbourhood commercial fabric (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2020; Fleury, et al., 2020). In fact, some studies highlight how the function of the small ethnic store can be that of a cultural laboratory in which people are stimulated to rework interpersonal models and perspectives of more inclusive meanings (Fioretti, 2013), while others point out how frequently these are accommodated by ethnocentric positionings that incorporate suspicion and distancing (Mantovan, 2015).

Social psychology and in particular contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) adds significant insights to analyse the dynamics emerging from informal encounters between people with different ethnic-cultural backgrounds. According to this line of research, coming into contact with people who do not share one's cultural references can promote the reduction of prejudice, stereotypes, and biases. More recent developments in this theory, rather than calling into question contact experiences as such, focus on their quality (Hodson, Turner & Choma, 2017). This means that depending on the different meanings that a certain contact situation can take on, this can facilitate or hinder a change in the thinking mechanisms that govern relationships in high multiethnic contexts (Keil & Koschate, 2020).

The focus on meanings paves the way toward studies of adult learning. Particular reference has been made to theories of informal and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Marsick & Neaman, 2018). These are perspectives that offer some coordinates for analysing how individuals develop inclusive (or exclusive) interpretive models in reference to the ethnic-cultural differences that structurally characterize everyday life (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2020). Following the paradigm of informal and incidental learning,

the everyday challenges that densely multiethnic contexts pose to us can often trigger tacit, experience-based and embedded learning processes. These forms of learning occur as adults are involved in socialization processes through which they construct the sets of beliefs, world views, frames of reference, narratives, practices and actions that shape how individuals position themselves and interpret experiences of encountering differences in plural contexts. However, the quality and effectiveness of such learning is highly variable (Marsick & Neaman, 2018). This is because learning processes are frequently subject to fallible and inadequate interpretations and constructions of meaning, as they are based on distorted assumptions (Mezirow, 1991). Informal and incidental learning follows Mezirow's (1991) theorizing in emphasizing how pre-reflective and fallacious acquisitions, assimilated unconsciously in the past, can define the ways in which we make sense of the world and the relationships we construct in it. In this vein, Fabbri and Melacarne (2020; 2023) identify some of the patterns and perspectives of meaning formed in monocultural contexts as the coordinates that determine the adoption of keys that are no longer appropriate for the management of situations involving daily contact with difference. The inability to transition from reductive and pre-critical world views to more inclusive perspectives can turn into the adoption of micro-radicalized attitudes, lines of thought and practices (Fabbri & Melacrane 2023). It is in the reflective device (Mezirow, 1991; Marsick & Neaman, 2018) that is recognized as the tool that can enable one to overcome bias-influenced interpretive patterns in order to access more inclusive thinking. Reflection is that rational and rigorous process through which people subject to questioning and critical validation the assumptions on which their beliefs are based, and then proceed to generate new schemas and perspectives of meaning.

The common thread that connects the arguments of this wide range of multidisciplinary studies allows us to read contact practices as expedients that allow us to show those forms of knowledge that arise from socialization in an informal and incidental way (Marsick & Neaman, 2018; Bracci, 2017) in the swamp of contradictions of everyday life and that can open to trajectories of meaningful learning or positions of closure (Amiraux & Fabbri, 2020).

Methodological path and choices

The study is positioned within qualitative methodologies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2018). Specifically, the inquiry strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) adopted was the ethnographic multiple-case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2018). The research followed a two-level structured sampling procedure. At first, the two contexts within which to delimit the comparative case study were selected. These were two significant urban areas-the commercial fabric of a highly multiethnic neighbourhood of a medium-sized city in central Italy and the commercial core of a small city in southern Germany, as characterized by the structural presence of small ethnic stores. Participants were identified by following a Snowball Sampling strategy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) a total of 22 shopkeepers were intercepted[2] meeting the following characteristics: a) possessing a migrant background or

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2   In the Italian context, N=15 traders were intercepted from: Tunisia, Senegal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Morocco, Italy. The types of activities were: hairdresser, electronics store, convenience store, grocery store,

no migrant background, b) owning or operating a business within the boundaries of the target contexts, and c) having owned or operated a business for at least six months.

Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews (Edwards & Holland, 2013) conducted in situ at the stores of the merchants who participated in the research. The 22 interviews, conducted in Italian or English, were audio-recorded in their entirety, subject to consent, and transcribed ad verbatim. Alongside this empirical material are integrated field notes derived from moments of non-participant observation (Creswell, 2018), conducted over a six-month period in the vicinity of the small ethnic stores present in the two reference contexts, and accounts of informal interviews held with some of the traders who participated in the study. Next, the textual corpus was analysed using thematic analysis (Creswell, 2018) of the manual type.

Main findings

This section will make a descriptive analysis of the main learning outcomes that emerged from the body of information in the data. Thematic analysis (Creswell, 2018) identified two thematic macro-families of interest named: itinerant apprenticeship and in-store learning.

Itinerant apprenticeship
The research participants opened their businesses as a result of work paths characterized by high mobility and a high diversification of the trades, they performed in the country to which they moved. This allowed them to di-

versify their skills and build expertise, derived from their personal and professional histories, capable of responding to the flexibility and uncertainty of today's work contexts.

The entrepreneurial projects of the interviewees can be interpreted as expressions of trajectories of professionalization built from below.

One learns by inserting oneself within what can be described as an "itinerant apprenticeship" (Schön, 1983), where one acquires knowledge and skills by intercepting the forms of knowledge implicit in professional action (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Observing how other shopkeepers act and participating in practices means making certain sales or store management strategies one's own, and experimenting with these repertoires of action within one's own work context.

Doing entrepreneurship from these conditions opens up new trajectories for the development of a small trader's career: professionalism is not built within the fixed boundaries of a specific trade and anchored to a specific context of reference, rather the borders between them are crossed. Drawing on literature in the legal and educational fields, these figures can be called transitional professionalism (Fabbri & Romano, 2021) to underscore their polytraining that blurs the boundaries between domains.

In-store learning
Around neighbourhood stores, it is not uncommon to observe groups of people standing by the spaces in front of the entrances to the premises. Indeed, what emerges is that eth-

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bar, selling handicrafts, money transfer, herbalist store, comic book store, clothing store. In the German context, N=7 merchants were intercepted from: Italy, Vietnam, Turkey, Germany. The types of businesses were: ice cream store, restaurant, beautician, building materials store, bicycle store, goldsmith store, paint store.

nic stores represent a place where the need to group together, sit down and speak one's own language is welcome.

It is regarding socio-relational instances, felt by those with a migrant background, that commercial activities assume a significant role and value with respect to trajectories of exchange, interaction, and learning. Beyond their instrumental function, around stores people meet, compare, and exchange useful information. The boundary of the store extends, and the space of the threshold gives rise to new places for everyday micro-socialization. The informal conversations that originate from these moments of aggregation can be read as those devices that facilitate access to networks in which one recognizes oneself as a resource for building ties to support processes of inclusion. Such relationships allow one to deal with the complexity of a daily life that is constituted as multiethnic (and sometimes marginalizing) through the exchange of knowledge and experiences. One relies on one's family network or on the network of knowledge generated within the various communities of belonging present in the territory.

We interpret these figures as "adversity companions" (Revans, 1982) that is, a group of people who, recognizing each other on the basis of ethnic or cultural affinities, share difficulties and can support each other in understanding critical or challenging events, making them addressable. Some of them are already familiar with the reference codes of the area and, therefore, take on the role of experts in passing on their knowledge to novices who, as they approach a new social and work context, gradually acquire the set of skills useful for managing their own insertion into the relevant business and social fabric (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Thus, the ways in which store thresholds and sidewalks are inhabited and engaged can be taken as emergent constructs that represent a metaphor for the re-signification of certain neighbourhood spaces. What seems to emerge is an emergent model in which small business places become cultural laboratories where people socialize their knowledge. Respondents also learn to navigate an unprecedented social landscape through the processes of socialization (Marsick, Watkins, Scully Russ & Nicolaides, 2017) that are activated during these occasions of encounter and exchange. Understanding how to practice one's profession within certain regulatory protocols, learning how to hybridize the products sold in order to know how to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse clientele, and constructing and negotiating one's identity in a high multiethnic context embedded in a "monocultural" city, can be constituted as forms of informal and situated learning generated within emergent intersubjective spaces with high socio-relational density (Marsick, Watkins, Scully-Russ & Nicolaides, 2017).

In the German context, these networks are not confined to the local community of belonging but extend by triggering socio-economic relationships and connections that break and cross the boundaries of the initial engagement groups. One networks within association groups, with one's clients. To emerge is the thought that confrontation and collaboration are generators of ideas.

Meeting arenas also open up on the Internet. Digital tools offer the possibility of enhancing and enhancing informal learning opportunities by fostering discussion, exchange, and socialization of knowledge. WhatsApp chats, Facebook groups, reviews on Google and Instagram are devices used to search for resources, look to merchants who have conducted similar experiences to learn how they dealt with certain situations (opening a new store or switching to using organic products), share practices and repertoires of action. It is in social that one's professional development is accelerated

through processes of diffusion and contamination.

Rather than membership in a specific ethnically or culturally connoted community, one aggregates on the basis of an interest in participating in practices related to products, customers, and visions.

Thus, the structure of aggregations, groups, communities and informal networks takes on a multidimensional direction given by the participation of traders with different gender and age profiles, different life experiences, different professional histories, different educational backgrounds and different ethnic-cultural backgrounds. This connotation allows for experimentation with multicultural engagement strategies that can contribute to the construction and negotiation of inclusive ways in which we categorize and give meaning to relationships inscribed within the boundaries of superdiverse scenarios (Vertovec, 2007, 2023).

Concluding reflections

This article presented, albeit in a reduced way, some of the results of a doctoral research project interested in investigating the types of learning that emerge from frequenting intersubjective places with a high socio-relational density located in high multiethnic contexts. The analysis of the results shows how stores, thresholds, and sidewalks can be seen as informal learning contexts (Marsick & Watkins, 2018; Marsick & Neaman, 2018; Fabbri, Bracci, 2021). It is from certain relational instances and the need to have to deal with contradictory and complex situations that merchants with migrant backgrounds have opened up trajectories of re-signification of urban spaces related to small trade. From the possibilities of confrontation that originate from frequenting neighbourhood stores also derive the production of situated knowledge, which is social-

ized within the coordinates of the informal aggregations that gather in front of the stores. Merchants with migrant backgrounds learn through processes of experience sharing and through experience itself (Marsick & Watkins, 2018; Marsick & Neaman, 2018). These forms of informal learning fall on a spectrum from instrumental learning to more emancipatory forms. Shopkeepers with migrant backgrounds mobilize, organize, experiment with novel work practices, transform the context in which they are embedded, and produce new ideas and perspectives.

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Reconceptualizing Models of Learning and Relating in Higher Education in the New Era of "Anthropocene"

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the dynamics of an alternative higher education pedagogy that takes into consideration the new era implications and the need for educational actors to reorient themselves through new and more inclusive understandings of time, space and collectives. I examine two examples of interrupting the linear flow of typical higher education learning context and incorporating alternative practices, reflective of students' educational/learning biography, including their familiar experiences with the world. Adopting a practitioner inquiry positioning and drawing on emancipatory/transformational approach, recognition theory and orientational/navigational approach, I explore the meaning that pre-service preschool teachers attach to these practices and shape new forms of relatedness. Excerpts from their reflection texts are used to highlight this meaning. Findings suggest the potential for enabling a new "situated ecology" based on enriched conceptualizations of educational spaces, educational times and learning as a situated activity that takes place through sharing, belonging, and caring.

Key words: Learning and Relating, Higher Education, Anthropocene, Educational (Auto)biography, Reflective Journaling.

Introduction

We have reached a point in history when human presence and activity decisively affect individual and collective life on the planet and its future. The concept of "Anthropocene" has been introduced to describe the new socio-geological era (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). It is also suggested as a context for understanding the ecological implications of the human imprint, combined with the importance of reaching an enhanced awareness of the human interven-

tion consequences (Latour, 2018). The word Anthropocene originates from the Greek terms for human (άνθρωπος – "anthropo") and new (καινός – "cene").

Due to rapid changes, human beings are experiencing continuous disruptions at various relationship levels (Charissi et al., 2020; Koulaouzides, 2021), such as their relations with nature, with others, with social space, with time. Facing this critical point in human history also presents a challenge for learning and the types of learning processes that might enable

people to understand, live in, and co-create this period in more care-informed and, where necessary, transformative ways.

Considering the new era implications, this paper draws on the need for educational actors, as expressed by the field of higher education – higher education sustainable development research, to reorient themselves through alternative understandings of time, space, and collectives. Such a navigational approach goes beyond the emancipatory goal "for students to become active, critical, and responsible citizens that are capable of acting in today's world, as well as the future's" (Decuypere, Hoet & Vandenabeele, 2019, p. 2) and "focuses on the situated and entangled being of both human and non-human actors in specific, designated places" (Decuypere et al., 2019, p. 3). It seeks to sensitize educational actors to challenge their given ways of thinking and to take into account the anthropogenic condition and the blurring of distinctions, characteristic of this period of time.

My encounter with the ideas of Wildemeersch, Håkansson and Læssøe (2023), who express the need to interrupt the existing rhythms of educative moments and adopt an alternative pedagogy that opens new perspectives on how we relate to the world, has also been an inspiration. It is then my argument that transformative learning theory and its intersubjective basis as well as Honneth's critical theory of recognition (1995) and its emphasis on relational dynamics may offer a useful lens for a more sustainable perspective in Higher Education (HE) pedagogy (Brown & Murphy, 2012a; Brown & Murphy, 2012b; Jennings, 2015).

In line with this, I explore two examples of interrupting the linear flow of the typical HE learning context and incorporating alternative, semester-long practices, reflective of students' educational/learning biography, including their familiarity with the world expe-

riences. That is, auto/biographical work and reflection journaling. Alhadeff-Jones argues, a third level of learning which presupposes the understanding and transformation of the assumptions from which we make sense of our experience" is one that:

> … can, for example, be based on an in-depth analysis of the biographical processes (Dominicé, 2000) that account for the responses produced in a crisis situation, and the interpretative frameworks that they reveal. (Mezirow, 1991; Alhadeff-Jones, 2021, p. 316)

The present study is based on exploring the meaning that pre-service early years' teachers attach to these practices and shape new forms of relatedness. Excerpts from their reflection texts are used to highlight this meaning.

Adopting a practitioner inquiry positioning

At the background of incorporating, as part of the syllabus, practices that challenge HE students' routine ways of learning based on their educational experience and reflection upon it, is a perception of teaching and learning as an ongoing inquiry (Freire, 1970) consisting of a range of encounters derived from the micro/meso/macro context within which the learning takes place (Formenti & West, 2021). As such, continuous inquiry and praxis become a critical endeavour through which "human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other" (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

Claims for increased consciousness about the world we live in (Kahn, 2010) indicate the urgent need to consider the interrelation between ecological and socioeconomic as well as cultural implications that affect individu-

als, societies, the ways of relating to ourselves, to others, to the human realm and vice versa (Formenti & West, 2021). The way we perceive ourselves and the world is through our experiences in it. It is through these experiences that our assumptions and beliefs can also be challenged, leading to transformative learning and growth (Mezirow, 1991).

In such a troubled and 'liquid' world, wherein we suffer from serious sustainability problems such as growing inequity, lack of democracy, resources deficiency and radical climate change, new paradigms for reconceptualizing models of learning and relating are required. Critical reflection and dialogue in safe, accepting, and caring learning environments could play a crucial role in shaping possibilities for new inclusive and belonging life narratives (Formenti & West, 2021).

From the teacher perspective, the practitioner inquiry approach is "defined as the systematic and intentional study of a teacher's own practice" (Kennedy & Dana, 2022, p. 111) encouraging them to engage in ongoing reflection, data collection, and analysis in order to enhance their teaching and contribute to the broader knowledge base in education. By adopting a practitioner-inquiry approach, HE instructors may form their practice in a more informed way based on individual as well as collective backgrounds and experiences that affect teaching and learning (Kennedy & Dana, 2022).

This interest has become even stronger for me, due to the challenges associated with the new era and the subsequent need for teachers and students to respond effectively to the new era implications through empowering learning experiences. Consequently, some of my concerns that the emerging necessities gave prominence at, could be shaped by the following questions:

1. Where should an alternative HE Pedagogy be orientated to?
2. How should the roles of the lecturers and students be conceived, given the complexities of the new era?
3. How do we have to reconfigure our sense of place, time, and collectives?

Finally,

1. How can we navigate ourselves as educational actors through new forms of relatedness?

Theoretical - Conceptual framework

Based on previous studies, alternative HE pedagogy should facilitate personal growth through critical reflection and transformation (Kedraka & Rotidi, 2017; Raikou & Karalis, 2016; Raikou, 2019). It should also promote skills that make students more aware learners and reflective practitioners (Charissi et al., 2020, Charissi, 2021). The notion of "emerging adulthood" that Arnett has used to describe the in-between feeling that students experience during this period of life makes HE a critical period of life-span development. During this period, humans struggle to balance between the ambiguities of adolescence and feeling responsible for themselves (Arnett, 2004). It is about a developmental stage characterized by a 'liquid' adulthood and by the challenge of moving to a more autonomous way of thinking and relating with the self and the others; learning contexts which respect students' lived experiences and build on them may contribute to development, growth, and transformation (Charissi, 2022).

Within the emancipatory/transformational approach, human beings shape and reshape their identity and frames of reference

intersubjectively through symbolic interaction. It is in this way that they may change dysfunctional ideas and practices (Kokkos and Associates, 2019; Mezirow, 2000). Axel Honneth's critical theory of recognition (1995) could serve as a guiding framework which enriches our understanding of our students' needs, especially given the new era implications. It also navigates us through new forms of relatedness based on mutual recognition. Self-esteem and respect lie at the core of humans' struggle for recognition, as it is linked with personal identity and worth. The way in which intersubjective recognition is being realized in both private and public spheres forms moral consciousness and understanding of the world, may also contribute to students' enhanced sense of belonging and caring (Fleming, 2011, 2014).

Furthermore, the orientational/navigational approach supports that there is a need for reconfiguring, within HE, "traditional humanist conceptualizations of time, space, and collectives" and adopting "new, relational conceptualizations of educational spaces (as learning milieus), educational times (as rhythms that slow the present), and learning (as a situated activity that takes place through belonging)" (Decuypere et al., 2019, p. 1). Accordingly, it "aims to enable educational actors to orient themselves and to consequently navigate in, and to learn by making connections with our more-than-human world" (Decuypere et al., 2019, p. 1).

Reflective of the students' educational biography practices

The academic teaching and learning agenda I have been working on is oriented towards professional preparation and personal development of pre-service early years' teachers. Exploration of different pathways in which to promote relational dynamics and critical re-

flection has also formed part of my teaching concerns. Experimentation with alternative methods of learning, especially given the new era implications and the call of sustainability education for adopting enriched conceptualizations of time, space and collectives, has further informed my practitioner-inquiry positioning.

Educational Autobiography (EAB) project

Participants, material, and method
Educational autobiography belongs to biographical methods, more specifically to autobiographical stories (Dominicé, 2000; Abrahão, 2012; Pazioni-Kalli, 2012). It is a personal story that includes reflection and interpretation of the experiences that influenced one's learning/education trajectories, personal expectations and needs, professional choices. As such, it can serve as an alternative training 'tool' which embraces cognitive and affective dimensions of learning while enhancing self-awareness, a fuller understanding of life conditions and a mutual appreciation of humans' active role in shaping their lives despite any social constraints (Monteagudo, 2014, 2017).

During the implementation of the educational autobiography project, 87 (4th year) academic students from an Early Years' Learning and Care University Department in Greece, attending an experiential laboratory course in counselling, participated in writing their own educational/learning stories, combining oral exercises, and writing, mixing individual and group work, finally completing an evaluation form. At the same time, they were practising important counselling capacities such as self-reflection, mutual acceptance, genuine interest and active listening, empathy and authenticity.

The biographical activities carried out during the group sessions aimed to support the preparation of their autobiographical document. The procedure of the application was inspired by a sequence of specific steps and activities as proposed by Dominicé (2000, 2012) and Monteagudo (2014). Elaboration of issues such as students' family tree, their family group and its socio-psycho-pedagogic dynamics, the local-community and cultural context, their lifeline, and exploration of significant personal, educational and social paths, their personal escutcheon, were interwoven with narratives of formal and non-formal learning experiences. Finally, they were encouraged to attempt a reflective interpretation of their experiences in the light of possible new understandings and interrelations. Terms and conditions of privacy and confidentiality were mutually agreed from the outset.

Findings

Regarding the evaluation of the project (Charissi, 2020), there was a general agreement among students about the educational autobiography experience in terms of: (a) their final positive attitude, despite any initial hesitations, related to recalling memories and critical events as well as opening to new sharing experiences (86.1%); (b) the contribution of the exchange of experiences and points of view towards an enhanced self-awareness and a deeper understanding of life experiences (86%), a critical reframing of their personal story and identity (83.5%); (c) the dynamics of the whole process in gaining a more holistic understanding of how they think, feel, act (79.7%) and the consequences of their actions as mediators between family, school, and society (87.4%). Furthermore, as content analysis of their autobiographical narratives revealed, students managed to engage at a strong or moderate level (regarding in-depth and multidimensional analysis) in the elaboration of various life-events that impacted their educational/learning trajectories, an enhanced perception of personal agency in shaping life conditions and experiences and of the interrelatedness between various life spheres such as personal, interpersonal, global. They finally agreed on the significance of keeping a reflective journal of their learning experiences.

Some additional insights about the impact that the EAB practice had on students, can be summarized in their following comments:

The whole experience helped me review, re-evaluate my educational trajectory, express emotions, change my way of thinking about the role of experiences.

My participation after this reflection process was more conscious and I realized how influential my profession is for the kids, the family, the society.

I was personally developed because of the daily contact with different people and the exchange of alternative views on various everyday issues and concerns.

I realized that we must always show our feelings, discuss them and constantly evolve for the better.

I now understand how complex is the process of becoming who we are. Only if we reflect on the role of various contexts in which we live can we realize the extent to which they affect the way we think, feel and act… and subsequently, become able to affect them too.

Reflective Journaling Project

Participants, material, and method
On the other hand, reflective journals or diaries encourage students to write down their thoughts and reflections about their learning experiences (Veine et al., 2019). Following the feedback of the EAB project, 1st year students from the same Department, attending an introductory psychology course, were encouraged to engage in reflective journaling by the end of each lesson and 74 volunteered to participate. They were urged to reflect at all three levels of learning as mentioned in Illeris multidimensional theory (Illeris, 2007, 2009), that is:

> (a) the content of learning (including theory activities, knowledge, skills),

> (b) the incentive of learning (including feelings, motivations and will),

> (c) social context factors (including educational context) that affect learning and the possibilities of theory implementation in everyday life.

In this way, journaling practice could enhance students' holistic appreciation of the learning process, supporting, at the same time, qualitative changes towards more functional, liberating through expressing themselves, self-directed learning and personal growth (Charissi et al., 2021). A safe e-space was created to share their reflections during the course, and a final evaluation/presentation was prepared by the end of the term. Students shared their thoughts, feelings, concerns, and commitments during a concluding group work session aiming to reconnect reflections on the content of the course, that is, human cognition and behaviour with the new era challenges and the human intervention consequences.

Findings
It is worth mentioning that despite students' initial hesitations, by the end of the process they stated that the reflective journal activity increased their awareness of their thoughts and feelings. It also reinforced their self-expression and helped them to generate connections between the content of learning and themselves, the content of learning and everyday practice, thus better appreciating the role of experiences and relational dynamics for their personal and educational development and increasing their sense of self-worth and value. Some representative excerpts from the students' final assessment texts are:

> *Lesson by lesson, I observed myself, I saw that I was expressing myself more easily, the lesson took on a personal meaning and I began to understand more and more deeply my own place and the place of others in my learning.*

> *It helped me to appreciate myself, to better organize ideas, to understand how I learn. It was very interesting. The space we were given to take this activity made us feel that the way we think and feel about our own learning counts as well as the way it affects how we, then, act.*

> *The reflection by the end of each lesson was an interesting and particularly helpful part. We had the opportunity to reconstruct the information, clarify what was troubling us…to make useful connections, to evaluate the importance of interacting with others and participating in the learning process.*

Reflecting on the way students perceive human cognition and behaviour as part of the new era and the human imprint on the plan-

et has been the concluding activity of the reflective journaling project. Students had the chance to share their thoughts and feelings in small groups and then with the whole classroom. Their texts showed an enhanced social and emotional awareness. Some representative excerpts follow:

In the era we live in, the destruction of the environment negatively affects social relationships. We have no respect for the environment, and this is also connected to the fact that we have no respect for our fellow people who live in it. Only if the person changes, will the situation we live in also change. Only if we respect the environment, will we be able to respect each other.

We generally take life for granted without considering the planet, the society, the citizens, our fellow people. Human behaviour must change, and especially human perception and habits.

For many years, we have created many problems on mother earth because of changing our relationship with nature. This senseless destruction harms not only the environment but humans too. There is no understanding or substantial communication, instead indifference. To stop indifference, we must reflect on our choices and cooperate with each other so that we can make the changes we want to the environment and our lives.

[...] It would be good for us to redefine our behaviour and cognition starting from the education we take. We can achieve this if every time we act, we

think about the consequences of our actions...if we reflect on our experiences and learn from each other. It is not enough that we only seek change... we must also change ourselves.

Final thoughts

Findings suggest that qualitative changes in the ways we relate with each other, with the world and ourselves can occur during the implementation of reflective of the students' learning/ educational experiences, projects. We explored the example of incorporating in traditional HE context two semester-long practices, educational autobiography, and reflective journaling, both aiming to connect learning with real-life situations and sharing. By slowing down the rhythms of teaching and engaging students in introspective, retrospective, and prospective activities, we can create spaces of mutual activation of codes and meaning schemes that enable them to deal with any previous distorted communication experiences. Finally, in collaboration with our students, we can act as mediators of a new "situated ecology" (Formenti & West, 2021, p. 26) based on the power to reconnect and re-establish our relationship with various interacting systems through enriched conceptualizations. The main idea supported by the findings is that if (a) we establish equally challenging and supportive adult learning environments which appreciate learners' biography, (b) engage life-experiences in the learning context with the help of reflective, present-oriented and provoking practices, (c) facilitate mutual respect and intersubjective exchange, we can contribute to the development of more valued, aware and caring social agents. By shaping adult learning environments where everyone's experience and presence is accepted and appreciated, we can collaboratively with our adult students create more meaning-

ful, educational spaces for all educational actors (Fleming, 2011, 2014). By meaningful, we mean those educational places which nurture more inclusive and caring narratives based on being consciously present, adopting a sense of belonging identity and eventually, becoming potential agents of a more substantial conviviality (Decuypere et al., 2019).

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The Role of Critical Thinking on Teachers' Engagement in Gamification: the Case Study of the Erasmus+ Program "Gamified Introduction to Gamification"

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a qualitative survey of 15 teachers from several education levels in Greece, who participated in a training program on gamification, about the relationship between critical thinking and teacher's commitment to the use of the technique of gamification. There is evidence of the positive relationship between the process of critical thinking and the empowerment of teachers to use the technique. According to the teachers' testimonies, the technique is more applicable in some disciplines, such as IT Science, early childhood education, physical education, pedagogy, biology, literature and partially in theology. On the other hand, gamification's dynamics is decreased in the disciplines of mathematics and physics. This study also supports the idea that the more committed someone is to gamification, the less the critical thinking process works. Likewise, the less committed to gamification, the more intense the process of critical thinking is.

Key Words: Critical Thinking, Gamification, Teachers.

Introduction

Critical thinking and its contribution to the learning process of learners, whether it concerns adult or minor learners, is a topic that has been thoroughly explored in the international literature. These studies approach the issue of critical thinking from different perspectives, such as how it contributes to the learning process of learners, or how learner engagement contributes to critical thinking, or how active techniques can contribute to critical thinking. An important aspect in these studies points out the role of the teacher in encouraging students to engage in critical thinking. Gamification is defined as the use of game design elements in a non-game context (Brigham, 2015) or, rather, as a '*phenomenon of creating gameful experiences*' (Koivisto, & Hamari, 2014). Literature review presents gamification to have a beneficial impact on the enhancement of learning whether learners are young or adults ((Brookfield, 2005· Koivisto & Malik, 2021). It is designed to incur certain dynamics in the same way that games do (Ayoung, Wagner, & Liu, 2018). Studies also show that it promotes intrinsic motivation, thought providing opportunities for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Rivea & Palmer Garden, 2021), and causes a significant increase in students' general knowledge (Buckley & Doyle, 2016). However, many scholars are still wary of whether gamification alone can enhance student engagement and motivation. According to Rivera and Palmer Garden (2021), gamification will be transformed into a powerful tool to foster student engagement for learning, achievement and well-being if it will be extended to incorporate other experiences and outcomes of student engagement. It is not that clear in literature whether gamification is considered a pedagogical method or approach, and whether it belongs to active or modern techniques. According to Rincon-Flores et al. (2022) gamification is considered a pedagogy

strategy that favours students' participation and their motivation. For Dichev and Dicheva (2017) gamification, on the other side, is considered as an approach which enhances learners' motivation, however it is still required to be systematically examined whether it can be considered as a recognized instructional approach. For Sailer and Homner (2020) gamification is a method for instruction, however it is not clear which are the factors that contribute to successful gamification, especially for cognitive learning outcomes.

As far as critical thinking is concerned, it is an issue that has been thoroughly examined in the international literature, but much less can be found on the connection of critical thinking with gamification. According to Emmick (2007) critical thinking is "a process that allows students to harness their voice and mature in the classroom". He also argues that critical thinking is a crucial process for the teachers, as it enables them to participate in the active learning of their teaching environment. For Lai (2011), critical thinking incorporates all these component skills useful for analysing arguments, making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating, and making decisions or solving problems. Along similar lines, Asigigan and Samur (2021) have examined gamified practices, like gamified STEM, and they assure that gamification has a positive effect on students' critical thinking skills. Angelelli et al. (2023) in their study have also noticed gamification's positive effect on critical learning, while they have found that the nature of the game (interactive and cooperative) enables learners to focus on problem-solving skills and group work.

The case of Greece

The application of games as learning environments can facilitate learning by fostering

learners' cognitive and behavioural engagement with the educational topic. Greek schools have begun to employ various digital technologies; however, gamification is a trend timidly implemented in Greek schools (Tzikouli, 2022). Despite the large body of literature on the positive impact games may have on students' performance and engagement (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015), Greek teachers tend to utilize non-digital games due to the multiple challenges they face, like teachers' readiness, knowledge, and skills. The use of active learning techniques by Greek teachers is particularly widespread, mainly in primary education, but also in secondary education. There are few statistical data, which prove that gamification is not a particularly widespread educational technique in Greece, but instead it is used very limitedly and, in fact, mainly applied by teachers from the IT field. Focusing on the correlation between gamification and critical thinking, we found a few studies that point out a positive nexus between them. More specifically, Tzelepi et al. (2020) have examined the value of gamification in online discussion in a research study which took place in Greece with students who study in the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE). The above scholars found that gamification has a positive effect on the students' conscious awareness of their own thinking and learning. Gardeli and Vosinakis (2019) in their study conducted on primary school students in Greece have found that augmented reality learning environments generate several positive effects on students' motivation, engagement, and learning.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between critical thinking and teachers' commitment to the use of gamification in their teaching practice. More precisely, we ex-

plored the opinions of 15 teachers from early childhood education, primary and secondary education from several schools of the Peloponnese, Greece, who had undergone a training experience in March 2023 within the context of the Erasmus+ program "Gamified Introduction to Gamification" on DIBL. This program is implemented by three countries (Greece, Denmark, and Italy) in the period from May 2022 to May 2024. DIBL is an innovative digital platform for collaborative learning based on dilemmas, to acquire knowledge and skills useful to become guide-teachers to further support the training of other teachers. The main target of this project was to improve DIBL, then adapt it to the Greek educational environment and evaluate its effectiveness. These teachers would serve as guide-teachers to help their colleagues back to their schools to implement gamification in their daily practice.

Method

The research method used in this study is the interview conducted to the group of 15 guide-teachers. We decided that the qualitative research would be ideal for the needs of this study, compared to the quantitative research. More specifically, we decided that it would be more productive to explore teachers' views on critical thinking through a personal conversation with them. Their interviews were 20–25 minutes long and they conducted online in June 2023.

Sample

The sample in this research are 15 teachers, 3 men and 12 women. Regarding the age range, 5 were between 35–45, 6 teachers were between 45–55 and 4 between 55–65. Three of them have a doctorate, 5 have a master's degree, and

the remaining 7 hold a bachelor's degree. Most of the teachers come from the IT field, namely 4 of them, while 2 people come from pedagogy, 2 from theology, 1 person from early childhood education, 1 teacher from physical education, 1 from mathematics, 1 person from physics, 1 from economics, 1 teacher from biology and finally 1 person from literature.

Results

Starting with the teachers who come from the IT field (4 in total), we found that all of them were aware of the technique and its dynamics, and they are all applying gamification in practice. More specifically, 1 of them applies it systematically, 2 apply it occasionally and only 1 rarely applies the technique. The last teacher, who was less committed to the technique, admitted that after the training procedure he has included this technique in his daily practice. *"Starting from the next day, I included gamification with enthusiasm!"* he admitted. When asked about the role of critical thinking in this process, he said that it helped him think in a deeper and more complex way about the use of this technique, also to see himself and his actions through different aspects, which strengthened the process of critical thinking, despite his reasonable doubts about its implementation to his school due to the shortcomings of technological equipment. *"Our school is small and located in a remote area in Peloponnese with few facilities. However, this did not stop me from implementing alternative methods of gamification"*, he added. The presence of other colleagues was of major importance to this person. Through our discussion we shared the enthusiasm this teacher expressed, and we saw the strong commitment he has gained towards the technique, despite the technical difficulties he faces in his school. Critical thinking seemed to work very well for this person. The 2 teachers who were applying occasionally gamification, they admitted that their commitment to the technique has not changed much, but it surely has increased. They also felt more engaged with this method. When they were asked about the role of critical thinking, they both commented on the importance of debating with other colleagues to evolve their thoughts about gamification. *"It empowered me to think clearly and rationally, understanding the role of gamification in teaching the IT Science. It also helped me realize that digital tools are not necessary to apply gamification. Colleagues played an important role in this process"*, one of them said, while the other said, *"Critical thinking promoted effective communication between us. We listened actively, and we engaged in respectful debates. I feel I contributed effectively to this process"*. We did not also meet the same level of enthusiasm we met in the previous teacher; despite they recognized the new skills acquired. Lastly, the person who was most committed to the technique and applied it the most, compared to the others, felt that the critical thinking process did not work for her. *"I am not sure if critical thinking worked somehow. Probably my previous engagement to gamification played a role in this development"*, she affirmed. She also added that she applies gamification to the same degree as before and nothing much changed.

Regarding the teacher from the early childhood education, she uses gamification every day to children in kindergarten, as it is a technique particularly widespread for kids at this age, she said. On the issue of critical thinking, she felt that it did not work, except perhaps in identifying some weaknesses of the technique. The teacher who comes from the science of economics stated that he systematically applies gamification in his course. Similarly, as it happened with the previous ones who were more engaged to this technique, he felt that the critical thinking did not have a strong appliance, perhaps only to reaffirm his previous

thoughts. Regarding the two teachers from theology, one stated that prior to the seminar she wasn't aware of the technique. Although she enjoyed the training process, she didn't feel empowered to put gamification into practice due to the short time of the seminar which did not furnish her with many analytical skills. She stated that *"I still lack confidence in my ability to implement gamification. I am far from being fully engaged. I don't know what it means for the critical process"*. However, she admitted that she has applied some tools of gamification. The second theologian stated that she had sporadically applied the technique in her teaching, as theology does not offer many opportunities for techniques like gamification to be applied, an opinion expressed by the first theologian too. For this teacher, critical thinking helped her to evaluate herself and to reflect upon her performance as a teacher before retirement. This was a finding of significant importance to us: to what extent a high-quality critical thinking could help older teachers re-evaluate their qualifications and their performance to alter their pre-existing perceptions about the traditional methods of teaching and cause them to take an opposing stance. *"Some charismatic teachers might look like fools with the advent of digital age, unless they get upskilled",* she admitted eloquently. This teacher had gone through a deep process of critical thinking, she evaluated both her day-to-day activities and her long-term teaching goals. It was clear that this lady was particularly concerned about how gamification could help her improve her performance before retirement, besides the students' benefits, and if she should invest time to get upskilled or not. It has become clear to us that she felt a sadness emerging from this realization. It is unknown to us whether this realization has led to action towards strengthening her commitment to gamification or a return to the traditional teaching approaches. The only sure is that we realized that this teacher has probably gone through the most intense critical thinking process of all.

Following the second theologian, the teacher from the physics education had also gone through a deep process of critical thinking. He told us that he decided to participate in the seminar out of sheer curiosity, having an established opinion that gamification was not applicable to physics education. The interaction with other teachers from various disciplines, combined with the educator's encouragement, were determined to involve in a process of high-quality critical thinking. He used facts and information from the team to evaluate and judge his pre-existed idea. Discussing with the other colleagues, this teacher felt an inner motivation to find ways to apply gamification in his own work. *"I felt an intrinsic motivation welling up, it was not a selfish aspect that had arisen, but more a desire to offer something new to my students that, I sensed, would excite them. I just wasn't sure at that time how this could work in practice, but I felt excited!".* For this teacher, critical thinking was a practice of self-awareness which allowed him to reflect on the beliefs he had and the choices he used to make. *"This was probably the best way to exercise my mind. I rejected my own idea, which had eventually proven to be a simple prejudice"*, he admitted, smiling at us. Another perspective of critical thinking had arisen from our discussion with the teacher from the literature. We discussed how critical thinking worked for her to assess her previous thoughts about the relevance of gamification compared to the students' age range. Since then, she wasn't using gamification in her teaching practice, as she believed that gamification was suitable only for elementary school students and not for high school students. She spoke warmly of her involvement in the process of critical thinking, but also about the role of the educator as a mentor. This seminar, she said, has encouraged a productive, rigorous, and respectful

debate between teachers which helped her to reassess the value of her ideas, not uncritically indeed, but after much thought and reflection. "*It helped me to call into question my previous thoughts about the age-range. I did not accept the given information uncritically, I rather preferred to dig deeper and uncover my beliefs and assumptions which influenced my previous thinking. It was very revealing! I decided to engage in this technique and to encourage my colleagues to take action too*", she added.

For the teachers from the pedagogy science, the discussion was more or less on the same wavelength. The one of the two who implemented gamification in everyday teaching felt that critical thinking worked less, compared to her colleague who implemented it occasionally, who felt more empowered in applying it in the future. In fact, the latter pointed out that the process of critical thinking worked as psychotherapy. *"It was like psychotherapy, I discovered new aspects of my life"*. She explained that she felt an intrinsic motivation to involve in spontaneous exploration and curiosity in gamification and its tools. On the other hand, for the first teacher, this seminar was more a means to reaffirm her beliefs about the dynamics of gamification. The teacher admitted that despite valuing critical thinking, she felt that it did not influence her on an individual level to change any of her habits or practices. She would continue to apply gamification in the same degree as before. However, she admitted that critical thinking had probably helped her to consider and value the ideas of the other teachers. She committed to listen actively, gather viewpoints, think logically and look at ideas from different perspectives. "*Until then, I thought that gamification was more of interest to young teachers. I was surprised to see pre-retirement teachers so enthusiastic about it. I think critical thinking worked more for them [compared to me] and boosted their confidence. This process inspired me, helped me understand their perspectives, which motivated me to change my previous belief*". This comment was for the theologian we discussed before.

The teacher from the field of mathematics expressed the difficulties in applying gamification at the level of high school students, as the demanding detailed program makes it almost impossible to be applied. This barrier was mentioned by 2 other teachers who were occupied in high school too. All of them commented on this terrible habit Greek schools have of boxing and limiting students, especially those in the upper classes. The mathematician commented on the lack of the necessary equipment in the schools, a barrier pointed out by other teachers too. He mentioned that gamification does not fit in the science of mathematics, in total, except for particular tools. Regarding critical thinking, he told us that it probably served as a confirmation on earlier thoughts he had about what specific gamification's tools could be used in mathematics. *"I did engage myself in critical thinking about how possible could be to apply gamification in mathematics. Thus, I rigorously questioned the idea of applying dilemma, compared to decision-making which seems to be more applicable"*. Despite this, he did not present any desire to apply the technique in his course in the future, he admitted he would continue to use the traditional teaching methods. Critical thinking helped him reaffirm his previous thoughts. On the same wavelength, the teacher from the science of physics didn't seem to be willing to apply gamification in his teaching practice, despite the training he received. He maintained his previous thoughts about its application; thus, we could say that through the process of critical thinking he reaffirmed his previous thoughts. *"I am rather sceptical. I think critical thinking empowered me only at the level of challenging the techniques of gamification in a way to realize that they do not fit in physics"*.

Finally, the teacher from the science of biology, was the one who proposed this Erasmus+ project on gamification and participated as a learner in the specific seminar too. He was particularly enthusiastic about the use of gamification and its dynamics. He proposed the co-existence of teachers from different disciplines and education levels in a common training program to promote a productive dialogue to empower teachers and alleviate any existed inequalities. The biologist's choices seem to have been vindicated because this seminar proved to be significantly productive for most teachers, regardless of their commitment to gamification. On a personal level, he has been applying gamification for several years in his classrooms, although, he admitted that he learned new tools he wasn't aware of all these years. Through the process of critical thinking, he reaffirmed his thoughts about the dynamics and perspectives of gamification. "*What happened was a self-fulfilling prophecy [following his proposal for this seminar]. As a trainee myself, I evaluated my thoughts to determine how strong they are*", he said with enthusiasm.

Conclusions

Before analysing the results of this research, we should mention the initial concern we had about the research method we should follow between quantitative and qualitative research. In the end, the qualitative research was chosen and the interview more particular because we believed that it was the ideal means to explore in depth those teachers' beliefs about critical thinking. We feel satisfied, despite the difficulties we encountered in evaluating some answers that were relatively ambiguous. At the same time, we were given the opportunity to meet fellow teachers, to learn about the difficulties they face in their daily practice and to confirm the dynamics of critical thinking for several disciplines. Proceeding to the conclusions, it is obvious that there is evidence of the positive relationship between the process of critical thinking and the empowerment of teachers to use the gamification technique in all educational levels. We noticed that the technique is more applicable in some disciplines, such as IT Science, preschool education, physical education, pedagogy, biology, literature and partially in theology. On the other hand, we have noticed that its dynamics is decreased in the disciplines of mathematics and physics. This study also supports the idea that the more committed someone is to gamification, the less the critical thinking process works. Likewise, the less committed to gamification, the more intense the process of critical thinking is. Of course, this study includes testimonies of 15 teachers, further work needs to be done to determine the relationship between critical thinking and teachers' commitment to the use of gamification in their teaching practice.

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The Expansion of the Venetian Civil Society: towards a CHAT-based Diagnostic Procedure for City-wide Formative Interventions

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ABSTRACT

This conference paper investigates the dynamics of the Venetian civil society activities facing the critical challenges of their community, such as overtourism, increasing floods, and rampant depopulation. The study draws on the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory framework to analyse how local activists and organizations have mobilized to address these issues. Thus, it seeks to identify the conditions for intervening in the collective learning processes enacted by civil society activities across Venice. The paper outlines the initial steps of a diagnostic procedure, involving participant observations, archival records, and narrative interviews, to reconstruct the expansive learning cycles of key local activist groups. Preliminary findings reveal the problems faced by the recently disbanded network, *Curiamo la Città*, and the subsequent need to focus on the mobilizations of separate collectives and networks. The study aims to shed light on the potential for coalition building through fourth-generation formative interventions centred on the Venetian civil society.

Keywords: Venice, CHAT, Expansive Learning, Diagnostic Procedure, Civil Society.

Introduction

Once celebrated as the Most Serene, Venice has notoriously been plagued by incessant overtourism, increasing floods driven by climate change, and rampant depopulation over the last decades (Pascolo, 2020: 17-26). Lately, a series of dramatic events, from the MSC Opera's crash in June 2019 (Giuffrida, 2019) to the *Aqua Granda* of the following November (Robbins, 2019), and above all the Covid-19 pandemic (Brunton, 2020), have laid these existential threats bare to the larger public worldwide. Yet, the Venetian civil society has been unwilling to surrender to the familiar chronicle of a death foretold for its community and sought to mobilize in radical new ways (Cavallo & Visentin, 2021; Feltrin, 2022; Lopez, 2021; Tosi, 2017; Wacogne, 2022) to confront such organic crisis (Thomas, 2009, pp. 145-146). Therefore, the need to overcome notable organizational conflicts and governance flaws to envision Venice's desirable futures has led many local activists to pose this fundamental question:

How can the Venetian civil society learn to collectively face its city's critical challenges?

The research project sets forth by addressing this complex issue through a doctoral study that aims to reveal the conditions for intervening in the collective learning activities of the local civil society. To do so, it must develop a socio-pedagogical approach (Tramma, 2018), bridging the neighbouring disciplines of adult education, as a radical, popular, and community practice, and social movement studies (Kuk & Tarlau, 2020). This effort is informed by the pioneering works of key research groups across Europe, namely Leuven's Laboratory for Education and Society (Masschelein et al., 2021), London's Thomas Coram Research Unit (Cameron et al., 2023) and the Pedagogy, Education and Praxis network (Petrie et al., 2020). However, given the longitudinal and citywide scope of the potential formative intervention in the Venetian civil society, the study centres on the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework (Engeström & Sannino, 2021).

CHAT focuses on how collective human activity transforms reality through processes of material, symbolic, and social mediation in specific cultural and historical settings. It distinguishes between two types of learning enabling these joint transformations, namely expansive or defensive learning processes. Respectively, these indicate human activities moving beyond their dysfunctional states to contribute to social change or becoming unable to do so due to internal and societal contradictions (Nummijoki et al., 2018). The emerging fourth generation of CHAT seeks to understand and catalyse the interacting cycles of expansive learning involving multiple activities dealing with wicked problems – e.g., climate resilience, homelessness, systemic racism (Engeström et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the ways to engage with those social actors from different sectors and level of governance responsible for tackling such challenges are still loosely defined by the CHAT framework.

Therefore, from the activist educational perspective guiding the current research, the case of Venice is relevant for three distinct reasons: 1) By describing how civil society activities committed to improving their community's well-being develop, this participatory study can help devise educational tools, methodologies, and settings which catalyse such process; 2) a precise CHAT-based diagnosis of the conditions for intervening in the Venetian civil society might serve as a practical socio-pedagogical model to help other local communities similarly endangered by wicked problems; 3) transdisciplinary research on collective learning processes at the core of civil society activities may contribute to the fourth generation of CHAT by confirming, challenging, or extending its theoretical propositions.

Methodology and field research

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory defines activity systems as purposeful collective work performed by individuals and groups within specific social and cultural environments. These activities are shaped by the interaction of six components: the subjects of the activity, the object of their work, the rules governing it, the actual division of labour among the participants, the external community connected to the activity, and, finally, the artefacts mediating the relations between these components. The typical intervention conducted by previous generations of CHAT scholars (Sannino, 2011) seeks to support single or multiple activities through their journey across the collective zone of proximal development. For instance, the Change and Boundary-Crossing Laboratories (CL and BCL) catalyse the expansion of the horizon of possibilities for collectives and networks. By working through the dysfunctional interactions of key components, these activity systems envision novel ways to face their

objects and learn concrete resolution to such problems (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013): CLs can empower them to transform specific professional and institutional settings; BCLs promote structural changes of entire social sectors and governance levels.

The preparatory work of CL and BCL consists of selecting the targeted activity systems, reconstructing their past developments, and establishing intervention goals based on the current needs of each activity (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013, pp. 79-116). However, fourth-generation interventions aim to foster the formation of coalition of activities, which conceive their critical challenges as cross-sectoral and multilevel, and thus develop integrated resolutions to them (Engeström & Sannino, 2021, pp. 11-18). The pioneering work of Sannino (2020) shows how interconnected Change Laboratories facilitate the interplay of expansive learning cycles that lead NGOs, policymakers, and local communities to improve Finland's Housing First programmes. Given how much time and resources these coalescing interventions require, CHAT scholars suggest conducting a thorough diagnosis of the field of activity to ensure their feasibility (Dinh & Sannino, forthcoming). Nonetheless, a rigorous procedure for diagnosing the needs and potential of local transformative activities to expand into heterogeneous coalitions capable of facing wicked problems is not yet established.

Therefore, to explore the critical case of the Venetian civil society, a new CHAT-based diagnostic procedure needs to be devised and tested throughout the preliminary fieldwork. The main purpose of this diagnosis is to reveal the conditions for the expansive learning of the civil society activities confronting the effects of overtourism, environmental degradation, and depopulation across Venice. Besides, it seeks to reconstruct the expansive cycles through which these activities learn to elaborate transformative solutions to the respective wicked concerns. Lastly, the results of the diagnosis may inform the development of a fourth-generation formative intervention aiming to sustain the cross-sectoral and multi-level cycles of expansion The ongoing research aims to provide the first detailed account of such a diagnostic attempt.

The first phase of this study took place between March and June 2022, an initial fieldwork period during which I partook in the public gatherings of the newborn local network called *Curiamo la Città* – CC, Caring for the City (Chiarin, 2022). As a mix of environmentalists, unions, housing collectives, and other activist groups supported by the municipal opposition parties, CC mobilized the civic forces seeking to envision the desirable future (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022) of the Venetian community. The mutual objective of these actors was to establish a long-lasting campaign orienting the local political discourse and practice towards joint resolutions to the city's critical challenges: thus, diversifying the local economy away from overtourism, promoting new development models in line with the morphology of the territory, and strengthening social cohesion across the different municipalities of Venice.

Despite my intention of examining *Curiamo la Città* as the case main unit, the network quickly disbanded in the summer of 2022. Therefore, I continued the fieldwork by participating in most of the public meetings arranged separately by the twenty-five civil society organizations that CC represented – ca. forty meetings between July 2022 and October 2022. During this period, I also consulted the civic archives that recorded the historical mobilisations headed by local environmentalist groups, neighbourhood associations and the social-solidarity economy. In the months that followed, I conducted a preliminary directed content analysis (Assarroudi, 2018) of the data collected as a participant observer and through the documentary research. This led me to identify five

key actors, in part affiliated with CC until recently, yet currently campaigning on their own: *Alta Tensione Abitativa* (ATA – High Housing Tension), *Coordinamento No Inceneritore* (CNI – Committee No Incinerator), *Riprendiamoci la Città* (RLC – Let's Take Back the City), *Poveglia per Tutti* (PPT – Poveglia for Everybody), and *Comitato No Grandi Navi* (NGN Committee No Big Ships). Respectively, ATA focused on short term tourist rent, CNI tackled environmental degradation, RLC dealt with social distress, PPT addressed the mismanagement of public property, and NGN opposed the local development model represented by the cruise and cargo ship businesses. The selection of these collectives and networks of activities was based on three criteria: the members' long-term commitment to social change, the wide participation in their initiatives, and the concrete impact on the institutions in charge of facing such problems.

Then, I utilized the participant observations and archival records to provide an overview of the broader cultural-historical context in which these civil society activities developed: in line with CHAT-based intervention procedures (Marcelli, Morselli, 2022), I reconstructed five timelines consisting of the mobilization and institutional activities established in response to the specific critical challenges faced by collectives and networks selected. Since these entangled objects have long affected the well-being of the Venetian community, public assemblies, protests, and civic campaigns as well as regulations, legal actions, and political resolutions have been numerous in recent decades.

Therefore, I conducted eleven narrative interviews, including one test interview, to improve the timelines both as chronological representations and as instruments of recall for potential formative interventions on the local civil society: for each collective and network I chose one civil society representative and one local politician affiliated with their activities.

The interviews centred on those periods of the city's history characterized by large mobilizations and institutional efforts to tackle the wicked social, economic, and environmental problems of Venice. The interviewees were prominent and long-time participants in the local civil society activities, and could identify key episodes as triggers for their expansive learning cycles. These were both included and highlighted in the updated timelines, which trace the cultural historical developments leading to the formation of the selected collectives and network. This first stage of the diagnostic procedure concluded with the initial examination of the interview transcripts through directed content analysis to obtain the results of the member checks.

Preliminary diagnostic results

The original purpose of the diagnostic investigation was to gain familiarization with the field and adequate access to *Curiamo la Città*, the miscellaneous network recently mobilized across Venice. Its dissolution clearly required major changes to the research design, but this ineffective attempt to bring together civil society and political actors shed light on the cultural-historical context of the case study. The campaign that CC tried to activate was oriented by a general object: the desirable future of the Venetian community. Although rather abstract and wide-ranging, it had the potential to unite the collective efforts of those civil society activities facing specific critical challenges through a long-term vision of social, economic, and environmental change.

The expansive learning cycle was initiated by two key groups, the *Comitato No Grandi Navi*, previously mentioned, and *Quartieri in Movimento* (QIM – Districts in Movement)*, a smaller network of neighbourhood associations from Venice's mainland districts. NGN and

QIM first questioned their own ability to instigate and spread novel political discourses and practices aimed at radically transforming the future prospects of the local community. Then, by involving several Venetian environmentalist committees, neighbourhood associations, and trade unions during public assemblies, they analysed the historical tensions between major civil society and political actors. Rapidly, this process of expansion came to a halt without them starting to model more tangible solutions to the civil society's lack of coordination and efficacy, as well as to its wicked problems.

Based on the available data, a working hypothesis explaining the abrupt break of activity by CC can be formulated: its participant groups were unable to overcome the internal organizational conflicts and the external governance flaws because the shared object of activity largely exceeded their collective zones of proximal development. For instance, ATA, CNI, and PPT, three out of five key actors selected, had either formed or resumed to mobilized only recently and the respective activities had yet to show significant outcomes. Notably, theirs as well as RLC's collective work began developing in new cross-sectoral and multi-level directions to face specific critical challenges while the experience of Curiamo la Città was ending.

The timelines indicated common elements between the historical backgrounds of ATA, CNI, RLC, PPT and NGN as well as important divergences in terms of mobilization practices and institutional impact in recent years. Throughout the mid-1970s and mid-1990s, the expansive actions of many environmentalist, housing, and social-solidarity groups were oriented towards improving the Special Law for Venice – n° 171/1973 (Parliament of Italy, 1973). Its purpose was to promote the environmental, urbanistic, and socio-economic recovery of the city of Venice following the devastation of the 1966 flooding, an unprecedented high water, reaching 194 cm above sea level. Given the complexity of such a task, a multi-level committee coordinating the works of the city, regional, and national governments was responsible for the application of the Special Law. Therefore, civil society activities often sought to influence the decisions of the committee through long-lasting campaigns in favour of a diversified local economy, the decontamination of industrial areas, and the repopulation of the historical centre.

Due to the minor role played by the Special Law since the early 2000s, collectives and networks concerned with specific challenges faced by the Venetian community ought to develop their activities in different directions. Lately, key civil society actors such as *Alta Tensione Abitativa*, *Coordinamento No Inceneritore*, *Riprendiamoci la Città*, and *Poveglia per Tutti* have learnt to expand by involving academic, health, and public sector bodies. Seemingly, their attempts to mobilize as cross-sectoral and/or multi-level coalitions of activity have addressed the need to elaborate both desirable visions and concrete resolutions for the future of the community. Therefore, these four groups have become the actual units of the embedded case study – the *Comitato No Grandi Navi* has remained mostly inactive during this past year. The second diagnostic phase has focused on tracing the expansive cycles through which they have learnt to affect the local, regional, and national public sphere in novel ways. However, the research results following the systematic analysis of such data are still forthcoming.

Discussion and conclusions

The tentative development and application of a CHAT-based diagnostic procedure to assess the potential expansion of the Venetian civil society indicates some preliminary outcomes: the discovery of five specific objects that orient the joint mobilizations of key local activist groups;

the identification of a general, yet more indefinite, object shared by the most transformative activities across the community, namely its desirable future; the reconstruction of the cultural-historical background from which these collectives and network develop. The recent movements towards and away from a common conceptualization of the city's critical challenges may suggest potential convergences and divergences between the expansive learning processes of the local civil society.

Based on the preliminary fieldwork, *Curiamo la Città* disbanded because its participants were unable to overcome the secondary contradiction generated by their entangled object of activity. Yet, to understand how this contradiction manifested when CC first attempted to mobilize would require a more detailed data collection on the expansive actions taken by the single organizations joining the network. Semi-structured interviews with five representatives out of the twenty-five collectives would provide a description of CC as an activity system and suggest how the transformation of its components could support the development process. Reporting these results back to the participants may encourage them to co-design fourth-generation formative interventions aimed at establishing a coalition of activities capable of facing the critical challenges identified by *Curiamo la Città*.

Social distress, environmental degradation, short-term tourist rent, and the mismanagement of public property have long been objects of concern for the Venetian civil society. The second phase of the diagnosis starts by identifying how these wicked problems orient the joint work of the four activity systems previously selected – RLC, CNI, ATA, PPT. This allows to discover which visions of the future and concrete resolutions emerge from the current mobilizations of these collectives and networks. The interplay of the transformative visions and resolutions produced by the four

groups may reveal their respective potential for expansive learning.

Therefore, the ongoing diagnostic procedure can attest whether the examined civil society activities need and seek to expand, are growing across sectors and levels, and converge or diverge through their developmental efforts. Depending on the resulting diagnosis, the citywide fourth-generation formative interventions may become operational in two distinct ways: either adapted to the separate processes of coalition formations driven by the specific challenges the city faces, or to sustain the convergence of these expansive cycles into a heterogeneous coalition reclaiming the future desired by the Venetian community.

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Dysfunctional Assumptions in Refugee's Parental Involvement: A pre-post study through Transformative Learning's view

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ABSTRACT

Transformative Learning theory concerns the way in which the adult, through new experiences' acquisition, transforms the initial formative learning. Adults in order to be able to interpret and explain the new reality have to adapt initial formative childish learning in new conditions. In this learning process, the dysfunctional assumptions have an important role as they strive to maintain the stability of the world's image and its disagreement with the new data. Dysfunctional assumptions concern the adult and the world around him even though reality often differs, and its data contradicts this image (Young et al., 2003). This means that most people cannot objectively interpret the facts, as it is difficult to move on from their possibly incorrect view of the new reality. According to Mezirow (2000), people find it difficult to converse with other people's contrary views, perceptions, and beliefs. This happens, because of their original frame of reference, according to which the beliefs of any individual that do not match their personal ones are rejected as unfounded, unreliable, or wrong (Mezirow, 2000). In our survey, we tried to imprint dysfunctional assumptions of refugee parents' involvement in children's school because parental involvement is a crucial integration factor for both refugees and hosting society (Georgiadis, 2020; 2023).

We preferred semi-structured interview in a before and after case study (pre-post study) to product our research data because we would rather not generalize but just to imprint them. Regarding the limitations of the pre-post study (Torgerson and Torgerson, 2008) we tried to emphasize on the dysfunctional assumptions' transforming characteristics of parental involvement as they appeared after their children's several months exposed to school environment.

Key words: TLS, Dysfunctional Assumptions, Parental Involvement, Parenting, Integration, Refugees, Education.

Education: Long Life

When we discuss about education we mean all types of education (formal, non-formal and informal), and in "a philosophical concept according to which education is considered a long-term process that begins at birth and lasts throughout life"(CEDEFOP, 1996, 80).

Adult Education as a Democracy's Matter

Since Knowles (1968, p. 386) supported that adults learn differently from children, research and theoretical dialogue has been particularly productive. According to Knowles, adult education is a process of developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life, to be able to apply whatever knowledge and skill they gain today, to living more effectively tomorrow. So, adults' learning experiences should be organized around competency-development categories (Κουλαουζίδης, 2022, p. 98). The dialogue culminated in Jack Mezirow's unique monograph, in which he characterizes learning in adulthood as a transformative process that aims to expand and potentially change adults' reference frame that has been formed during their socialization period (Κόκκος κ.α., 2021).

In the citizenship's field, citizen's continuing education is an important factor that promotes democracy (Κόκκος κ.α., 2021). The need to raise awareness among citizens is imperative in order to be more informed, autonomous, and able to formulate common action plans that meet their vital interests, participating in the consultations and decisions that concern them (Κόκκος, κ.α. 2021).

Adult education is required by social field's stormy changes, traditional social structures' crisis, the growing indifference to the public, combined with part of the population's susceptibility to the uncritical acceptance of propagandistic and populist discourse (Κόκκος, κ.α. 2021).

Transformative Learning

Transformative Learning concerns the way in which the adult, through new experiences' acquisition, transforms the initial formative learning. According Mezirow, Transformative

Learning theory is affected through Freire's 'conscientization', Kuhn's 'paradigms', women's movement consciousness, Roger Gould's writings, philosophers' theories such as Jurgen Habermas, Harvey Siegal and Herbert Fingerette, and his field observation of his wife transformative experience (Mezirow, 1978). Transformative learning theory is a metacognitive evidential and dialogical epistemology of reasoning, understood as advancing and assessing's process of a belief, involving the validation and reformulation of meaning structures (Mezirow, 1978). Transformative learning refers broadly to processes that result in significant, irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world (Hoggan, 2016). We cannot critically reflect on an assumption until we are aware of it. Also we cannot engage in discourse on something we have not identified, or we cannot change a habit of mind without thinking about it in some way (Cranton, 2002). Transformative learning's ten phases are: Disorienting Dilemma, Self-Examination, Critical Assessment, Recognition of Shared Experiences, Exploring Options for New Behaviour, Planning a Course of Action, Acquisition of Knowledge, Trying New Roles, Building Confidence, Reintegration (Mezirow, 1978). Brookfield also reports a strong case can be made of the fact that as we examine learning across the lifespan, the variables of culture, ethnicity, personality and political ethos assume far greater significance in explaining how learning occurs and experienced than does the variable of chronological age (Brookfield, 1995).

Dysfunctional Assumptions as Transformative Learning term

Anyone's world consists of Schemas (Young et al., 2003). They are deeply entrenched beliefs about the self and the world, learned at a very

young age, often all a person knows, providing with feelings of security and predictability (Young et al., 2003). To give up a schema is to relinquish knowledge of who one is and what the world is like (Young et al., 2003). But what about assumptions? We are our assumptions (Brookfield, 1995). Assumptions are the taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and our place within it that seem so obvious to us as not to need staring explicitly, and they are categorized in three types, paradigmatic, prescriptive and casual (Brookfield, 1995). As Koulaouzides noted, according to Mezirow theory, transformative learning mainly prepares and eventually causes change in society, since the recognition of the dysfunctional assumptions is the key step leading to the liberation of adult learners from their ways of thinking that impede their undertaking social action (Koulaouzides, 2017). Through critical examination, people discover thinking and acting assumptions.

Parental Involvement

Through 1920s it has been emphasized that for the more effective promotion of the common school and home's aims and for the strengthening's purpose of the service which each carries on itself, it is desirable that parents and teachers cooperate more systematically than they have heretofore done biopolitical glance (Gruenberg, 1922). In the 1960's racism recognition brought about the passage of the Civil Rights Act. The underclass needed support as much as early immigrants had, children needed a successful school experience and improved schooling, and family conditions would help acculturate the underclass into the values and mores of the dominant class (Berger, 1991). In this context, it is emphasized and organized parent's participation in their children education. In the 1970's in the USA, Gordon stated through her parental involvement typol-

ogy the crucial role for child's lifelong development and community's progress (Gordon, 1977). As Berger (1991) pointed out in the early 90s schools already had an exceedingly difficult task, but their task would be made easier when a true parent-teacher-community alliance occurred. Epstein (1996) emphasized the term partnership as an expression for parental involvement, which means the identification of interests by parents as participants in taking responsibility for their children and working together to create better educational programs (Zedan, 2011). Apparently, parental involvement refers to parental behaviours related to the child's school or schooling that can be observed as manifestations of their commitment to their child's educational affairs (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). This means that a parent who shows these behaviours to a larger extent, can be regarded as higher involved than a parent who shows these behaviours in a lesser degree (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). According to Epstein's typology, parental involvement's six categories as basic parenting, facilitating learning at home, communicating with the school, volunteering at the school, participating in school decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein & Dauber, 1990), is a culturally responsive model accounting for parental engagement within the context of home-school-community collaboration (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). In the recent ten years, while the ties between parents and schools have broadened and deepened resulting in greater involvement and influence of parents, their participation becomes necessary and vital element (Zedan, 2011).

Refugees-Immigrants' children education

The enormous number of refugees/immigrants arriving through the Eastern Mediterranean route, part of which remains in Greece after the E.U. (Turkey Agreement of March 2016), highlighted the need to adapt the Greek education system to refugee children. Refugee children have a different culture, most of them living in Open Accommodation Facilities, go to public schools where, undeniably thanks to the Refugee's Education Coordinators (REC), manage to attend classes and "join" the school reality (Aroni, 2018; Paida, e.a., 2020). The establishment of the figure of the REC aimed at creating bridges between the school and the society. In this sense, their responsibility is major, as they are the individuals to whom the refugee parents entrust their children to go to school. In most cases, they are the only people representing the school with whom these parents have some relationship (Crul et al., 2019). Parents' role in relation to the school is replaced by the Refugee's Education Coordinators, while in addition, the children, given their emerging ability to learn the language of the host country, assume adult roles in terms of mediation.

Refugees-Immigrant's Children's parental involvement: Barriers as Challenges

According to Mezirow's 's theory, psychological procedures and dysfunctional assumptions are barriers to educational and social integration (Τσιμπουκλή, 2020). At the same time, barriers are also promoters to investigating new ways of learning. Adult learning process, as a process of transformation, is the result of a crisis, which an adult experiences when he tries to resolve contemporary dilemmas based on old practices and assumptions (Τσιμπουκλή, 2020). And

this is exactly what happens in refugees' cases. As reported, parents excluded through luck of integrating procedures and RECs are the only individuals representing the school. These parents have some relationships with RECs (Crul, et al., 2019). Most refugees come from societies where education is important and teachers are highly respected, entrusting their children to the school system, highly respecting teachers' authority and believing that themselves should not be much involved in the life of the school (Kovacevic, 2018). A strong majority of refugee parents don't speak the host country's language or English and are often illiterate in their native language (Kovacevic, 2018). Unpacking the complexities behind the families' situations within their new environment can prove challenging when you consider the number of issues at hand: they are faced with learning a new culture, the law of their new country, adjusting to an unfamiliar environment, often preoccupied with working in an unaccustomed job market, and learning new skills to provide economic stability for their families(Kovacevic et al., 2018). Relational and emotional conflicts in which previously functional patterns of behaviour within families are found not to work well within the resettlement setting, as traditional cultural values and patriarchal gender roles are challenged in the resettlement context by a more liberal cultural environment with different expectations, and where there is a financial need for women to work outside the home (Weine, 2008). Barriers to adult's integration are language, agency, social networks, family and children, psychological conditions, education, and gender (Sobczak-Szelc et al. 2020).

Qualitative Research

This study attempts to gain some kind of 'before and after' picture in an historical sense

using refugee assumptions' interview, according to their parental involvement. It was somehow an intellectual puzzle our questions tried to represent (Mason, 2002). As Torgerson & Torgerson noted, quasi-experimental research methods like Before and after study was widely used in health and social science research in order to make causal inferences (Torgerson & Torgerson, 2008). In our survey, we want just to approach transformative learning dysfunctional approaches without causal inferences. We have interviews as soon as they lived in an Open Camp and thereafter, while they lived in the city.

Semi-structured Interview

Interview as a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or people (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954), is an interpersonal drama with a developing plot (Pool, 1957), while it stands on discourse and people's lives. For this study, we choose the semi-structured interview because it can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee, and the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a preset interview guide (Denzin & Lincloln, 2018). The interviews have been conducted in English language.

Sample/ Participation/ Informed consent

The sample of our research was parents of students who lived in an Open Accommoda-

tion Facility and follow up public school . They were five persons, Asylum Seekers, two women, three men, and their nationalities were Afghan, Somali, Bangladesh, all of them speaking English. The women are single parents, and the man was the father of a nuclear family. The general principle of informed consent applies widely. People have the right to have prior knowledge of just what they agree to before agreeing to it (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Only in this way it is possible for them to decide to participate or not. Potential participants in research need to have the nature of the research explained to them in terms which they could reasonably be expected to understand (Howitt & Cramer, 2011).

Procedure

We have interviewed twice during their accommodation in an Open Camp Facilitation and after their removal to the city. The first one interview was while they lived in the Camp and the second one was at the end of the school year, as they already accommodated to the city. Our questions were, among other topics, about parental involvement. It was mentioned that conducting research with people who are considered vulnerable presents unique challenges and requires special attention from researchers (Benzon & Blerk,2017).

Data production through thematic analysis

As soon as they accommodate in the Camp, their question was when the children should go to school. The school was mentioned as one of the reasons they decided to leave their country. They were unable to do anything about children going to school, they couldn't help their children studying, they didn't transfer them

to school, they have no idea of their children's progress. Children's rights were unknown to them.

In their country there was not that kind of care. They depend on Refugee's Education Coordinators. The role of culture and tradition played a role in shaping their experiences and beliefs about education. In their countries there is no parental involvement. Teachers have all the authority and there are no mediators.

All interviewees mentioned that there is a lack of representation of their culture in the Greek state schools their children attend, and that Greek schools in general do not take their cultural background and interests into consideration.

More specifically, there was an issue with:

a. *lack of Integration procedures, language, and insecurity (Georgiadis, 2020, 2023).*

b. *Instead of parental involvement, they noticed children's parentification (Garcıa-Sanchez, 2018).*

c. *Gender stereotypes.*

d. *Parents are disempowered in their role through refugee condition.*

e. *Diversion roles regarding host country language.*

f. *Managing time strategies (mother tongue and homeland culture to their children).*

g. *Reorientation when they lived to the city.*

Conclusions

Transformative Learning theory could be the change of paradigm to integration model, through parental involvement.

Crises today have individual, societal and global dimensions. They leave people experiencing loss, struggling with feelings of having lost their way in the world. Crises seem to demand action and may require that we short-circuit reflection, especially critical reflection. The challenge may be to bring about both self-transformation and social change; to form new thoughts that may unsettle fixed positions (Fleming & Eschenbacher, 2022)

In societies' difficult times Freire's Pedagogy makes as sense to us (Soeiro et al., 2022), as Transformative Learning. Integration is as total matter of our societies as Transformative Learning is for everyone, continuously and ceaselessly.

Bridging the gap between home and school that is a gap between home and society.

Strategies such as: (1) creating a parent liaison position; (2) tapping into existing community service organisations; (3) providing parent education programmes (4) second chance schools (Georgiadis, 2023).

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Second Chance Schools and Migrant Integration: The role of Transformative Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of Second Chance Schools as a tool in the Integration of Refugees and immigrants, with an emphasis on the theory of transformative education (Mezirow, 2007). As you know, immigrants leave their country of origin for many reasons, one of them is for a better life for themselves and their children. Thus, they wish to improve the level of their education as well as their children's. For their children, this means their introduction to the educational system of the host country, and for them, the chance to continue at some level of the educational system. In Greece, there are Second Chance Schools that offer this possibility (Papachristopoulou et al., 2018). The basic theory applied in these Schools is that of transformative learning. As an alternative to the banking model, which situates learners as recipients of knowledge and thus education as reproductive, critical pedagogy positions learners as participants in knowledge creation, and thus education as transformative. The purpose of transformative education is to empower learners to see the social world differently and through an ethical lens so that they will challenge and change the status quo as agents of change (Eschenbacher, 2020).

Second Chance Schools were designed and funded by the European Union some three decades ago, so that member states could offset the effects of dropout rates and tackle social exclusion. To answer the question, during the school year 2020–2022 we conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with immigrants who attended Second Chance Schools in the prefecture of Attica or had graduated in previous years and were staying in Open Accommodation Facilities in Attica. The interviews were analysed using the Qualitative Content Analysis method. In particular, through this research, an attempt was made to record the opinions and experiences of the trainees for the application of the transformative learning method in the Second Chance Schools and its contribution to the development of the critical-social reflection of the trainees regarding everyday issues. We examined issues such as thinking more maturely, becoming more aware parents, husbands, people, becoming more active citizens, changing their opinion and attitude towards everyday issues.

Key words: Migration, Transformative Education, Integration.

Introduction

International migration is a timeless phenomenon. The process of integrating immigrants into host societies is a constant issue for the Western and European world. Although immigrants are a vital part of the economy of

developed countries, since they constitute the cheap labour force, their inclusion in the wider society, in terms of equality, is not always supported. Refugees are treated in a similar direction. The flows of refugees that began to arrive in 2015 from the countries of the Middle East and Asia, seeking protection and refuge from the horrors of war, are a difficult issue both for Europe and for Greece to manage. The prospects of the social and economic integration of refugees and immigrants in steel remains a big issue. Given the large number of third-country nationals who have applied for international protection in Greece, as a country of first reception, the current legislation on asylum in Europe, the European Agenda on Migration and the prevailing economic and social conditions, integration seems a field quite difficult. Nevertheless, efforts are being made, both by local, state, non-governmental, international and European bodies, as well as by the nationals of third countries themselves. Integration is defined as a two-way and long-term process (Georgiadis & Pantazis, 2020). With the better organization of the state mechanisms involved in social and immigration policy, given that the economy in Greece and Europe is heading towards booming and not the other way around, the issue of integration, as well as the benefits of integration, can bring a positive sign. So, one of the main issues raised in this period is the integration of immigrants in the Host Countries. One of the key elements of migrant's integration is the knowledge of the language of the host country through a fast process. One such process is adult education and in particular Second Chance Schools (Pantazis & Georgiadis, 2023).

Second Chance Schools (SDE)

The general philosophy and pedagogical concept of Second Chance Schools (SDE) is part of the concepts of reformist pedagogy and alternative schools, education for and through the community (social education) and open education. Elements of these pedagogical currents, which are included in the philosophy and purpose of the SDE are:

a. *Exploiting human abilities and potential at ages beyond those specified by the state "existing" school.*

b. *Consideration of the local community as a space for pedagogical intervention and a source of learning.*

c. *Utilization of the possibilities offered by the narrower and wider society for the establishment of social and professional skills.*

d. *Multi-disciplinarity in learning processes and highlighting its practical consequences in order to develop the cognitive and social abilities of learners considered as active learners.*

e. *Implementation of pedagogical processes based on the needs of students and the challenges of the physical and social environment.*

f. *Differentiation of the learning process compared to the conventional school through the facilitation of the participation of the "leaker", the open curriculum and the focus on the learning needs of the student.*

g. *Reinforcement of social learning through processes of interpersonal communication, participatory decision-making, regarding the content of the learning material and the methodology, with the implementation of projects and with the connection of the school with the happenings in the community.*

SDE are public schools for adults in the field of Lifelong Learning education. They are

aimed at citizens aged 18 and over, who have not completed the nine-year compulsory education. With this institution, they are given the opportunity to obtain a title equivalent to a high school diploma, emphasizing the acquisition of basic qualifications and the development of personal skills. Today, there are 76 established SDE, in the 13 Regions of Greece (Krivas, 2007).

As a school model, SDE emerged from the American "Accelerated schools", which were founded in the late 1980s in the USA, with the aim of dealing with the leakage of secondary school students, reintegrating them into the school process and equipping them with skills for their social adaptation and to become capable of joining the labour market. The main pedagogical goal of "Accelerated schools" was to satisfy the needs of students through the emergence and utilization of each one's potential (Levin, 1997).

They tried to achieve this goal based on the following pedagogical principles: in contrast to the traditional school, which separates students — directly or indirectly—according to the extracurricular help they have, these schools were characterized by the unity of learning content and practices for all students, integrating the action of all those involved in education (teachers, parents, students). As a result, (a) strengthening the involvement of all students in school processes and responsibility in decision-making. (b) supporting them so that their potential emerges through the educational processes and their weaknesses (cognitive, psychological or social type) are reduced (Krivas, 2007).

On this theoretical background, the *Second Chance Schools* were founded, they were first described with this title in November 1995 in the "White Paper" of the EU under the heading "Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society". Five main objectives were formulated in this text:

a. *To encourage the European citizens to acquire new knowledge. The school should approach and cooperate with the business sector.*
b. *To combat social exclusion.*
c. *The European citizen should use three languages spoken in the EU countries with proficiency.*
d. *Investment in education should be considered equivalent to other financial investments.*

SDE curriculum is open and flexible and is based on the principle of multiliteracies rather than a strictly predetermined and centrally planned syllabus (Georgiadis, 2010).

The Program takes into account the social reality that the trainees experience every day in combination with their special characteristics. The learners' experiences from their surroundings are an important resource, which is used in the learning process. The flexible learning subjects, "lessons", of the ESS aim at the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills by combining formal, non-formal and informal forms of learning, but also at the acquisition of social skills (learning how to learn, cooperation, communication, etc.).

The subjects that make up the core of the program are the following: Greek Language, Mathematics, Informatics, English, Social Education, Environmental Education, Cultural-Aesthetic Education, Elements of Technology and Natural Sciences, Guidance — Career Counselling and Counselling Psychology.

The program at SDE is fast-paced and lasts 18 months, 2 school years, divided into two nine-month periods. The timetabled weekly program covers 25 hours (20 hours are covered by Literacy, 2 hours by Consulting Services and 3 hours by workshops of various activities - projects). The purpose of SDE is the integration of adult students, in our case refugees, into the economic, social and cultural

society, the elimination of social exclusion as well as their more effective participation in the workplace equal (Krivas, 2007).

Transformative Learning Theory

The American scholar J. Mezirow, since the 70s, has developed the theory of transformative learning, the main basis of which is critical reflection (Kokkos, 2005b). He was particularly influenced by the work of Dewey, Freire, the German-born philosopher J. Habermas on reflective dialogue, Bateson's theory of learning, etc. while in the past fifteen years he has occupied a multitude of scholars in the field of adult education as he proposes his more clearly documented study approach (Kokkos, 2005a; Kokkos, 2005b).

In Greece, the institution of SDE is the practical will to create a school different from the others, with a programmatically declared and institutionally guaranteed innovative, flexible and open character, which promotes creativity and critical thinking, and aims at personal empowerment, the transformation, and the emancipation of the learner. The above are the fundamental principles of the Theory of Transformative Learning, according to many, the most prevalent adult learning theory in recent years (Kriva, 2007).

The basic premise of his work is that people are possessed by crystallized and stereotyped perceptions because of the socio-cultural environment in which they are socialized. They are trapped, in essence, already from their childhood in a system of "mental habits" (or "views") through which they perceive and interpret social reality without realizing the importance that this system has in the course of their lives (Jarvis, 2001; Jarvis, 2006; Kokkos, 2005b; Yiotopoulos, 2014; Pantazis & Georgiadis, 2023). At this point, we observe several similarities in Mezirow's theory with

habitus, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu, which basically constitutes a system of predispositions through which we perceive social reality, interpret it and evaluate it (Koulauzidis, 2008). However, with the passage of individuals into the phase of adulthood, and especially during periods of crisis in their lives, comes the questioning of this system as individuals face problems in terms of their smooth social functioning by adhering to it. The process in which the individual, after critically reflecting on his mental habits, reconstructs his beliefs and fixed perceptions was called by Mezirow "transformative learning" (Jarvis, 2001; Jarvis, 2006; Kokkos, 2005a; Kokkos, 2005b; Pantazis & Georgiadis, 2023).

Influenced to a great extent by Habermas, Mezirow is led in his work to a tripartite distinction of learning. As the first form, he defines instrumental learning, in which learning is achieved through solving problems and determining the cause-causal relationship. As a second form, communicative learning is presented, which concerns the human tendency to learn from his interactions with others through communicative codes. A third form of learning was defined as emancipatory learning, which includes the recognition and/or reconstruction of stereotypical perceptions and which, according to Mezirow, can only be achieved by adults as, to a large extent, it relies on the wealth of experiences that have acquired throughout their lives, in the skills of critical reflection and critical dialogue that effectively lead to awareness (Mezirow, 2000; Koulauzidis, 2008).

Transformative learning, according to Mezirow, is the process that brings changes in a frame of reference. Adults have acquired a coherent body of experiences; relationships, concepts, values, feelings, habitual responses, frames of reference that define their bioworld. Frames of reference are constructions of assumptions through which we make sense of our experiences. Because of people's strong

tendency to reject ideas that do not conform with their preconceptions, there is usually difficulty in switching from one frame of reference to another. However, when circumstances allow, transformative learners move into a frame of reference that is more inclusive, more insightful, more reflective, and empirically integrated (Demetrio, 2003).

A frame of reference consists of two dimensions: mental habits and opinions. A habit of mind is a set of assumptions, broad, generalized and orienting predispositions that act as a filter for the interpretation of an experience. Mental habits can be sociolinguistic, ethical, epistemological, philosophical, psychological or aesthetic (Mezirow, 2016). A typical example of a mental habit is ethnocentrism, the predisposition to exclude some from a collective as subordinate (Demetrio, 2003).

A habit of mind is expressed as an opinion. The point of view is made up of several semantic structures, i.e. sets of expectations, beliefs, feelings, behaviours and judgments that determine the way we categorize things and interpret causality. Meaningful schemas arbitrarily determine what we see and what we don't see, cause-effect relationships, versions of the succession of events, our image of others as well as of ourselves which we often idealize. They suggest courses of action whose implementation is automatically adopted unless subjected to processes of critical reflection (Mezirow, 2016).

To extend that experience and circumstances that allow, as we have seen above, we can proceed to more reliable frames of reference with the aim to better understand our experience (Mezirow, 2016). To achieve this, skills, sensitivities, knowledge must be amenable to critical reflective dialogue; to be open-minded, to learn to listen with empathy, to "bracket" previous criticism, seeking common ground. The innate characteristics of emotional intelligence (self-awareness and

impulse control, persistence, zeal and motivation, empathy, and social intelligence) are clear resources for adults to develop the ability to evaluate alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical reflection. In both communicative and instrumental learning, critical reflection and self-reflection are emphasized, re-evaluating what is taken for granted in order to create an original but more reliable critique (Mezirow, 2003).

Critical thinking involves logical reasoning and intuition. Both are affected by limiting emotional responses. Many beliefs are the result of generalizations through repeated interactions beyond the conscious. As we will see below, transformations can be focused and conscious, the result of repeated synaesthetic reactions, or finally abstract assimilations, for example the assimilation of another culture or the uncritical acceptance of the rules, norms, and ways of thinking that it includes (Mezirow, 2016). In this process of transformation of views, he observed four stages of learning:

> a. *"Elaboration of an existing view", in which an assumption is reconstructed without, however, questioning the views to which it belongs — in essence, the individual idealizes his system of mental habits.*
> b. *"Adopting a new point of view", directly related to one's mental habits. It is basically a process of expanding one's views in the various fields of life without again challenging one's crystallized perceptions with which to interpret reality.*
> c. *"Radical transformation of a view".*
> d. *"Transformation of a mental habit or an entire system of mental habits" which practically means reframing the way in which the person now perceives reality, evaluates*

his experiences and learns from them.

Mezirow in his work considers the transition of the adult person to the state of maturity as certain through the accumulation of experiences that takes place over the years, and perceives all this as an emancipatory process (Mezirow, 2000). At this point, however, his work has been criticized, particularly by Peter Jarvis (2004), who argues that Mezirow's work does not support his notion that older people are de facto more mature than their younger counterparts. It recognizes the process of reflection as learning but neglects the effect of experience on the development of a set of skills, emotions, and sensations (Jarvis, 2004; Koulauzidis, 2008).

Methodology

The aim of this research is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of adult trainees with a refugee profile in the SDE in the region of Attica, regarding the contribution of transformative learning to their empowerment and their inclusion in Greek society.

According to Kokkos (2005a), the method under study is an innovative approach to Mezirow's theory that attempts to achieve the goals of this theory, looking for different ways to achieve them. This means that the method we are studying seeks innovative ways of developing critical thinking and promoting reflective dialogue during the learning process, with the ultimate goal of overcoming and transforming dysfunctional assumptions for learners. It is obvious that the innovative character of the Transformative Learning method offers a field for fruitful investigation of the possibilities of its utilization in the educational context of SDE and a strong motivation for the realization of the present research.

Based on the above, this research is part of the direction of research that supports Transformative Learning and encourages the search for new methods for its utilization in the learning process within the context of adult education (Boudon, 1997).

In order to achieve the individual objectives of this research and to fulfil its purpose, the qualitative approach was chosen.

The formation of the specific selection results from the researcher's attempt to capture and explore in depth the opinions, behaviours and attitudes of the research participants. The present research was carried out on residents with a refugee profile of the Eleonas Open Accommodation Facility for Asylum Seekers and Vulnerable individuals in Athens during the period 2018 – 2021, who attended in various SDE in the city of Athens. Our sample consisted of 20 subjects.

Research Results

The subjects of our sample are socially marginalized and come from families with limited or often non-existent educational capital.

The majority of them are unemployed due to the lack of knowledge of the language and other formal qualifications that could provide them easier access to the labour market as well as more favourable working conditions (e.g. insurance, higher salary, etc.).

Furthermore, another feature of our research is that the majority of them are men (only three women with a refugee profile studied at SDE).

When asked about what they gained from their attendance, they answered that the attendance at SDE helped them to understand the language better and thus to be able to communicate better, write as well as read. They realize that without these skills, their survival, and coexistence within the Greek social context be-

comes particularly difficult and their integration very difficult.

They consider that their studies at the SDE have contributed to the improvement of the quality of life, to a smooth integration.

It helped them overcome several difficulties they were facing and changed their attitude. They overcame many difficulties they had (e.g. bureaucracy, relations with public services, etc.) regarding their integration in the host country.

Then, from their words, it can be concluded that they participated in SDE because they thought that this would help them in their professional development.

Some reported that they believed it would help them find a better job, others that it would improve their position in the job they already had, some that it would gain the respect of their boss and coworkers, and others that it would help them get a job, because it would offer them necessary supplies that because they did not have them, they found it difficult to find work.

We made them also a question regarding the values they acquired during their attendance and the answers were intriguing: equity, participation, communication and collaboration, community spirit, reflection, experimentation, trust, risk-taking, community expertise and mutual respect.

Finally, they were pushed to study at SDE because they thought that their family relationships would improve.

Subjects who had children in school answered that by being involved in school, they could help their children with schoolwork.

In addition, they believed that relationships would improve with other family members who knew the language and would be able to keep up with them and share things with them.

Conclusions

SDE, with their founding purposes, brought to the fore a current aspect of social development, like never before, school dropout and the social exclusion of people with a refugee profile, two issues that, if not addressed with due attention, will act as deterrents towards the smooth integration of people with a refugee profile.

Studying the existing literature as well as the white paper that refers to the junior secondary education certificate, we found that indeed the junior secondary education certificate was a necessity for the European Community and also for Greece, which is a member of it, and their operation without delays is imperative.

Based on their founding purposes, SDE established in areas affected by social exclusion, in degraded areas and with a fairly high unemployment rate, which mainly concerns those who have not completed basic compulsory education.

Through the interviews, a positive (transformational) framework is outlined in which the educational process takes place.

Regarding their reasons for studying at SDE, their answers to our research questions lead us to the conclusion that their choice is based on the formal certification offered by the high school diploma, a key element for their inclusion in the host country. In particular, they believe that it contributes positively to their professional upgrading, as well as to a better professional choice with better working conditions (Georgiadis, 2010).

Finally, their strong desire to obtain the high school diploma and the belief in its future usefulness lead the research subjects on the one hand to point out the positive aspects of their education and on the other hand to declare that they were very satisfied because they were helped to change perceptions and attitudes towards issues that they made it difficult

for them. They make this statement for two main reasons: a) because they find that these schools differ radically from typical schools. They point out that in these schools the way of teaching is entirely different. b) Cooperation with the trainers is one of the elements that helped them overcome their dysfunctional assumptions and be able to integrate smoothly (Pantazis & Georgiadis, 2023).

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Pasolini and his "Manifesto Theatre": A New Permanent Poetic Laboratory to Transform Society

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ABSTRACT

How is it possible to reinvent, through Theatre, both transformative education and adult emancipation for a world to come pandemic, especially after the SARS-CoV-2? The purpose of this research is to offer an answer, constructing a teaching method through the experimental use of the *Manifesto Theatre* by Pier Paolo Pasolini for adult education. According to my research, this experimental method responds to Jack Mezirow's Theory promoting the synthesis of three elements: critical reflection, rational disclosure, centrality of experience. Pasolini's *Manifesto* Tragedies can be used as scenario-based learning exercises adapting to contemporary culture to highlight students' critical and transformative posture. The experimental method fully responds to the demands of *Transformative Learning* due to its configuration as an open and permanent laboratory not only for actors (students) and directors (researcher), but also for society as it tends to the "cultivation of communities of practice" in which adults are fully self-employed and emancipated.

Key words: Manifesto Theatre, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Transformative Learning, Adult Education, Performing Arts Education.

Introduction

In 1968, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975) published the *Manifesto per un nuovo teatro* in which he indicated the need to set up a school of linguistic and ethic-political re-education for society (Gianeselli, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). Indeed, he considers the theatre as a pedagogical tool in the "triadic relationship" (Houssaye, 1998; Damiano, 2013) between intellectual and neocapitalist society (Gianeselli, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). Pasolini opposes to this neocapitalist reality the linguistic re-education through theatre, cinema, and poetry as embodied acts of teaching to make society emancipated and to promote critical thinking: so, we should therefore consider performing arts as languages and their products as discourses that we analyse consequently to understand social, political, and economic processes. So, the corsair pedagogist (Gianeselli, 2023b) assumes that "Learning is a social process, and discourse becomes central to making meaning" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10). This is only the first element that allows us to establish a comparison between the pedagogical and didactic posture of Pasolini and that of Mezirow: in 1968, the corsair pedagogist understands that:

a defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience. For some, any uncritically assimilated explanation by an authority figure will suffice. But in contemporary societies we must learn to make our own interpretations rather than act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others. Facilitating such understanding is the cardinal goal of adult education.

(Mezirow, 1997, p. 5)

Thus, Pasolini proposes – firstly for the theatre – a teaching practice: the performative act becomes an educational act of the actor (and then of the director-playwright) on himself and on the spectators who participate in the process.

From the transformative rite to the transformative training for society

In his *Manifesto per un nuovo teatro* (1968) Pasolini indicates that he intends to educate the intellectual bourgeois which then would propose this educational path to the working class: in other words, the *Manifesto* can be considered as a theory for practice and a revolutionary program for a transformative social training through embodiment and poetry. This vision is extremely inclusive: the transformation process is not just for the individual or for some *élite* group, but for the entire society, as Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) indicates in his pedagogical writings (1967). As Korczak (1878-1942), Pasolini considers reality a sacred language that is constantly violated and crushed by the new Power (Gianeselli, 2023a), that of consumption, which imposes a logic of deterioration not only for consumer products, but also for both bodies and minds. To explain this way of studying reality, Pasolini refers to the concept of "hierosemia". For a man of the classical, pre-industrial world, everything could be hierophania, and occasionally it reached theophany: God himself appeared to him. Pasolini is convinced that the sacred peasant world is evidently fallen in his age. He was born into that pre-industrial world, but as he grew up and went on with his education and his life, he understands that he has passed into another world, an industrial world which is dominated by reason and layman. But in Pasolini, and this is the contradiction, reality remained a hierophania (2005). He explains this contradiction underlighting then that his religion is a form of immanentism: reality is hierophania, but he does not believe in a transcendent God, he believes that reality itself is God. From this point of view, reality is a theophany. Here is the crucial point: for Pasolini reality is a language. And then, if for him reality is a hierophania – in a sentimentally, intuitively way – we may assume that reality is no longer a hierophania, but a hierosemia that is a sacred language. Theatre, cinema, and performing arts are all languages from the same sacred language which is reality. In the *Manifesto*, Pasolini also assumes that his "new" theatre is a cultural rite, which means that we should consider his educational program as a transformative rite and training for society. The aim of my research is to demonstrate that Pasolini's program is an extremely advanced effort to make effective what Erika Fisher-Lichte (2004) defines "auto-

poietic feedback loop"[1] by activating it with a metacognitive sense towards political and social reality. In other words, Pasolini proposes a critical approach to the new society, which the philosopher Han defines "infocratic" (2021), and its productive systems through the theatre considered as a sacred language of reality and cultural ritual composed by the vision of the shows and the analysis of these through a continuous debate between audience and authors. It means that the audience should activate a metacognitive process in the enjoyment of the show: the debate is functional to the analysis of what happens on stage, a direct emanation of what happens in the interpersonal mechanisms of the polis. So, the cultural rite is fully transformative because it becomes a training for political life.

The training to "educate educators"

The Pasolini's training through performing arts involves three dimensions as the process of perspective transformation: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioural (changes in lifestyle). In my research, I propose a further step. In 1968, Pasolini was able to stage only *Orgia* (2001), which is one of his six tragedies, for the Teatro Stabile in Turin. My proposal is to make continuous the pasolinian training by structuring an educational permanent laboratory formalized to have a development that covers a time frame to support the metacognitive process. It means applying the methodological intuition of Pasolini in a continuous and recursive way to formalize a teaching method that recovers its pedagogical

intuitions and fully responds to its transformative vocation. This vocation is evident if we consider that Pasolini, in this phase, anticipates the possibility of coordinating instrumental and communicative learning as suggested by Mezirow and as confirmed by Fleming (2018):

> We transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based. We can become critically reflective of the assumptions we or others make when we learn to solve problems instrumentally or when we are involved in communicative learning (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7).

We must also consider that the process proposed in the *Manifesto*, i.e. the linguistic and ethic-political re-educational project, not only invests the public but also actors and director-author who thus become educators. Implicitly, Pasolini in his *opera omnia* and in the pedagogical essay *Gennariello* (*Lettere Luterane*, 1976) seems to ask himself precisely the following questions that Alexis Kokkos proposes to educators (2019, p. 60) such us: "should I facilitate a process aiming at the transformation of certain points of view? If so, which ones and how might they be selected? Should I focus, if there is students' consent and adequate time, on the transformation of a whole habit of mind?". As Gramsci said (1967), the teaching training must also become a way to "educate educators".

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1   This concept assumes that spectators have a direct interaction whit all the elements which composed the performance.

The Manifesto Theatre: a new transformative interpretation

Italian critics have ignored the educational value of Pasolini's project when they did not directly try to diminish it with moderatism and superficiality. So, I offer a new interpretation, still in the experimental phase. What I call "The Manifesto Theatre" (Gianeselli 2022b; 2022c) has the declared purpose of emancipating individuals, changing their way of life by building a participatory and thinking community, which must be inclusive and deeply respectful of all diversities and of diversity. Pasolini charged with responsibility author, actors, and audience: for him, they are all intellectuals who have the duty to build a community able to face reality with honesty and critical spirit. Through such structured theatre and performing arts, it is possible to achieve a high level of cognitive and metacognitive awareness as Mezirow's proposes:

> Thinking as an autonomous and responsible agent is essential for full citizenship in democracy and for moral decision making in situations of rapid change. The identified learning needs of the workforce implicitly recognize the centrality of autonomous learning […]. The adult educator must recognize both the learner's objectives and goal. The educator's responsibility is to help learners reach their objectives in such a way that they will function as more autonomous, socially responsible thinkers. Helping people learn to achieve a specific short-term objective may involve instrumental learning (Mezirow, 1997, p. 8).

Pasolini's proposal, indeed, is a learning process in three macro-phases that respond operationally to the needs of Jack Mezirow's Theory because it promotes the synthesis of three elements: critical reflection, rational dissemination, centrality of experience. The three Pasolinian macro-phases which I have identified are dramaturgy and construction of the staging, debate, and meeting with the public, independent critical reflection, and self-criticism of the audience after dialogue with the playwright-director and actors.

The University of Bari Aldo Moro's first *focus group* with students

The first exploratory *focus group* (Gianeselli, 2022b) with university students and secondary school students about to graduate was set up exactly this way. Here the research proposed the study of the Donna's monologue from the tragedy *Orgia* and the monologue of Oreste from the tragedy *Pilade* by Pasolini (2001). The teaching method applied was inspired by the educational approach suggested by Pasolini in his *Manifesto per un nuovo teatro*. The *Tragedies* has been critically analysed as a poetic text in its formal and content aspects, from the performative point of view reasoning on the possible director and actor choices, from the historical and metahistorical perspective considering that the idea of "new theatre" is defined by Pasolini "neo-aristotelica" and it is inspired by the Athenian theatre. The ten phases which a transformative process goes through suggested by Mezirow (1978) were applied as categories of analysis of these two monologues. Then, the students analysed the Tragedies, led by Lu-

igi Mezzanotte[2] and me, trying to imagine alternatives to the contemporary reality and trying to share a prediction on the outcomes. So, this method explores how it produces transformation during the process itself, considering the *Tragedy* as a unique disorienting dilemma, and encouraging self-examination and critical assessment of assumptions. The students relate one's discontent to a current public issue that is the main theme of the *Tragedy,* and explore options for new ways of living. Then we build competence and self-confidence in new roles re-imagining the plot, and we start to plan a new course of action. Students acquire knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans and think about provisional efforts to try new roles. At the end of the debate, students propose a reintegration into society based on conditions dictated by the new perspective. The results of this workshop are represented, in addition to the positive impact recorded by the participant observation during the focus group hours, by the letters that spontaneously the students wanted to deliver on this experience. From the critical analysis of the discourse based on the Grounded Constructionist Theory (which refers to symbolic interactionism and therefore has an adherence to Pasolini's assumption that reality is a language) have emerged these occurrences that I present.

Critical reflections developed by the laboratory	Phrases extracted from letters provided by students
metacognitive reflection and emotional sensitivity	The laboratory made me think about how I react to the political reality of my time, I realized I feel anger when I think about the present and the future!
metacognitive reflection on theatre as an educational stimulus	I realized that I resent the distance between me and the show that I sometimes perceive when I go to the theatre: that distance is not in the laboratory.
reflection on the proposed contents in relation to the own political, social, and economic situation	I found out that Pasolini thought especially of young people and his theatre spoke to me as if he knew me.
metacognitive reflection on the relationship with institutional education	This laboratory makes me think that often, even in school, we "suffer" the lessons and that instead I would like to study to understand, not only to learn by heart a lot of notions that I will forget.

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2   Luigi Mezzanotte is the actor who was directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini in 1968 for the first performance of *Orgia* produced by Teatro Stabile of Turin. He was never interviewed as a witness before my research.

reflection on the relationship with the theatre	I understood why I am not motivated to go to the theatre: there is no dialogue with the audience and the building together the show.
expectation on the laboratory and purpose to continue training	I would like to see the whole show and to continue to follow its construction. I would like to continue with the workshop.

From these autobiographical writings emerges that the laboratory experience has activated not only cognitive processes[3] but also and especially metacognitive ones.

The analysis of the specific language of the theatrical product leads to the analysis of the language of reality, and therefore to the construction of a mindset that makes criticism a tool for understanding individual and collective dynamics such as socio-political, emotional-behavioural, theoretical-relational. The ideal function of this kind of teaching is the production of a form of virtuous circle that transforms the individual in relation to society: he is charged with ethical-political responsibility, taking care of his emotions and feelings. Pasolini therefore indicates a pedagogical method that can be ascribed to the categories of Critical reflection methods, Art-based learning, and Experiential activities as multidisciplinary and transversal as shown in the following table which is referred to Kokkos explanation (2019, p. 64).

Critical reflection methods	Aim at fostering critical self or team reflection, it uses reflective/ dialogical writing, critical reading of dramaturgy, critical dialoguing, critical questioning, team debriefing, reflection on the group members' stories, action research.
Art-based learning	In this case, we consider the Manifesto Theatre by Pasolini like Boal's Theater of the Oppressed method was included to "draw insights and alternative views on the issues at hand".
Experiential activities	Storytelling and role-based case studies were included in this category

Final Thoughts

The research has just begun, and the initial qualitative results are encouraging. The next phase of my research will use a *Mixed Method* design to validate the teaching method derived from Pasolini's *Manifesto per un nuovo teatro*. The Higher Education experiment allows me to measure the cognitive, metacognitive, and emo-

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3   New techniques of analysis of the poetic text and of the theatrical cultural product have been learned and the previous specific skills have been consolidated by students.

tional impact of the training. It will be a necessary step to achieve a coherent formalization of the method, also considering the aim to rethink the Performing Arts Education in Italy after the Pandemic Era. So, this is a new interpretation of Pasolini's theatrical revolution in Italy until 2022 which offers a new perspective from theatre and performing arts as educational practices, totally transformative for society if and only if mediated by an awareness of the specific languages: the *Manifesto Theatre*. Indeed, the *Manifesto* faces the crisis in individual and collective terms and if used systematically could be an excellent tool for teaching and learning which tends to "cultivation of communities of practice" (Wenger, 1999) formed by adults fully self-employed and emancipated. In addition, the research also reaches the post-qualitative methodological and epistemological proposal: after formalizing the general teaching model for Performing Arts Education, its application responds are possible only if we consider the need to establish a co-creation relationship between the researchers themselves and the social actors involved (Fabbri et al., 2021). So, as suggested by Pasolini, theory must be considered already as a form of practice and as a form of transformative process that contaminates training, learning, research, and action (Fabbri et al., 2021). Continuing towards this formalization by creating spaces to actually realize this project of permanent poetic theatre laboratory will always mean keeping in mind that:

> Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove

more true or justified to guide action (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8).

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Performative Methodologies and Transformative Learning: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to reconstruct the state of the art in the use of theatrical performance methodologies for the promotion of transformative learning. Through a systematic review of peer-reviewed articles from the last twenty years, in English or Italian, we want to summarize the intervention proposals and the research tools adopted. From the review emerges the use of different performative methodologies, especially the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, and the use of qualitative tools, in particular the logbook, to record transformation. At the same time, the articles underline the involvement of extra-rational and emotional dimensions in transformation and suggest an openness towards an embodied dimension of transformative learning.

Key words: Performative Methodologies, Theatre, Transformative Learning, Embodied Transformative Learning.

Introduction

Mezirow (2003) defined transformative learning theory as a process based on reflection, identification and critical evaluation of assumptions that leads to the generation of new or restructured patterns of meaning. Although this process is dominated by reason, the main scholars of transformative learning agree on the importance and the complementarity of the conscious and unconscious dimensions (Kokkos, 2010). Aspects of the self and the psyche are involved in learning (Dirkx, 2005), so the subject must be considered in a holistic way (Taylor, 2019), including his imagination and intuition (Davis-Manigaulte et al., 2006). From a post-humanist perspective, overcoming the dualistic categories of reason/emotion and mind/body (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2023), embodiment becomes a dimension of transformative learning (Schlattner, 2022).

Art is given the merit of being "mélange of cognition, emotion, and imagination" (Kokkos, 2010, p.162), thus permitting to explore new ways of seeing, being, doing and knowing (Bishop & Etmanski, 2016), allowing the transformative learning. Performative methodologies are art-based experiential methods (Fabbri & Roma-

no, 2017) which involve the subject in the first person in a scenic representation and consent him to «discover unknown sides of oneself, appreciate the overcoming of a limit, develop one's communication skills» (Zorzi & Gottardo, 2022). The theatre is a catalyst event for change, whose most ambitious goal is "to facilitate the process of changing awareness and behaviour" (St. George et al., 2000, p.19), but this is a potential: the theatre can plant the seed of change, but this does not imply transformation (Bishop & Etmanski, 2016), much less transformative learning. As Mangione (2014) remembers, in fact, theatre can have various learning objectives.

Review

The interest to conducting a systematic review (Creswell, 2012) derives from the plurality of uses of performative-theatrical methodologies in various contexts. The review wants to summarize and systematize:

- the intervention proposals.
- the investigative tools adopted.

The systematic review by Haidet et al. (2016) on the use of art in medical education was used as a reference for the conduct of this review.

Screening of resources
Between the end of February and the beginning of May 2023, a search was carried out on the database *OneSearch* of *University of Siena*. The keywords searched for, in the entire text of the contributions, were:

- transformative learning AND drama.
- transformative learning AND theatre
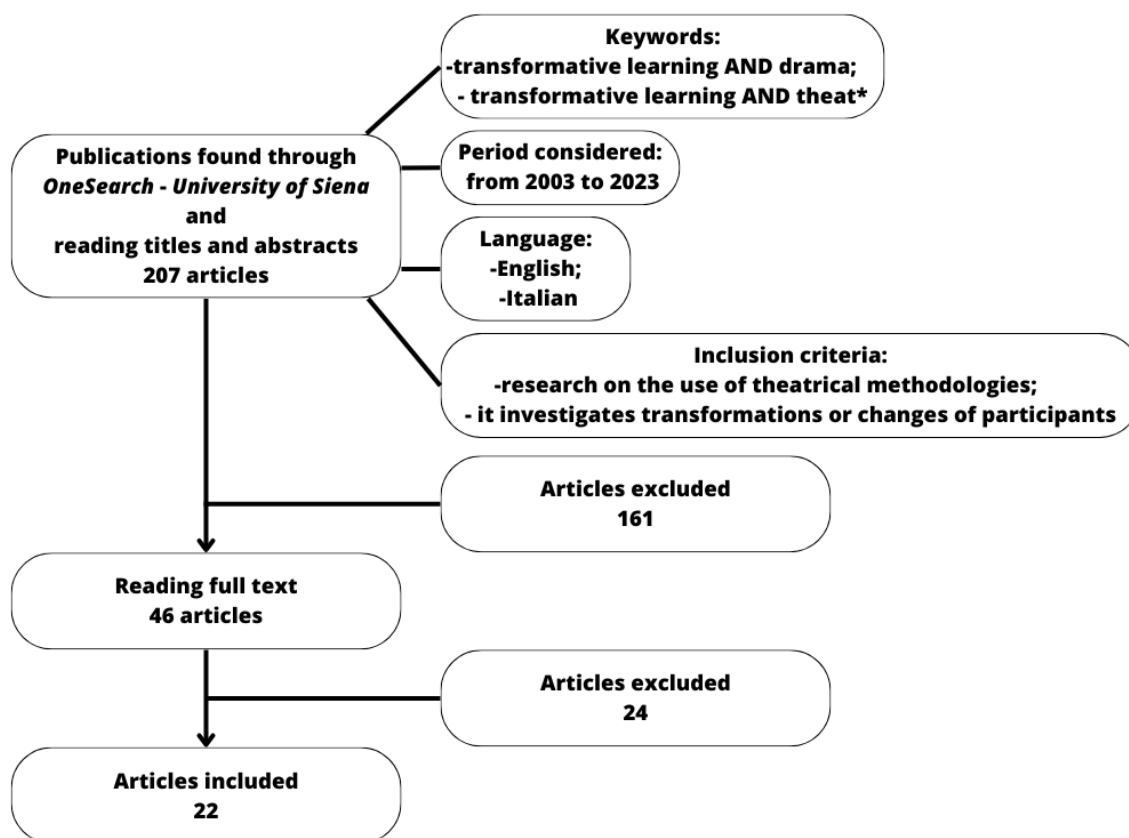
Figure 1. Authors' elaboration

Peer reviewed articles published in the past twenty years (from 2003 to 2023) were considered, in Italian or English. So, 207 articles were collected.

Selection of contributions
The titles and abstracts of the collected articles were read and those that met the following inclusion criteria were selected:

1. the article was an empirical or theoretical research on the use of theatrical methodologies;
2. it investigated transformations or changes of participants. In particular, the theatrical methodologies investigated in the contribution had to be "high impact" (St. George et al., 2000), i.e., they actively involve the participant in the performance, thus identifying in practice the device through which learning is made possible (Fabbri, 2017).

In this phase, articles without abstracts were also included in order not to exclude potentially relevant contributions. This process led to the exclusion of 161 articles.

The reading of the entire texts of the remaining 46 contributions led to the identification of 22 relevant articles. (Figure 1)

Results

Recipients and context
The interventions with performative methodologies that investigate transformation are mainly addressed to adults (19 articles). Only three articles have teenagers as recipients. This difference in distribution is not surprising, it follows an open question: the possibility of talking about transformative learning with young people (Kokkos, 2022; Larson, 2016; Simonsen & Illeris, 2012). The changes that have occurred to young people are connected to the awareness of their choices and their own learning (Vettraino et al.,2013), to the increase in confidence and self-esteem (Opfermann, 2020) to a greater exploration and acceptance of differences and identities (Aubrey, 2015). These changes can be traced back precisely to that transformative learning related to points of view, typical of young people (Kokkos, 2022).

More than half of the contributions (12 articles) are related to interventions in the university context, for the training of health personnel (Larsen et al., 2018; Nash-Patel et al., 2022; Van Bever et al., 2021) and teachers (McLaren & Arnold, 2016; Romano, 2016b, 2019).

Tools
All studies make use of qualitative tools, which in some cases (Cain & Dixon, 2013; Romano, 2014, 2016b, 2019) are supported by quantitative tools.

In half of the studies (11 articles), the participants were involved in writing logbooks. "The logbook allows one to focus on some dimensions and think about, during and after the experience that is taking place, to foster greater retention of learning and memories" (Romano, 2016a), through this tool, the participant can activate specific moments of reflection. Kloetzer and Tau (2022) distinguish two different uses of the tool: the first, called "adaptive", is characterized by a superficial compilation, linked to the obligation given by the delivery; the second "transformative", able to promote a real, critical transformation. It is important that the tool, to facilitate a transformation, is not considered an obligation, but an opportunity for the participants. At the same time, Liu (2020) highlights that the absence of evidence of a reflection on the logbook does not necessarily imply the lack of transformation, as only through a triangulation of multiple data can this conclusion be reached. Indeed, more than

half of the contributions use multiple tools such as interviews, focus groups and observations to integrate the data.

The use of survey is not particularly widespread and if in Moffat and McKim (2016) the questions are open to investigate meanings and understandings, in Cain and Dixon (2013) and Romano (2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2019) we find closed answers and qualitative tools. Cain and Dixon (2013) administer a survey to teachers before and after the participation in an artist experience to measure beliefs about the directivity of teaching. The data obtained are compared and integrated with those from two informal interviews. Romano (2014, 2016b, 2019) administers two surveys to the participants: the *Learning Activities Survey (LAS)* and the *Survey on the Theater of the Oppressed*, whose data are used "to assess for each participant whether any transformative learning occurred" (Romano, 2019, p.33).

McLaren and Arnold (2016) in their article, although they refer to Heatcote's *A/R/Tography*, an art-based research method, they use typically qualitative tools such as observation and analysis of the logbooks of the participants.

The pivotal role given to qualitative tools and to reflective ones is dictated by the nature of transformative learning, which is based on critical reflection on assumptions, premises taken for granted.

Performative methodologies
The theoretical references of the performative interventions mainly refer to Boal, through the application of methodologies and proposals coming from the *Theater of the Oppressed* (Romano, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2019; Sánchez Ares, 2015) or specifically from the *Forum Theater* (O'Keefe-McCarthy et al.,2022; Van Bewer et al., 2021; Vettraino et al.2013). Three contributions (Butterwick & Selman, 2012; Opfermann, 2020; Diochon et al.,2021) use exercises

that come from *Theater of the Oppressed*, such as the *Image Theater*, while not referring directly to Boal's methodologies. All these contributions underline the potential of the *Theater of the Oppressed* as a dialogic tool which, through a recursive process between action and reflection, makes transformation possible.

Sepinuck's *Theater of Witness* (Blackburn Miller, 2018) is another theoretical reference, whose objective is the creation of a real theatrical performance where the protagonists work with the "other side", participants with stories and experiences of lives opposite to their own; and Johnstone's *improvisational theater* (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015; Larsen et al., 2018) which involves interaction between actors and audience members, the latter provide cue to the actors and sometimes replace them on stage.

The other contributions, while not referring to a specific codified methodology, involve the participants creating a dramatization (Aubrey, 2015; Miccoli, 2003) or use a mixture of several methodologies, sometimes not performative (Bezner Kerr et al., 2019; Cain & Dixon, 2013; Moffat & McKim, 2016).

Transformation and change
The keyword "transformation" is present in all contributions, but as Hoggan (2023, p.447) underlines, "people can change in innumerable ways" and not all learning is transformative. For this reason, it is possible, and useful, to make a threefold distinction.

- *Transformation as transformative learning*

Fourteen contributions make explicit reference to the theory of transformative learning. In these, the data, obtained with various tools, are used to highlight changes in points of view, perspectives, meanings, and behaviours in the

participants. In fact, new meanings are constructed using "expressive, narrative, artistic, dramatic, theatrical techniques, anchored to the construct of performance"(Romano, 2022, p.227).

The transformation is not homogeneous in all the participants involved, as Butterwick and Lawrence (2023) remind, the choice to transform is up to the subject, the important thing is to ensure a space where imagination and change are viable paths. To this end, all the studies focus on the importance of the autobiographical dimension and the involvement of previous personal experience through performative methodologies.

- *Transformation as possible transformative learning*

Some contributions, although not making explicit reference to transformative learning, report data that seem to suggest this type of learning.

Some women in Sánchez Ares' research (2015) not only testify to a reflection on internalized prejudices, but also talk about a change in their own life, after the performative intervention. Following the improvisational methodologies (Larsen et al., 2018), some students, future nurses, claim to have negotiated their role in the healthcare context, recognizing the patients' perspective and point of view. The teachers, in McLaren and Arnold's work (2016), in their logbook write: "I wouldn't say that my perspective of myself as a teacher has entirely changed, but I would say that it has shifted" (p.29) and "It's still me. But I see it differently. I see my role differently" (p.30).

A strong limitation of these results, in affirming the effective presence of a transformative learning, is the fact that the change is declared by the participants themselves. Indeed, Liu (2020) warns of the risk of "performative reflections" that hide a gap between what is done and what is thought. It would therefore be useful if these data were accompanied by observations in natural contexts to verify the effective transformation.

- *Transformation as change*

The data of some studies, while highlighting changes in the participants, do not seem to affirm a transformative learning.

This is the case of the health professionals who participated in some sessions of *Theater of the Oppressed* (Van Bewer et al., 2021) and the nursing students of the study by Nash-Patel et al. (2022) who testify to a strengthening relation. Other studies (Bezner et alii, 2018; Kloetzer & Tau, 2022) focusing on the learning process and on the transmission of contents, don't go deep into the transformative dimension.

Not excluding the possibility of the effective lack of transformation after the use of the performative methodologies, these results can also derive from tools that are not triangulated or not very "sensitive" to measure this dimension, students' resistance to these types of activities (Butterwick & Lawrence, 2023) or the insufficient time between the performative intervention and the survey. As Cain and Dixon (2013) recall, in fact, transformation can take time because it requires to "fight" against one's feelings.

Discussion

The purpose of this review was to identify the performative methodologies used for the promotion of transformative learning and to summarize the tools used to detect this change. Although the theoretical references to Boal and the *Theater of the Oppressed* are the most frequent, this does not exclude the effectiveness of other performative methodologies, more

or less codified, for the transformative learning. The performing arts have the power to make personal stories recountable (Romano, 2019) because they "provide a way or express what we are feeling when words fail us" (Butterwick & Lawrence, 2023, p.54). This allows one to investigate the obvious and obscure aspects of one's past experiences, generating new understanding and change (Larsen et al., 2018) and enabling transformation; a change that isn't limited to being rational, but that involves physical and emotional dimensions. Butterwick and Selman (2012), in fact, affirm that the shift in habits of mind and perspective is made possible by the physical involvement that causes the activation of emotions, just as Küpers and Pauleen (2015, p.495) speak of "embodiment transformative learning". This importance given to the embodied dimension of transformative learning opens interesting trajectories of investigation, not only for performative methodologies that are based on the involvement and activation of the bodily and emotional dimensions, but more generally in the recognition of the "inseparability of rationality, movement, emotion, and other related concepts such as spirituality, creativity, or intuition" (Schlattner, 2022, p.834).

At the same time, attention to the embodied dimension may require the use of a wider range of inquiry tools. Certainly, reflective tools, such as logbooks and portfolios, are important, but at the same time they "separate" the rational dimension from the more creative and physical one. One of the participants of Kloetzer and Tau (2022) populated his logbook with poems through which express reflections and feelings. Through the words, images, and sounds of poetry, but through art in general, it is possible to provide unique answers, which are difficult to reproduce with language, and so they bring knowledge and meanings that would otherwise be lost (Lange et al., 2022). To collect this type of data, it is important to con-

duct an inquiry not "on" the transformation, but "with" the participants (Melacarne, 2021) and their modes of expression.

The challenge for the "embodiment transformative learning" could be to be able to consider and triangulate not only qualitative and quantitative data, but also "artistic" ones because learning is a physical and emotional response to an experience and not a separate moment of reflection (Lawrence, 2008).

Certainly, this review has limitations related to the low number of contributions, coming from a single database and the presence of contributions only to the last twenty years. Furthermore, the emotional dimension involvement within the process of transformation was not explored in depth. At the same time, it highlighted the variety of performative methodologies whose strength and potential, in terms of transformative learning, is given by the global and holistic involvement of the participant, considered as an inseparable *unicum*.

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De-muting Humanity: In Search of an Alternative Narrative for Adult Learning and Education

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ABSTRACT

The divorce between the human and the more-than-human worlds, which neoliberalism and western colonialism have tended to accentuate, is at the centre of the existential crises facing humanity. This paper suggests alternative paradigms for understanding and knowing the world in the search for a new educational narrative capable of contributing to the creation of potential antidotes to the current multiple crises. We take as our starting point four apparently different perspectives – Illich's notion of grand stories, Gosh's parables for a planet in crisis, the Latin American praxis of Popular Education and the indigenous concept of 'buen vivir', which upon closer investigation suggests a common concern with what constitutes humanity and the relationship between the human and more-than-human worlds as the basis for elaborating an alternative story for 'transformative education'.

Key words: Climate Change, Good Living, Popular Education, Narratives, Adult Learning and Education.

Introduction

Over the past 30 or 40 years, whenever humanity faces crises and challenges, the international community turns to education as part of the solution. The nature of that solution is characterized more by notions of quantity than by the type of education on offer. The argument is that the limitations of education can be attributed to the fact that it is inaccessible to large numbers of the population or that there is not enough of it, but rarely due to the type of education on offer.

The Education for All Initiative which was launched in Jomtien in 1990 was more concerned with the provision of education for all than it was with the nature of the provision.

Ten years later, in Dakar, after the limited success of Jomtien, the exhortation of education for all was repeated. The Millennium Development goals were concerned with overcoming extreme poverty and considered that achieving universal primary education was a necessary part of that strategy. When it became clear that the eight goals would not be achieved, the proposed solution was more education. The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD 2003-2012), the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE, 2006-2015) and the Global Education First Initiative (2012) were all introduced as a means of broadening and multiplying the offer.

More recently, the prevailing logic of 'more of the same' oriented the inclusion of

education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where education in its lifelong learning guise was seen as one of the solutions to the planetary crisis based on the principles of sustainable development. With seven years still to run, the UN (2023) itself admits that it is time to sound the alarm:

> At the mid-way point on our way to 2030, the SDGs are in deep trouble. A preliminary assessment of the roughly 140 targets with data show only about 12% are on track; close to half, though showing progress, are moderately or severely off track and some 30% have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.

With the growing awareness of the existential threats to humanity posed by climate change, pollution and the loss of biodiversity, the rationale of the challenge to education undergoes a drastic redefinition. The impact of this awareness can be seen in the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education (UNESCO, 2021), to a lesser extent in the Marrakech Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2022) and in the report of the Transforming Education Summit (TES, 2023). The Futures of Education Report states that: "We already know that knowledge and learning are the basis for renewal and transformation... But to shape peaceful, just, and sustainable futures, education itself must be transformed" (UNESCO, 2021, p.5). The Marrakech Framework recognizes the need to build a new social contract for education "Inspired by the findings and proposals of Reimagining our futures together" and affirms that "ALE plays a key role in creating humanistic responses based on human rights, democratic societies, ethical principles, the mobilization of collective intelligence and an open dialogue informed by interdisciplinary

knowledge" (UNESCO, 2022, 15, p.4). Given the magnitude of the challenge – as reported by the UN in 2022:

> In a world that is experiencing a fourth industrial revolution, nearly half of all students do not complete secondary school and 763 million young people and adults are illiterate, the majority of whom are women. (UN, 2023, p.1)

There is a continuing concern with quantity but at the same time a stark realization that much of current education is irrelevant when confronted by the problems the world faces. The same report recognises that education remains in "deep crisis", a "crisis of equity, quality, and relevance" (UN, 2023, p. 3)

Whilst these current international initiatives recognize the need to transform education, and thereby open small fissures in the traditional vision of education, this continues to be dominated and driven by long-consolidated Western epistemological perspectives. Decades ago, Ivan Illich recognized that to change the existing understanding of education required elaborating a new narrative "a powerful new tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story." To rethink our common destiny and our planetary relations implies radically rethinking how we understand the process of education and formation. This rethinking needs to recognize the existence of other epistemologies, other ways of knowing, besides the dominant western Eurocentric liberal epistemologies.

Alternative paradigms for understanding and knowing

This paper relates part of our search for alternative interpretations concerning the nature

of the crisis we are asking education to solve. What are the roots of the current crises, with particular attention to the climate crisis, which, according to the UN, places the world "on the brink of a climate catastrophe"? We take as our starting point four apparently different perspectives which upon closer investigation suggest a common concern with what constitutes humanity and the relationship between the human and more-than-human world as the basis for elaborating an alternative story for 'transformative education'.

Illich's concept of stories is intricately linked to Harari's notion of grand myths or narratives and their role in human history. Humans are essentially story tellers. Human history is built on grand narratives which exist only in people's collective imagination: Churches are rooted in common myths, as are states and judiciary systems. As Harari says: "Humans think they make history, but history actually revolves around this web of stories" (Harari, 2017, p.205) and he goes on to add that "Stories serve as the foundations and pillars of human societies" (idem, p. 208). Without a commonly accepted story concerning the role of education in society, no complex human society can function. The old narrative is no longer sufficiently convincing or relevant to provide the answers that the critical issues of today demand.

It was in this sense that the International Commission on the Futures of Education gave centre stage to the need for a new social contract which it defines as "an implicit agreement among members of a society to cooperate for shared benefit' and "one that aims to rebuild our relationships with each other, with the planet, and with technology" (2021, p.2). Without diminishing the importance of the *Marrakesh Framework for Action (MFA)* for the field of adult learning and education, the MFA should be read in the context of the report of the International Commission in order to ac-

quire what we might call 'narrative value'. If we compare the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning with the Marrakech Framework, we begin to understand the power of creating a persuasive new narrative. The MFA is a pragmatic statement of intent which neither inspires nor persuades.

Despite the more visionary dimension of the Hamburg Declaration, adult learning and education has, over the last fifty years, become increasingly focused – some would say obsessed – with the world of work as the all-pervasive ideology of neoliberalism infiltrated the realms of education, culture, health care, politics, and economics. Whilst in industrialized countries the concern of ALE has been with skills and reskilling, qualifying and requalifying workers for the world of work, in the less industrialized countries in which ALE is more strongly identified with compensatory schooling, investment in youth and adult education has been justified principally due to the need to provide young people and adults with those competences which are required by the labour market. Hence, the dominant narrative for ALE has centred on the competitive requirements of the world of work in which the market is the principal arbiter, with a focus on the individual rather than a collective subject, motivated by the imperative to increase production and profits. The dominant mode of production is predatory, extractive capitalism, for which nature is a deposit of resources.

This divorce between humanity and other forms of life, which neoliberalism has tended to accentuate, is at the centre of the existential crises facing humanity. Whilst Ghosh argues that the dynamics of climate change are rooted in a centuries-old geopolitical order constructed by Western colonialism which resulted in "the muting of a large part of humanity" and in the "simultaneous muting of nature" with dire consequences for the way in which 'humanity' related and relates to the natural world (2022,

p.235), the Brazilian Indigenous leader and philosopher Ailton Krenak (2020), insists that 'Everything is nature. The cosmos is nature. Everything that I can think of is nature'. The world into which Indigenous people have resisted being incorporated is a world which has converted nature into 'resources' to be exploited in such a way that the market becomes 'everything that is outside of us'. To him, the concept and promise of sustainable development to which the international community has delegated the power of attempting to redeem human aggressions on the planet, is no more than "a myth invented by the major corporations to justify the assault which they penetrate on our idea of nature". The predominant paradigm of development proposes a lifestyle divorced from the living organism – Earth – characterized by its attempts to suppress diversity and to deny the plurality of forms of life, existence, and habits.

The ecological crisis is not a passing threat but a cumulative one. Together, the recent Covid-19 pandemic and the ecological crisis, oblige us to face up to the fact that the current paradigm of development is materially, ecologically, ethically and humanly unsustainable. It becomes evident that despite important international declarations and agendas, education has been slow to accept its critical role in establishing a new pedagogical narrative which challenges old models. The MFA and the Futures Report – the latter rather more forcibly than the former – point to the need for a change in narrative in which reconnection with the natural world and other forms of life, other forms of knowing, other forms of living is imperative.

In his historical narrative ***The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis,*** Ghosh illustrates how understanding colonization is a key to understanding the entrenched belief in the separation of humans from the more-than-human world (Walters, 2022). The process of colonization involved not only the subjugation and reification of other human beings, particularly those 'natives' who were thought of as inferior 'brutes and savages', and women, all of whom were identified as part of 'nature' but also the trees, animals, landscapes, and other natural resources which they 'occupied' and with which they were intimately related. As Ghosh explains:

> Out of these processes of subduing and muting was born the idea of 'Nature' as an inert entity, a conception that would in time become a basic tenet of what might be called 'official modernity'. (2022, pp.38-39).

Thus, 'nature' was reduced to an inert repository of resources, which to be `improved` needed to be expropriated, no matter whether from Amerindians or from the population of the Banda Islands in Indonesia. A similar process took place in England with the Enclosure Acts of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.

The single most emblematic example of this perverted relationship with nature is the crucial dependence on fossil fuels as a source of energy. As Ghosh argues, "Of all commodities, none are better suited to being treated as 'resources' than those compacted remains of primordial forests that we call 'fossil fuels'" (2022, p.99). Coal, oil, and gas are all resources extracted from a desacralized, inanimate Earth and have been responsible for fuelling successive more 'efficient', cheaper and 'productive' modes of production. Greater production and consumption have been achieved at the expense of polluting, poisoning and destroying the natural environment. As Walters concludes:

> Capitalism thrives on rampant consumerism and waste, whereas what is needed is an attitude of mutu-

al interdependence, conservation, preservation, and appreciation of the finiteness of the planet. The climate crisis is a confrontation between imperialism, capitalism and the planet which means that virtually everything we know has to be unlearnt, relearnt, learnt. (Walters, 2022, p.9)

Whilst Krenak suggests that the current strategy of 'sustainable development' is no more than a myth to continue justifying the assault on nature in which adult learning and education was exhorted to play an important role, Ghosh's analysis leads us to conclude that a reversion of this process will involve attempts to 'de-mute' both nature and those many millions of the world population who have been dispossessed and repressed to maintain the existing world order.

In Latin America, the central concern of Popular Education has been to give a voice to the 'popular classes' or to the oppressed segments of society. Freire's book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* came to symbolize this search for an alternative narrative for education in which the oppressed and their popular culture become protagonists and no longer objects of education. For Freire, popular education is an antidote to oppression,

> (…) directed at the transformation of society, taking as its starting point the concrete/lived experience (…) of the subjects. (Paludo, 2015, p.178)

Education is a right and a fundamental human need, which is part of the ontological vocation of the human being. Learning is part of our DNA as sentient animals and of our programming in the Darwinian sense. Popular education is as much concerned with process as with results. It is subject to human agency, and, as a process, takes as its fundamental objective

that of humanizing, emancipating and liberating human creativity. In this sense, education is not limited to transmitting but, above all, to producing knowledge as a constituent element of the practice of liberty. Whilst intending to emancipate, education takes dialogue as its starting point and essential instrument.

More recently, the praxis of Popular Education in Latin America has been increasingly influenced by the indigenous concept of good living (*Buen vivir*) which should not be interpreted as an alternative form of development but as an alternative to development based on the cosmology of the Indigenous people. These concepts of 'popular education' and 'good living' (*buen vivir*) could both be considered as constituting other forms of knowing, as being part of the movement to decolonize knowledge and as representing ways in which both popular and indigenous movements have reasserted their right to transmit and recreate their 'other place-based knowledge' as an essential component of education for life. Whilst Popular Education challenges the relationships upon which learning processes are based, the concept of 'good living' (buen vivir) challenges the very nature of development and the relationships between the human and non-human worlds or between different forms of life. It represents (Donald Rojas apud Ibañez, 2011), "an indissoluble and interdependent relationship between the universe, nature and humanity", in which the emphasis given to the quality of life should not be interpreted as the capacity to consume or possess goods.

For Dávalos (2008, n.p), 'good living' constitutes a life stripped of those parameters which are most dear to modernity and economic growth:

> Individualism, the search for profit, the cost-benefit relation as a social axiom, the utilization of nature, the strategic relationship between hu-

man beings, the total commodification of all spheres of human life, the violence inherent in the egoism of the consumer, etc.

He adds that:

> Although the current economic theory attributes to the Cartesian paradigm the notion of the human being as the 'lord and master of nature' and interprets nature as an externality to human history, 'good living' incorporates nature in history (…) not as a productive force but as an inherent part of social being.

The fundamental understanding of that Harmony which should characterize the way in which humans relate to the natural world, possesses profound repercussions for learning and education. The way in which knowledge was and is produced takes as its premise this relationship between humanity and nature.

Fernandez concludes that Popular Education, historically involved with processes of transformation and social emancipation, identifies new meanings in the ethical, political, pedagogical and epistemological spheres in the concept of 'good living' which enrich its efforts to achieve the liberation of the common people (2016, p.31). Just as popular education understands that human beings are the subjects and protagonists of their own education, so 'good living' converts the natural environment into a subject with rights and not an object to be exploited for human ends.

De-muting humanity: believing change is possible

Given the origins of the crises threatening humanity, resort to the logic of more of the same as a solution has been proven insufficient time and again. It is not more education which will contribute to establishing a new harmonic and respectful relation between the human and more-than-human worlds. That can only result from a new paradigm of development which recognizes the right of all forms of life to existence. As Stanistreet alerts us, "Believing that change is possible is more important than being able to visualize what it will look like" (2023, p. 6). In a similar vein, maybe we should recognize that a new educational agenda or a new social contract requires a pluriversality of solutions in recognition of the multiple challenges faced by the universe with its epistemic diversity.

If we recognize that education is not a preparation for life but life itself, then the corollary of this is that life cannot be reduced to human life. Life embraces diversity, and diversity is the essence of life. It is this diversity, which must be at the heart of education, an education which is biocentric rather than anthropocentric, an education whose vital and revitalizing source are those pedagogies practised by indigenous people worldwide. In addition, with it must come the recognition that education is life-wide since learning is a process, which is independent of formal institutional spaces. As Stanistreet suggests:

> (…) we need to ensure that pedagogical approaches make room for difference and dissent and promote challenge and critique, and that curricula are open, adaptable, and co-created, shaped by a recognition of education as a public good aimed at promoting human flourishing in the widest civic sense. (2023, p.5)

If we are to succeed in de-muting humanity and nature, the combined vision offered by popular education and good living is a fer-

tile starting point. Democracy, participation, human rights, and ecological justice relate to the very heart of human existence, the capacity to learn, to create human relationships, "to assume joint responsibility for the world", as Arendt put it (Stanistreet, 2023, p.6), to comprehend the value of what Freire called 'amorosity' and Illich 'conviviality' and the respect for all forms of life.

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Changes in the Self-Directed Learning due to the Fast-Growing Internet: Benefits and Disadvantages in the Learning for Adult Learners

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ABSTRACT

Self-learning ability has been recognized as a trait of human personality since ancient times. In modern times, the rapid growth of new technologies, especially of the Internet have brought Self-Directed Learning in the foreground with a new dynamic. Even if the Internet is considered as a great equalizer, many researchers express their doubts on whether the constant use of the Internet shapes truly emancipated independent learners, especially in case they have not been trained to critically manage the huge volume of information and knowledge being offered. In the context of this aspect, three questions were raised: What are the changes brought by the rapid growth of the Internet in Self-Directed Learning? What are the benefits adult learners are having from this growth regarding their learning? Are there any disadvantages, and if so, which ones? When processing the answers to these questions, emphasis is put on presenting opposing approaches using modern book references. Moreover, there will be presentate secondary research data from a previous study (2022).

Key words: Self-Directed Learning, Changes, Benefits, Disadvantages, Internet, Adult Learners.

Introduction

Self-directed Learning has been recognized as a trait of human personality since ancient times. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle are described as independent learners, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness in learning with or without a teacher's guidance (Merriam, 2001). In modern times, especially in the 1970s and onwards, Self-Directed Learning expanded as its importance was recognized in the learning process of autonomous adult learners. During that time, many studies were conducted, several theoretical approaches and many teaching models were established among first M. Knowles (1975) & A. Tough, (1971). Later, in the early 21st century, interest in this approach started to fade as many researchers showed interest

in distance learning, new theories in learning e.g. However, the rapid growth of new technologies, especially of the Internet, have brought Self-Directed Learning in the foreground with a new dynamic (Rashid & Asghar, 2016). The widespread use of digital means in education and training of adult learners has boosted e-learning. Adult learners could benefit from these changes as they are given the possibility a 24 hours per day access to learning sources and surf the Internet to find information and knowledge depending on their learning needs, but also their interests in general, in a self-directed way (Song & Hill, 2007). Even if the Internet is considered a great equalizer, many researchers express their doubts on whether the constant use of the Internet shapes truly emancipated independent learners, especially in case they have not been trained to critically manage the massive volume of information and knowledge being offered (Mezirow, 1985; Brookfield, 1993). In the context of this aspect, three questions were raised: What are the changes brought by the rapid growth of the Internet in self-directed Learning? What are the benefits adult learners are having from this growth regarding their learning? Are there any disadvantages, and if so, which ones? When processing the answers to these questions, emphasis is put on presenting opposing approaches using modern book references. Moreover, there will be secondary research data from a study carried out on the subject of: 'Self-Directed Learning as a factor to enhance students' resilience at the Hellenic Open University during the Covid-19 pandemic' and presented at the Conference of EADTU (21/10/2022). In this pilot qualitative study, six (6) MA students at the Open Hellenic University participated in the form of semi-structured interviews, during the second year of the pandemic. Based on this, the main conclusion is that cultivating critical reflection is the safety net for maximizing the benefits from self-directed Learning regarding

new data (Kalogridi, 2022). Especially, universities must develop programmes to cultivate critical thinking, so that learning has a personal meaning for everyone, is a conscious action empowering individuals, putting them in readiness, and placing itself within the historical-social-political context in which it occurs.

Self-directed learning: Concept, definitions

Self-directed learning has been constantly at the forefront from the 1970s, with a multitude of studies, empirical research and publications. Self-directed learning as a concept and process is inextricably linked with adult learning. All theories of adult learning, especially Andragogy, explain the characteristics of adult learners, especially the autonomy and self-direction in learning. Mezirow wrote, "no concept is more central to what adult education is all about than self-directed learning" (1985b, p. 17).

Many definitions exist for self-directed learning. Knowles was the first who defined self-directed emphasizing that learners would have control over the design and implementation of their learning activities (Knowles, 1975). Later on, Candy, a leading researcher in self-directed learning, defined the term contains dimensions of process and result and refers to four (4) discrete phenomena: 1. Personal autonomy; 2. Flexibility and the ability to "manage" one's own education; 3. Ability to control the organization of one's education; 4. The quest for non-institutional learning opportunities in non-institutional social frameworks, in other words in being more or less self-taught (Candy, 1991).

According to Hammond and Hiemstra (1991) self-directed learning refers to the process, through which individuals gain control over their learning; in other words: set learning targets, locate their learning sources, select

the learning methods and techniques that suit them best, and, finally, evaluate their personal learning achievements and their progress in general.

Studying these definitions of self-directed learning and others (Merriam, 2001) we say that self-directing learning refers to the process, through which individuals gain control over their learning, set learning targets, locate their learning sources, select the learning methods and techniques that suit them best, and, finally, evaluate their personal learning achievements and their progress in general. Many others, like Hammons and Collins (1991) emphasize critical reflection as a key component of the most fully formed of self-directed learning aiming at the individual's personal development. We will address the importance of a lack of critical reflection regarding the processes of self-directed learning at a later point, as a major disadvantage of self-directed learning today in the era characterized by the rapid development of the Internet.

Changes in self-directed learning in the era of rapid development of the Internet

Recently, the study of self-directed learning has attracted much attention from researchers, scholars and adult educators, especially those linking it with online environments (Hill, Wiley, Nelson & Han, 2004; Song and Hill, 2007). Indeed, digital technology has been one of the great innovations of the 21st century. This so-called digital era is characterized by the possibility to transfer a large volume of information freely and quickly. This fact produces on its own self-directed learning strategies.

Many studies have explored the changes in self-directed learning due to the fast-growing internet and the benefits resulting from digital learning (Hiemstra, 2009). It is a fact that the rapid development of the Internet and digital learning are changing the way learners learn. Even traditional accredited educational institutions have been using technology to plan and teach their curricula. For instance, in 2012, Stanford University offered a free online course on artificial intelligence which drew the attention of 160,000 students from 190 countries. This experiment developed into massive open online courses (MOOCS). Soon afterwards, the Universities of Michigan and Pennsylvania offered 43 online courses to 680,000 students. In the same direction, Harvard University and MIT collaborated as they estimated that half a million students would enrol on their free online courses. Consequently, such was the influence of MOOCs that researchers, like Czeglédi & Juhász (2013), considered that tertiary education would transform to an accreditation system, where the participants, instead of receiving 'degrees' would receive 'certificates', certifying that the students have accomplished all projects and passed all exams. Moreover, universities, like the University of Keoko in Japan, have established digital learning for their students (Eisenstodt, 1997).

Technology, and especially the Internet, have clearly influenced official education, however, their impact on adult learning has been even greater. Digital tools and wide online communications have also changed learning processes. Adult learning courses have incorporated technology to a great extent. In this framework, the omnipresent opportunities for self-directed learning provide adults with the possibility to utilize the volume of information and learning resources offered today to benefit their learning. Nowadays, self-directed learning includes a plethora of resources based on the Web, digital resources and opportunities for worldwide collaboration with individuals sharing the same interests and needs. The digital world is full of new learning opportunities, for instance, iPod, TV programmes, dig-

ital radio and virtual simulations that may suit anyone's programme and learning style (King, 2010). The new dominance framework of digital tools in education has brought a change in all learning processes and requires that the learner be more self-directed in their choices and use of learning resources.

Benefits in self-directed learning in the era of rapid development of the Internet

The benefits of digital learning are highlighted by many researchers and in this context the important role of self-directed learning is recognized as learners on the web work on their own for many hours. Towards this direction, Draves (2002) considers that cognitive learning on the web is actually better than in-person learning. He provides a list with all the reasons he believes the Internet enforces learning, including advantages such as the possibility to learn at any rush hour, at the learner's own pace, accessibility to a lot of information, ability to follow up personal progress and ability to make their own effort on learning.

Other researchers also support that the advantages of digital learning are more than the ones learning in class as the Internet provides flexibility, responds to the learner's own pace, available time, and the chosen place (Kerka, 1997; Boyer and Maher, 2005) project the ability learners develop on the Internet to take initiatives regarding their learning, and they mention it to promote transformative learning in the context of the Internet.

Long likes the possibility offered by the virtual world to learn to go beyond problem-solving to problem setting (2002). Finally, Candy underlines the liberating value of the Internet regarding the constant access to information without any geographical boundaries or limitations. Moreover, he believes that cer-

tain forms of SDL are particularly appropriate for the Internet: "self-directed learning is one key way in which people keep up with change and, since we are currently experiencing an unprecedented level and pace of change on a global scale, it is plausible to expect the demands of a changing world to lead to greater amounts of self-directed learning" (2004, p. 20).

In a small sample size research of Kirkman, Coughlin, and Kromrey (2007) the satisfaction and success in self-directed learning in terms of educational experience, course format, and Internet use are underlined. They found that satisfaction and success were significantly correlated with each other, as might be expected and that the availability of the Internet can reduce a learner's need for prerequisite content domain experience. For these writers, the Internet, in many respects, is a great equalizer. Even individuals from disadvantaged groups such as refugees, migrants, or geographically remote inhabitants and poor people can obtain knowledge and learn what they have to learn once they can access the Internet and gain a little experience with it. In essence, if adults have the motivation, drive, and patience, they can learn much by themselves.

To conclude, there has been much talk regarding the impact of the internet on self-directed learning. The learners increase their control over their learning as they have access to digital resources of learning which are far more than the resources of formal learning, but also past resources. However, many researchers have expressed their doubts and questions arisen regarding the quality of digital self-directed learning mainly as of the lack of advantages offered by in-person learning, such as the interaction between the members of a group, cooperative learning, critical thinking development, in-person absence of a motivator, but also leader adult educator.

Disadvantages in self-directed learning in the era of rapid development of the Internet

The digital era, as aforementioned, has brought self-directed learning to the forefront in a more intensive way, generating great challenges. The omnipresent and rapidly growing technology constantly provides learners with new opportunities and possibilities for self-directed. Even though a significant number of studies have proven the positive aspects of digital learning, on the other hand, there are also numerous studies that have highlighted the negative ones.

A study by Kohan, et al. (2017) with the theme "self-directed learning barriers in a virtual environment: a qualitative study" in a sample of MA students of medical education and e-learning in medical education in Iran, in the academic year 2014-2015, revealed three themes and six sub-themes as self-directed learning barriers in virtual education including:

- *cognitive barriers*, such information overload and lack of focus on learning or mind wondering,
- *communication barriers*, such inadequate coping skills, inadequate writing skills, and
- *educational and environmental barriers*, such heavy workload…

In this study, the various barriers adversely affected the students' quality learning.

In another study by Bennett & Bell, even though the positive aspects of the Internet are acknowledged, such as the knowledge of new technologies, multitasking ability, etc. it is mentioned that the learners born between 1981 and 1994 are also characterized by 'shallowness in reading, lack of critical thinking and naivety as for copyright and authenticity of sources of information on the Internet' (2010, p. 417).

One of the most important disadvantages reported by researchers is that self-directed learning leads to **shallow learning**, if the learners have not developed critical, emancipated learning to utilize efficiently and for their own benefit the large volume of information-knowledge the Internet offers (Bennett & Bell, 2010). Towards this direction, Mezirow, since 1985, underlined that it would be simplistic to consider that self-directed learning means to simply control learning techniques. This means that learners act within a defined simulated context of knowledge with no critical control (Mezirow, 1985). According to Mezirow, "this can take place as part of a dialogue, in which individuals participate in absolute freedom, testing their perspectives and interests with the views and interests of others and correspondingly being led to a transformation, simultaneously shifting their learning goals. In practice, adults need to evaluate critically and comprehend the historical, cultural and biographical reasons for which someone needs to learn, wants to learn and is interested in learning. Such self-knowledge is a prerequisite for autonomy in self-directed learning" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 27). According to Brookfield, 'it has been proven that no learning activity can support of material and human resources. This always occurs within a social context (Brookfield, 1985, p. 7-9). Brookfield claimed that "the most complete form of self-directed knowledge occurs when the process and the critical reflection merge, as adults seek the meaning in their learning" (Brookfield, 1985, p. 38).

Finally, the role of the educator in digital learning is very different from and questionable compared with in-person teaching – learning. The Internet explosion is about to demolish the traditional learning – teaching where 90% of knowledge 'was transmitted' by the teacher to the student claims (Giuseffi, 2018). However, along with it down goes affective learning, which can be accomplished better

in a small group discussion setting. Learning is not only cognitive, but it also includes feelings, interaction, dialogue, understanding, and clarification of theoretical views. For all these reasons, education within a room with chairs in a circle, an educator motivator, mediator remains the most appropriate for many people: an educator that will discuss learning with the learners face-to-face, self-directs the learners, reinforcing their initiatives and critical thinking; learning that will be accelerated through discussions, dialogue, role playing and many other ways. Obviously, the Internet cannot generate such facilitative learning. Indeed, there is a paradox in learning, says Collins. 'Learning is individual, no one is learning for someone else. However, learning is not accomplished in absolute void. We learn through interaction with something or someone else within a specific environment.' (Collins, 1991, p. 118). In this context, "self-directed learning should have as its goal to empower individuals to gain awareness that they should be the creators of their thoughts and emotions, to assist them in comprehending their experiences and perceiving the meaning of their life" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 17). The Internet has not yet generated this facilitative, independent, emancipated learning. Afterwards, the views of a small group of MA students will be presented on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning.

Methodology

In this paper will be presented secondary research data from a study carried out on the subject of: "Self-Directed Learning as a factor to enhance student's resilience at the Hellenic Open University during the Covid-19 pandemic" and presented at the Conference of EADTU (21/10/2022). The purpose of the study was to investigate self-directed learning skills, which contributed to helping postgraduate students

at the Hellenic Open University (HOU) to overcome difficulties in their studies during the pandemic, and achieve their goals and boost their mental resilience. In this pilot qualitative study, six (6) MA students at the Open Hellenic University (5 women and 1 man) participated in the form of semi-structured interviews, during the second year of the pandemic. The participants were MA students at the Hellenic Open University (MA Sciences of Education) in the academic year 2021-2022. They had studied for three academic semesters at a master's degree level, being willing to participate in the study and having profound experience of the subject matter. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews to allow the participants to express their experience freely. The interviews were analysed based on the method of thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Inductive content analysis was employed, in which themes and categories were extracted from the theoretical content of this article.

The reason for which we have come back to this study was the fast-growing participation of MA students on the Internet compared to the past according to what they said, as well as their constant participation in online activities and lessons. In this context, the students reported the advantages and disadvantages of digital learning which are largely consistent with findings of other studies presented in the theoretical part.

Results

Benefits in the self-directed learning of students due to the fast-growing internet
More communication and collaboration among students on social media
The learners acquired more skills of self-directed learning mainly by achieving more frequent collaboration with their fellow students

with whom they created learning and cooperation communities on social media, Messenger, Viber, Facebook, where the collaborators learnt from one another. In the context of these communities, it emerged that peers are a significant source of self-directed learning.

Student 1W. *"I had great support from my fellow students at HOU. It is incredible the cooperation that exists in the field of remote learning, and which was also confirmed in the use of its methods in conventional education during the years of the pandemic".*

Student 5M. *"Cooperation with my fellow students became much stronger. We had daily communication through our team on Webex and viber. We exchanged opinions, notes, and information about our research papers and more."*

More information and knowledge from the internet

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly increased the use of the Internet, as all academic institutions operated exclusively with distance learning. The growing use of the Internet has made students become more familiar with digital tools, resulting in extracting even more information and knowledge relevant to their field of studies. This new situation highlighted self-directed learning as a key strategy for the successful completion of students' studies.

Student 3W. *"I gathered information for my essays from books but mostly from the Internet."*

Student 5M. *"During this period, the internet was the only way to obtain references, information, etc.: electronic libraries and websites related to research, supply of books and notes, all from the internet".*

Extracting information also affects their choices regarding self-directed forms of learning by choosing learning activities that suit them and for which they had no information in the past.

Student 2W. *'The information I find on the Internet regarding seminars and programmes I consider interesting is important. Before I could not learn about them. Now I have become more active and self-directed regarding my learning because I have learned to search for them.'*

Student 4W. *'This information, even if we underestimate it, may sometimes bring personal change as it is you who decide about it. You learn things you could not previously imagine; you broaden your horizons. I have chosen to attend two MOOCS at the same time this period.'*

The benefits of online teaching and flexibility in managing personal time

Even though the study group was very small, the views regarding the advantages of online teaching as well as the views on managing time spent on the Internet vary.

Student W3. *'Online teaching has many advantages as we economize on time, and we can do other things at the same time.'*

Student W4. *'Online learning has many advantages. It is flexible relating to space, time, studying pace and eliminates distance. It provides many innovative methods, cultivates skills and leads adults to self-motivation and self-directed learning.'*

Student W2. *'What is positive about the Internet is the flexibility in managing my time. I can find there more easily what I am looking for and I do not need to spend time at the library or read an entire book to find something…'*

Disadvantages in the self-directed learning of students due to the fast-growing internet

Lack in focusing on knowledge and critical approach of information and knowledge.

A key issue of the students was critical reflection on the need to critically approach and manage the volume of information identified.

Student 1W. *"It was a challenge to locate the most valid and relevant information on the subject being processed. Here again, the role of the Teacher Advisor in guiding the students in the right direction is highlighted. Necessary tools are critical and abstract thinking, but also a sense of proportion for the necessary focus. But I became much more aware during this period of the need to acquire critical thinking with scientific criteria."*

Student 4W. *"I focused on specific points that were necessary and helpful for the preparation of my essays. And as I mentioned before, I used the information I found in scientific sources, but it was very difficult to cross-checked it with other sources to see if it was valid."*

Student 5M. *"The influx of information from the internet was huge, and I found it quite difficult to manage all this volume. Then I tried hard to critically approach the sources, to compare them with basic texts, to check....".*

The students realize the need to critically manage the large volume of information and knowledge the Internet provides them. They also realize that this is the most difficult skill they have to acquire in the context of self-directed learning,

Too much time spent on the Internet leads to shallow learning.

When they spend too much time on searching for information and on the Internet, this could be at the expense of qualitative, substantial learning. Time management may generate stress, but they always run the risk of becoming addicted to the use of the Internet.

Student 1Wd. *'By constantly researching for information – there is always something new to find – I became a greedier user of the Internet without achieving substantial studying and learning.'*

'Student 3W. *'When you enter the world of the Internet you sometimes lose track of time and when time is pressing us to hand in essays we are consumed by stress.'*

Student 5M. *'You find a lot of information on the Internet, many interesting things, but time goes by so quickly you do not realize it. You need discipline; otherwise you may become addicted.'*

The Role of Adult Educator in self - directed learning.

The role of the Adult Educator becomes crucial in the context of self-directed learning on the Internet and cultivation of critical thinking regarding managing the large volume of information that can be accessed to on the Internet.

Student 1W. "*In the course of my studies, the pandemic was not decisive, I was lucky as a Counsellor Professor to meet a teacher who believed in and encouraged students' self-direction, not in the sense of a superficial concession of control and power, but in the sense of encouragement and empowerment of self-directed learning. It was working with her that made me realize the true essence and content of remote learning.*"

Student 3W. "*Yes, of course, the help from the Counsellors-Teachers was greater during this time. And we communicated more. My teacher's help was immediate and decisive. She gave me important directions, advice, and ideas for references, she pushed me to self-directed learning.*"

Student 5M. *"The role of the Teacher Advisor in guiding the students in the right direction is highlighted. Necessary tools are critical and abstract thinking, but also a sense of proportion for the necessary focus. But I became much more aware during this period of the need to acquire critical thinking with scientific criteria."*

Concluding Thoughts

This study aims to help us understand self-directed learning within the context of changes

produced by the rapid development of the Internet. Adult learners have the opportunity to benefit from these changes as they are given the possibility to access learning sources and surf the Internet 2h hours per day, to find information and knowledge depending on their learning needs, but also their interests in general, in a self-directed way. Researchers but also learners can see many advantages and disadvantages in the constantly growing involvement of learners regarding their self-directed learning. The advantages were also confirmed by secondary research data of our pilot study are briefly the following:

- Flexibility in managing personal time. Extracting information and knowledge from many sources at any time of the day, depending on each person's availability. Reinforcement of individual learning pace, ability to make individual learning effort, such as attending programmes, i.e., MOOCS, and their assessment.
- Possibility to create and participate in various communication and learning groups on social media (i.e., messenger, Viber, Facebook, etc,), resulting in a growing access to even more learning sources than in the past, but also creating the conditions for cooperative learning.
- Possibility to get additional information on various learning activities, which affects to a certain extent their choices regarding self-directed forms of learning by choosing learning activities that suit them and had no information about them in the past.

However, as aforementioned, researchers but also participants in our study have ex-

pressed disadvantages regarding the quality of digital self-directed learning, such as:

- Less interaction offered by in-person participation within a learning group.
- Too much time spent on the Internet may stress more the learners, and they run the risk of becoming addicted to it.
- The difficulty to use a critical approach regarding the huge volume of information – knowledge due to a lack in training the learners to use critical thinking may lead, according to many people, to shallow learning and inability to monitor the authenticity of resources.

Moreover, the absence or lack of an educator raises questions as to where may reach the absence of a motivator, leader educator who will cultivate self-directed critical learning in learners.

Furthermore, as far as our pilot study is concerned, the results are not representative but can be used for further research on self-directed learning due to the fast-growing internet. Based on this, the main conclusion is that cultivating critical reflection is the safety net for maximizing the benefits from self-directed learning regarding new data. Especially, universities must develop programmes to cultivate critical thinking, so that learning has a personal meaning for everyone, is a conscious action empowering individuals, putting them in readiness, and placing itself within the historical-social-political context in which it occurs. Therefore, there is no doubt that technology-infused learning lives of today's learners. Technology is changing the entire learning context, learning itself highlighting a more self-directed independent learner. Whether the learner will also be emancipated, with critical thinking regarding their learning is an open

issue that will be addressed in the near future by social and political changes in society and education.

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Perspective Transformation through Adaptive Teaching: the contribution of the T.E.S.T. Project

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ABSTRACT

Transformative and emancipatory approaches to education are emerging as important aspects of educational practice. Professors and adult educators are increasingly required to demonstrate flexibility, the ability to provide emotional and practical support, and adaptability to facilitate the development of learners at all levels of education (Westwood, 2018). An adaptive teacher should create an environment that supports critical reflection and encourages learners to challenge their beliefs, facilitating transformative learning and focusing on learner empowerment (Brookfield, 2017). With this focus, the paper presents the findings of exploratory qualitative research, including desk research and focus groups, conducted as part of the *T.E.S.T. — Technologies for STEAM Teaching* research project, with the aim of developing the profile of the adaptive teacher. The desk research was based on scientific papers, project reports, toolkits, handbooks, training programmes at national and international level. Focus groups were held with students, teachers, and managers from an international network of institutions selected on the basis of specific criteria. Based on the findings, the paper presents the profile of the adaptive teacher and discusses its implications for student-centred learning and transformative approaches in higher education.

Key words: Transformative Learning, Adaptive Teaching, STEAM Disciplines, Higher Education, Methodological Repertoire.

Introduction

Overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic led to a rethinking of STEAM education towards the construction of methodological pathways and learner-centred practices, guided by a more transformative design (Barana, et al., 2019). Transformative and emancipatory educational themes and approaches have emerged as important aspects of educational practice. The new technological and digital scenarios require, on the one hand, teachers to adapt to the different pace and educational needs of students and, on the other hand, students to learn how to adapt to a constantly changing labour

market (Hoffman, & Duffy, 2016; Parsons, Ankrum, & Morewood, 2016; Hardy et al., 2019). How can teachers teach adaptively? According to the international literature in STEAM Education, an adaptive teacher should create an environment that supports critical reflection and encourages learners to challenge their beliefs, facilitating transformative learning and focus on learner empowerment (Westwood, 2018; Hoggan, 2022). From this perspective, some important questions arise:

What characteristics compose the profile of an adaptive teacher able to facilitate students' transformative and emancipatory learning in STEAM disciplines?

- *Which are the competences of an adaptive teacher that could support learners' perspective transformation in STEAM disciplines?*
- *Which pedagogical and technological approaches and tools can adaptive teachers in STEAM disciplines weaponize to face diversity?*

Trying to answer these questions, the paper describes the results of a qualitative-exploratory procedure of the two-year research project T.E.S.T. — Technologies for STEAM Teaching. In the frame of the T.E.S.T. project, qualitative research including both Desk Research and Focus groups was conducted. Desk research was based on scientific papers, projects and reports, toolkits, handbooks, training programs at national and international level. Focus groups involved students, Faculty members and managerial staff selected on specific criteria.

The results of both Desk Research and Focus groups produced rich descriptive findings according to which teachers should develop competences linked to a certain level of compromise and a positive attitude towards diversity; an educational planning that considers differences, educational mediation,

and formative evaluation. The importance of a humanistic and person-centred approach to adaptive teaching strongly emerged. The project's methodological framework was outlined, which enabled the construction of a methodological repertoire for the adaptive teaching in STEAM. The emerging outcomes aim to shed new light on how transformative learning can inform adaptive teaching and how the adaptive teacher profile can facilitate emancipatory education in Higher Education, especially in STEAM fields.

Building the profile of the Adaptive Teacher. Desk analysis and focus group results

Adaptive teaching is an approach aiming at achieving a common teaching goal with learners whose prior achievement, aptitude, or learning styles differ. In the frame of adaptive teaching different instructional strategies are applied to different groups of learners so that diversity prevailing in the classroom does not prevent any learner from achieving learning outcomes and gain success, and includes both careful lesson planning and responsive teacher interventions during the lesson (Ikwumelu et al., 2015). Nowadays, the field has developed and shaped in different directions, including many existing learning strategies, like personalization and individualization of learning. Although some authors make the difference between the terms 'adaptive teaching', 'differentiated teaching', and 'individualized instructions' ((Ikwumelu et al., 2015), in the literature, they are often used as synonyms.

At university level studies and especially in the areas of STEAM, teachers are not sufficiently prepared to address classroom diversity (Torres-Coronas & Vidal-Blasco, 2019). Almost in all Europe teaching training courses

addressing adaptive learning technologies and methodologies are lacking both in general and in the STEAM field.

The qualitative research carried out aiming to compose the profile of an adaptive teacher able to facilitate students' transformative and emancipatory learning with a focus in STEAM disciplines, to describe the competences of that adaptive teacher as well as to discuss the pedagogical and technological approaches and tools could adaptive teachers in STEAM disciplines utilize to face diversity and facilitate adaption.

The research
Desk Research is a research method that is based on the analysis of the available data sources, including their compilation, mutual verification and processing and can serve as the basis for discussion on the topic under investigation. A total of research documents is selected and based on specific criteria several documents are analysed and discussed. In the frame of the T.E.S.T. program the Desk Research based on National Desk Research conducted by partners for each country involved in the project. The keywords related to the sources search were: *Adaptive Teaching/Teacher reviews, Learning Methodology for Adaptive Teacher, Competences and skills of the Adaptive Teacher, Adaptive Teaching/Teacher in STEAM.*

The total sources used for the Desk research were:

- 24 scientific papers and master/doctoral thesis at National level
- 7 reports of projects at National level
- 24 scientific papers at International level
- 5 reports of international projects
- 5 Toolkits/handbooks focused mainly on STEAM Toolkits/handbooks or training programs

- 22 other papers/reports/projects concerning *Inclusive Digital Education, impacts of Covid-19 and the rapid shift to online and remote learning and teaching*

A *focus group* is defined as a small group of carefully selected participants who contribute to open or semi-conducted discussions for research purposes on a research question or theme under investigation. The purpose of the group is not to arrive at a consensus or agreement on the topic but seeks to identify and understand participants' perceptions of the topic or situation under investigation (Bora, 2017).

The objectives of Focus Groups in the frame of the T.E.S.T. project are to identify *needs*, *experiences*, *priorities, and challenges* for Higher Education students and teachers in order to define the constituent elements of a proposed TEST programme for the Adaptive Teacher in a STEAM framework.

The focus group preparation was designed to involve 3 different groups: students (undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD candidates), teachers (Faculty members), and managerial staff. Each focus group lasted approximately 45–90 minutes, was conducted in online mode via zoom platform, was both audio-recorded and video-recorded and later was transcribed for a careful analysis of the data collected. Two members of the research team of each partner institution were moderators and facilitators for the focus groups, and the other two were observers and notetakers. The *criteria* for the selection of participants to each FGs were their relationship with STEAM disciplines for faculty members and students, their experience and professional position in STEAM related HEIs as management staff, their experience in national and European projects in the field of STEAM, and their research interests in the field.

The protocol of the questions for each target group included questions related to: *the*

difficulties they experience with STEAM Disciplines in general, the situation of STEAM education and activities before and during Covid-19 in the institute -especially for laboratory teaching processes, the weaknesses, and difficulties they faced about distance learning in general and in STEAM education and how they manage them, their training needs on methodology for effective online teaching/learning of STEAM disciplines, the profile of the adaptive teacher, the state of the art of training provision in STEAM fields in their institute.

The data collected from the focus groups was transformed into text through a transcription by listening/watching the video recording and compared with the notes taken during the focus group sessions. After that, the moderators/facilitators and observers/notetakers had a detailed discussion and a 'training' on the coding of the data aiming to support the validity and reliability of the analysis and the results. Codes, code categories, and derived thematic axis (themes) were the basis of the results of the procedure and the discussion.

Findings of the research

Findings of both Desk research and Focus groups offered valuable data to answer the questions under investigation for the Adaptive teacher in STEAM fields. All the findings are in accordance with basic principles of teaching and learning in an authentic educational environment with the student in the centre of every procedure and the teacher standing by him/her (Barana et al., 2020; Parsons et al., 2016). According to this framework, adaptive teaching:

- *reflects teaching adaptively*, with arts integration practices, attention to promoting students' critical reflective thinking;
- *means* recognizing individual differences;

- *means* teaching future professionals capable of solving increasingly complex problems and navigating ambiguity and unknown circumstances;
- in STEAM education *is related* to the integration of collaborative practices, problem-based inquiry learning;
- *requires* instruments technologically sophisticated (like Virtual and Augmented reality).

Emergent characteristics of Adaptive Teaching in STEAM teaching are *integration of multiple discipline-based contents, focus on real-world problems and scenarios, collaborative methodologies to enhance students' participation, student-directed work, project-based instruction, problem-based inquiry learning (PBIL).*

The results of the project STEAM on edu: https://steamonedu.eu/ can be a practical and realist basis to form an Adaptive teaching in STEAM teacher competence profile in relation with experiences from individualization and personalization in education and models from differentiated learning such as:

- Models and concepts of individualization and differentiation in the classroom
- Perspectives on heterogeneity, diversity, multiculturalism, and gender as drivers for adaptive teaching
- Instructional design with a focus on co-teaching, research-based learning, adaptive learning support technologies as well as formative and summative performance assessment.

Findings of the focus groups were aiming to discuss emerged issues concerning:

- *difficulties during STEAM-related subjects and courses*
- *difficulties and weakness in teaching and learning online*
- *recommendations for teaching and learning online in STEAM subjects based on experienced difficulties*
- *profile and competences of an adaptive teacher in general and specifically in STEAM subjects*
- *training needs concerning adaptive teaching and adaptive teacher*

Collecting, analysing, comparing, and summarizing the analysis of national focus group reports, the diagrams below show how Students and Teachers imagine the STEA(A)M Adaptive Teacher:

Fig. 1: Students imagine adaptive teacher

Fig. 2: Teachers imagine adaptive teacher[1]

Based on the same as well as based on relative literature, we can conclude that it is important for an adaptive teacher for STEAM disciplines and framework and especially in an online teaching and learning environment to be able flexible and effective (Kameas & Spyropoulou, 2021) as a *teacher*, as a *learning designer*, as a *manager*, as a *professional* as well as an *effective user* of digital tools in the classroom and laboratory.

Below, the interrelated and interconnected competences that an adaptive teacher should own, are graphically presented:

Arriving to conclusions

Based on the research findings, the importance of a humanistic and person-centred approach to adaptive teaching emerged strongly. In the general educational context, adaptive learning is relatively underdeveloped in practice, although there are emerging dynamics and tendencies. The characteristics that have been incorporated into the framework of adaptive teaching are: *integration of content from multiple disciplines, focus on real-world problems and scenarios, collaborative methods to enhance student participation, student-directed work, project-based instruction, or problem-based inquiry learning.*

Fig. 3: Interconnected competences for the adaptive teacher

The STEAM field can be seen as having specific characteristics that can both limit and enable the development of digital adaptive learning. In the context of adaptive learning, any teacher training should include:

- The concept of diversity in the classroom
- The principles of adaptive methodology
- Methods for analysing the situation of each STEAM knowledge domain, developing adaptive learning processes, designing learning materials, supporting collaboration in the classroom and in co-working labs, implementing and evaluating adaptive learning processes.

Transformative Learning and Adaptive Teaching[2]

This section briefly explores the links between adaptive teaching and transformative learning theory. It attempts to unfold new (or renewed) trajectories of learning in the interplay between transformation and adaptation, in line with the challenge of opening (unexplored) pathways for disambiguating transformative dimensions of adult learning. As described by Mezirow (1991), transformative learning involves critical reflection on our assumptions when our taken-for-granted ways of knowing and being are challenged. This can lead to changes in our perspectives that can result in a change in individual behaviour or, in the case of an organization or community, new actions

for social and organizational change (Butterwick, & Lipson Lawrence, 2023).

Within the scenario, this section attempts to "trouble" the dual concepts of adaptive teaching and transformative learning, starting from two *overarching questions*:

- What is the role of adaptability (in terms of curriculum adaptation, method adaptation, assessment tool adaptation) in transformative learning processes?
- How can professors and researchers use transformative learning to challenge research in adaptive teaching?

What is the role of adaptivity (in terms of curriculum adaptation, method adaptation, assessment tool adaptation) in transformative learning processes?

Most of the jobs that the children of 2023 will be doing in their twenties don't exist yet. As professors, we can imagine that the professions of 2050 will be based on projects, highly technologically enhanced practices. They will use artificial intelligence — and perhaps the metaverse — the same way we use our laptops and iPhones. New technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, super-globalisation and super-connectivity, to which we are now accustomed, have an unexpected and unpredictable influence on future professions and work organizations (Lehtinen, Hakkarainen, & Palonen, 2014). Economic and democratic turbulence, the pandemic, the political crisis, the digitalization of the work chain, the dematerialization of work practices have led to the creation of entirely new jobs or to the hybridization of existing jobs in complex

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2   This paragraph has been written with Alessandra Romano, Associate Professor of University of Siena, Scientific Responsible for the T.E.S.T. Project

ways. Complexity is accelerated by the proliferation of cognitive technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), which are changing the nature of work as well as the types of work and jobs of the future (Faller, & Marsick, 2023, p. 92). AI-driven platforms set in motion dynamic interactions between people, new enabling technologies and tools, regulations, expectations, and other unanticipated objects, leading to continuous and unpredictable changes in the daily experience of the workforce (ibid).

Data analyst, big data scientist, machine learning scientist, growth hacker, UX designer (user experience designer), digital humanist, personal debt advisor, green finance manager, green transition manager, environmental lawyer are examples of new professions in 2023. In general, these new professions seem to emerge at the edge of multi-scientific and multidisciplinary professional domains, requiring transformational learning.

How can professors and researchers use transformative learning to challenge research in adaptive teaching?

Adopting the transformative learning framework in the field of investigation on adaptive teaching research adds several important inputs to extend the reflections of the construct. Among these:

1. Transformative learning theory provides researchers and teachers with a methodological framework to validate the polarized assumptions about STEAM education and adaptivity in teaching and learning;
2. Transformative learning helps researchers who are immersed in the field of investigation to assume a self-reflexive stance as researchers and scholars engaged in this biennial project;

3. Transformative learning provides a multi-axial and intersectional framework for understanding the complexity of diversity in students' identity. Those intersecting dimensions (gender, power, abilities, status, ethnicity, culture) impact on their access to opportunities to learn and to grow as human beings and citizens. No research investigation could ignore the relevance of students' identity positionalities in their access to different pathways of participation, career, resources, and learning paths.

According to a recent paper by Hoggan and Finnegan, "the meanings of transformation are multiple and layered" (Hoggan, & Finnegan, 2023, p. 6). We agree with these two scholars who question the notion of "one-shot transformation": meaning perspectives' transformation doesn't happen overnight or one day. Part of the transformative learning literature sees some limitations in Mezirow's (1991) notion of a disorienting dilemma as a catalyst for transformation to happen. Adaptive teaching considers learning processes not as a moment, a single dilemma or event, but rather as a dynamic, emergent and non-monotonous learning that functions to develop much more adaptability to the discontinuity, the surprising and unexpected phenomena.

Conclusions

The paper offers a perspective of integration between adaptive teaching and transformative learning theory. Based on the findings of the qualitative research of the T.E.S.T. project, the authors describe the emerging profile of the adaptive teacher and link it to some of the

recent literature on transformative learning (Hoggan, & Finnegan, 2023).

The aim is to open new ways of understanding adaptive teaching through the lens of learning as/for transformation. Despite this intention, the paper has some limitations in terms of reductionist perspective. The field of adaptive teaching is an umbrella concept that needs to be unpacked in further contributions. Some questions about adaptive teaching and the function of adaptive teachers remain unanswered. For future developments, more research on this relationship is needed for the expansion of the transformative learning approach in STEAM education.

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The Implementation of the Transformative Learning Method through Aesthetic Experience at Greek Public Vocational Training Institutes: PVTI Trainers' Views, Results, Obstacles, and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is to investigate the application of the transformative learning method through the aesthetic experience at Greek Public Vocational Training Institutes (PVTIs). The aim is to identify the benefits of applying the method and if there are any visible positive effects on the educational goals. At the same time, an attempt is made to identify the obstacles presented and the participants were asked to make suggestions for improvement. In order to achieve the above objectives, qualitative research was carried out with the participation of twenty experienced PVTI trainers. For the deeper analysis of the data, four thematic axes were developed which concerned the knowledge of trainers for education through aesthetic experience, the benefits of applying art to the educational process, the obstacles presented and what factors would contribute to learning through the aesthetic experience to be a constant component in PVTI training. The research revealed that PVTI trainers believe that education through art undoubtedly contributes to the active participation of trainees, activates their imagination and critical thinking, and helps to change established perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours.

Key words: Public Vocational Training Institutes (PVTIs), Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience (TLAE), PVTI Trainers.

Introduction

Within a constantly changing social and work environment, there arises the need for a radical transformation of established educational systems and teaching methods with the aim of optimizing learning outcomes. This need is particularly pronounced in the field of adult education, where vulnerable and marginalized social groups are trained to smoothly integrate into the social fabric and rejoin the labour market. This purpose is also served by

the establishment of Public Vocational Training Institutes (PVTIs), which contribute to social cohesion and the fight against inequalities by supporting the personal and professional development of trainees who lack the necessary qualifications to meet the ever-evolving demands of the changing work and social environment shaped by new conditions. The goal is to transform the social order, which shall lead to the emancipation of the individual.

The specificities of PVTIs require the employment of experienced and specialized educational staff who, in addition to their academic and theoretical training, should be capable of understanding the trainees' needs and implementing active learning techniques to activate their interest and encourage their active participation in the educational process. According to Kokkos, one of the issues that necessitate a revision of established learning methods is the need to implement radical learning methods in adult education (Kokkos, 2011). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience (TLAE) is an innovative educational method where critical thinking is activated through the use of art. Through productive dialogue, trainees critically re-evaluate their experiences, stereotypes, and previous perceptions, aiming to transform their ideas and change their perception of reality. Learning becomes experiential, trainees actively participate, and they are required to discover knowledge themselves. The learning process differs from the traditional teacher-centred model, where knowledge is acquired passively and superficially, achieving better learning outcomes by promoting active participation.

The present research aims to investigate whether PVTI trainers are aware of and apply the aforementioned method, whether they believe it contributes positively to the learning process, what they consider the benefits of extensive application of the method in PVTI training, what obstacles they face, and what they would suggest for the better implemen-

tation of the method. The research design was conducted following the principles of qualitative research methodology, and the main data collection tool was interviews. The sample consisted of twenty PVTI trainers from various specialities, selected based on their educational experience in PVTI training and their experience in implementing active learning techniques, specifically TLAE.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will provide a brief overview of the theoretical approaches regarding the contribution and significance of aesthetic experience within the context of the learning process, presenting the perspectives of the leading thinkers on the role of art in enhancing critical thinking. These theoretical approaches and perspectives collectively form the framework of the TLAE method developed by Kokkos, which represents an alternative pedagogical approach in the field of adult education.

The initiator of the theory of transformative learning is Jack Mezirow, who argues that the ultimate goal and purpose of education is to guide learners in becoming aware of their capabilities and to become more socially responsible, emancipated, and self-reliant within their respective social environments. Transformative learning refers to the process through which learners activate their critical thinking in order to become aware of and evaluate the real sources of learning, values and emotions, ultimately discovering the true causes and attaining genuine knowledge (Mezirow, 2007). To implement the mechanism of transformative learning in practice, there are three essential elements that contribute to the approach proposed by Mezirow: experience, critical reflection, and rational dialogue. During the educational process of transformative learning, existing experience serves as a basis for opti-

mizing educational outcomes. It is crucial to provide appropriate stimuli so that the group of learners can engage in critical reflection, and subsequently, through rational dialogue, re-examine their initial assumptions and realize new knowledge (Lingeris, 2007).

John Dewey (1934), in his work "Art as Experience," expressed the view that aesthetic experience is the most powerful means for developing imagination, which he defined as the fundamental element of the learning process. Works of art possess not only a physical existence, but are also governed by an imaginative dimension created by their creators. To decrypt their deeper meanings, one must employ their imaginative capacity. Aesthetic experience is more intense and profound than the everyday experiences we gain from daily life and represents a significant "challenge for thought" (Dewey, 1980).

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire laid the groundwork for utilizing aesthetic experience in transformative learning processes. A central element in Freire's educational method is the development of critical consciousness among learners, enabling them to recognize their situation through the decoding of artistic works and take action towards social change (Freire, 1970). Typically, he used sketches created by well-known artists related to the topic under examination. The decoding of images occurs through a productive dialogue in which participants, guided by the experienced instructor, analyse each concept separately to activate their critical thinking and re-evaluate their stereotypes and values to gain a new understanding of reality and their place within it (Freire, 1974).

Critical theory represents a significant approach to the role of art in developing critical thinking. Founders of critical theory, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1969), known as the "Frankfurt School", emphasized that the conceptual structure and intellectual essence of a work of art do not align with the dominant norms of social reality. Thus, engaging with art cultivates a mode of thinking that reacts to the societal model imposed by prevailing conditions (Kokkos, 2009).

Furthermore, David Perkins' technique (1994) aims to develop the learners' reflective disposition through the use of art, particularly open, critical, and creative thinking. This technique involves systematic observation of an artwork in conjunction with targeted thought-provoking questions posed deliberately by the educator.

The theoretical framework of the TLAE method developed by Kokkos (2011) is based on the utilization of aesthetic experience within the context of transformative learning. It incorporates the aforementioned theoretical approaches concerning the impact of art on the learning process. Particular emphasis is placed on recognizing the limitations of some learners within the group due to their cultural, social, and educational backgrounds, which may hinder their participation in the process of decoding artworks and comprehending hidden meanings. Thus, adult educators are called upon to make every possible effort to mitigate existing disparities and create the appropriate educational environment to facilitate intellectual and emotional access to art. This methodology provides a sound basis for developing trainee critical reflection, which is a prerequisite for individual transformation that can ultimately empower trainees to challenge the existing social reality (Koulaouzidis, 2013).

Research Methodology

The objective of this research emerged from the combination of two sources of inspiration for the researchers. On the one hand, the TLAE method comprises a modern and innovative method of teaching. On the other hand, train-

ing in the field of Greek PVTIs is concerned with adult education.

It is accordingly interesting to examine, through the research questions, whether the TLAE method is effectively implemented at Greek PVTIs and whether its utilization can be extended and enhanced. The main goal of this research is to record the perceptions of Greek PVTI trainers regarding the use of the TLAE method and to document its impact, whereby the perceptions – documented by the outcomes — may be utilized for further research, as well as designing relevant training programs for the target group of PVTI trainers.

We subsequently define the research questions upon which the four key thematic axes of the Trainers' schedule are constructed. The research questions include: (a) PVTI Trainer awareness of the TLAE method and the manner of its implementation; (b) The benefits of using the TLAE method; (c) The obstacles and difficulties encountered in utilizing the TLAE method; (d) The results from utilizing the TLAE method; and (e) The suggestions for improvement to facilitate PVTI trainers who want to implement the TLAE method.

On the basis of the hereinabove research questions, the four thematic axes are designed for a deeper analysis of the data, which relate to the specific objectives that are: (a) Trainer awareness of the TLAE method; (b) the benefits stemming from the implementation of art in the teaching process; (c) the obstacles that arise; (d) the factors that contribute to learning through the TLAE method becoming a consistent component in adult training; and (e) the suggestions for improvement made by PVTI trainers in relation to implementing the TLAE method.

We then proceed with research methodology. Before carrying out the research, we received Approval No: K5/51658/11-5-2021 from the Vocational Training Implementation Directorate of the General Secretariat of Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth at the Ministry of Education. Qualitative research was carried out with the participation of 20 experienced PVTI trainers in order to respond to the hereinabove objectives. The interviewees in this research context are trainers at PVTIs from 3 districts in Western Greece. The criterion for selecting trainers was that they are adult educators who have been certified by the Unified Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). They are familiar with the utilization of art in teaching. This implies that the trainers are aware of the TLAE method because it has been included in their learning objectives.

The interviews were conducted with the interviewees in the Greek language between late May and late July 2021; transcribed into the Greek language; analysed and interpreted by the researchers in the Greek language; and were only translated into the English language during the analysis stage when the final report was written.

The researchers then carried out a Synthesis & Analysis of the empirical data that emerged from the interviews. This led to the exporting of outcomes that answer the research questions. These outcomes, inter alia, led to suggestions for improvement.

Results

Recapitulation of Results by Objective
The research data has been synthesized by axis and then analysed based on the responses by the participants. The synthesis records the responses by the trainers to the corresponding sub-items, which supported the main argument.

As regards the demographic characteristics of the participants, the age of the trainers ranges between 30 years and 50+ years. PVTI trainers have received a lot of training on their cognitive object. Their experience is signif-

icant, since most of them had more than one year's teaching experience at PVTIs.

Objective 1: Examine whether PVTI Trainers are aware of the TLAE method and the way in which they have implemented it. [1ˢᵗ Axis]

The results that support that PVTI Trainers are aware of the TLAE method are as follows:

- The lesson becomes more vivid and attractive.
- Active participation is encouraged.
- Provides opportunities for contact with art through educational visits.
- There is no right or wrong perspective on art.
- The trainer assumes a supporting and encouraging role (facilitator)
- Select significant works of art of educational value (stimuli for exploring critical questions)

Objective 2: Define the benefits of the TLAE method's implementation [2nd Axis]

The outcomes indicate that the benefits of implementing the TLAE method are as follows:

- Group collaboration - evolution of group spirit
- Move away from the teacher-centred model.
- Trainees learn empirically and experientially.
- Art liberates.
- Better comprehension of the theoretical part of the course by trainees
- Experiential learning intertwines with critical reflection and art helps to unlock inherent elements of knowledge.
- Learning becomes more comprehensible and pleasurable.

- Problematic assumptions are reconsidered, and an emancipatory awareness of reality is evoked.
- Enhancement of self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence

Objective 3: Highlight the obstacles and difficulties arising from the implementation of the TLAE method [3rd Axis]

The obstacles and difficulties arising from the implementation of the TLAE method are as follows:

- works of art that exceed the limits of trainee apprehension.
- inadequate technical equipment
- baggage of prior knowledge and experience impedes deeper self-awareness and inner self-development
- inadequate provision of the required spatial arrangement
- difficulty in transforming habits of mind since adults do not easily alter behaviour patterns.
- improper allocation of teaching periods
- inadequate logistics infrastructure
- trainees only familiar with teacher-centred model
- trainees reticent to express opinion; fear of being exposed to negative criticism.

Objective 4: Document the results arising from the implementation of the TLAE method [4th Axis]

The following results arise from the implementation of the TLAE method:

- Enhances self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Critical reflection on learning experiences clearly increases.

- Transformation is a process that requires effort and repetition on a systematic basis.
- Aesthetic experience constitutes a key element of the training process.
- Art is a key tool for smoothing out diversities.
- Active participation learning techniques stimulate interest and interaction between trainees.
- Aesthetic experience animates critical reflection, activates emotion, enhances imagination and leads to lifelong acquisition of knowledge.
- Trainers create the appropriate learning environment and prepare trainees to learn.
- Positive response by trainees to art as a learning process and not a game
- Trainers enhanced their occupational profile.
- Trainers select works of art they are most familiar with, since expertise in art is not a prerequisite.

Objective 5: List the suggestions for improvement made by PVTI trainers in relation to implementing the TLAE method [4th Axis]

The following suggestions for improvement were made by PVTI trainers:

- Training must be of a substantial and not a procedural nature; it should be interactive and include exemplary workshops, incorporating the theoretical and practical components
- A Study Guide is essential for trainers wishing to integrate TLAE into their curricula, with detailed instructions of an advisory nature.

- The State should invest in PVTIs by supplying appropriate technical equipment and materials.
- Infrastructure needs to be improved to exclusively accommodate PVTIs in specifically designed buildings.
- Flexibility is required in formulating the training timetable, which cultivates a training policy where innovative training practices are promoted.
- Trainers should be encouraged to experiment with art and organize discussions on a systematic basis.

Discussion

An examination of the empirical data leads us to the inference that the integration of aesthetic experience in the educational process undoubtedly provides multiple benefits to both trainees and trainers. The use of art in training renders the lesson more vivid and attractive, as it engenders active participation by the trainees.

Simulation, internships, workgroups, and projects are employed in conjunction with web tools. We now observe a move away from the teacher-centred model where the teacher was the centre of learning. Now the trainee is more often the centre of learning, with the trainer occupying the role of a facilitator for overcoming problems.

Trainees were also provided with the opportunity to regularly visit Museums, Art Galleries and various places where there was contact with art. This was facilitated with the systematic observation of various works of art, paintings, poems, or statues, which convey the artist's message or attempt to clarify various problems or concerns about this art form. These contribute to learning through practice

and greatly assist trainees in understanding the theory and not losing interest.

Art also contributes to experiential learning for trainees. Through its use, trainees experience what they learn, so they better understand what they observe, while learning evolves gradually. Art liberates. Every person views art through their own perspective, imagination and experiences, so that these views may be more freely expressed. It has the potential to transform people, since it is reasonable that adults possess some views, where each view is individual through the stimuli it provides.

In practice, trainees better comprehended what was being taught in the theoretical part of the course. It broadened their spiritual horizons and assisted them to think in a more critical, global and holistic manner. There is no right or wrong perspective. The trainer assumes a role more akin to a guide / advisor / facilitator / mediator (between the trainee and art) and functions in a supportive and encouraging role, thus leading trainees to new knowledge.

These various art-based learning techniques are drastically effective and facilitate the learning process. They assist trainees to maintain focus and interest on the topic being studied, despite potential physical or mental fatigue. They also motivate trainees to activate their cognitive, affective and imaginative faculties in order to become more actively involved in learning.

Aesthetic experience provides the setting where freedom of thought, empathy, and emancipation from dysfunctional experiences of knowledge and attitudes may occur. The systematic contemplation of art works may also assist with reviewing problematic assumptions and evoking an emancipatory awareness of reality. This is a result of the transformative learning process.

Similar research findings conclude that the incorporation of aesthetic experience into the educational process has extremely positive outcomes in adult education. It is essential for educators to receive systematic training to effectively implement active learning techniques, particularly TLAE. The present research confirms and supplements the above conclusions by identifying the obstacles faced by adult educators in PVTIs as they endeavour to integrate art into their educational methodology. It also explores potential actions that could not only enhance this effort, but also establish aesthetic experience as a fundamental component in adult education programs.

The main obstacles that were recorded by our research principally relate to the fact that trainees are not familiar with these techniques. They expected the implementation of the traditional teacher-centred model in PVTI training. Despite this, the majority of the trainees responded positively and addressed the utilization of art as a learning process and not a game.

The problem of shortages in logistics infrastructure has been moreover demonstrated by our research. This issue is mainly due to the PVTI use of borrowed building facilities infrastructure and a lack of specially designed areas, as well as insufficient technical equipment. The problem with the correct allocation of teaching periods was also demonstrated, since the proper utilization of art in teaching requires a period of at least two consecutive teaching hours and should be factored into the compilation of the timetable.

The transformation of initial concepts and assumptions is a long-term process that is not easily achieved. Transformation requires the systematic repetition of the process in order to cultivate attitudes and skills and ameliorate their behaviour at a social and interpersonal level. Trainers must have the appropriate training, and as demonstrated by our research, a positive predisposition to utilizing art in teaching.

Conclusions

The main issue, when addressing an adult audience, is dealing with a huge amount of experience, which can be both of great value and a source of long-standing beliefs being hard to manage. As our research showed, aesthetic experience can help adult learners to change their perspective on it, in a very personal way. The absence of a "right" perspective of art and the interconnection of cognitive, affective and imaginative dimensions actually are key drivers for a fully learner-centred approach, able to enhance critical reflection, active participation and emancipatory learning. Critical reflection by trainees is activated through productive dialogue where critiques, experiences, stereotypes and previous perceptions are openly expressed so that their points of view may be transformed to achieve perspectives of reality.

From this viewpoint, we find somehow metaphorical the specific transformative process of the pedagogical approach; adult learners expecting the implementation of the traditional teacher-centred model, are actively involved in their learning process, taking progressively the ownership of it, and thus achieving better learning outcomes. Learning becomes more experiential as learners are invited to discover knowledge by themselves; knowledge is no more received in a passive and sterile manner. It is comforting, in this regard, to notice that the trainees do not see the aesthetic experience as a game, which would reveal a distance from the "real", "serious", training program. But it is even more fundamental to have ascertained that trainers were ready, as well, to move away from the teacher-centred model, meaning that they will be likely to take on the role of facilitators/mediators, namely between the trainee and art (there's no "right" perspective for them either). We could not take it for granted a priori, and it is a very encouraging sign for the implementation of an effective pedagogical TLAE approach.

Authors' contribution

Francesco C. Ugolini did the scientific supervision of the research and is the author of the Conclusions paragraph of this paper; Ismini Kavallari is the author of the remaining of the paper.

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Disorienting Dilemmas During the Covid-19 Pandemic Outbreak: An Approach to Musicians' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic of Covid-19 was an unprecedented and unexpected period in human life, causing significant changes in the way that reality is experienced. Measures against Covid-19 severely impacted musicians as conservatoires and entertainment halls were closed and every in-person art activity was suspended. The aim of this study was to explore the unsettling experiences of musicians in the context of the lockdown measures taken in response to the onset of Covid-19. Specifically, utilizing concepts of Mezirow's Transformation Theory we identified the "disorienting dilemmas" faced by the musicians in this period. The present study employed a qualitative framework with semi-structured interviews with 10 musicians in Greece. The study was conducted between January and July 2022. Qualitative analysis demonstrated that a proportion of musicians were faced with unpleasant feelings such as fear, stress, anger, and experienced unemployment and professional uncertainty, and insecurity. Moreover, professional music teachers stated that they had to cope with the digital reality without previous knowledge and experience in distance education and teaching. Furthermore, forced social isolation, bans, and cessation of social life generated the need to manage leisure time and daily habits, whereas, this social isolation time was deemed as a period which internal searches took place. Finally, several considerations were expressed regarding human relationships, the role of Mass Media and the role of the State in the context of the implemented pandemic mitigation policies. Findings suggest the need for re-evaluating the way of thinking and acting, as well as for critical reflection that triggers transformative learning.

Key words: Dissorienting Dilemmas, Music Education, Covid-19.

Introduction

The reality of the pandemic crisis was an unexpected period in human life. Individuals were introduced to a new, differentiated context, which was characterized by a reversal of the usual and given way of experiencing reality. To deal with the pandemic, a series of measures were taken involving the use of masks, social distancing and lockdowns, the establishment and prevalence of teleworking and distance education. As a result, a landscape of mental disturbance, work and financial uncertainty, shrinking of communication, disrupted sociability and living contact was created. In this context, the artistic sector was affected as well. That is to say, concerts, and all live music events were banned, music halls, conservatories, and schools were temporarily closed. Moreover, numerous musicians working as freelancers, self-employed or/and with insecure positions in the private sector were faced with a severe employment crisis (see OECD, 2020; ISM, 2020). At the same time, online teaching has been a new challenge for music teachers. In the light of the above, we attempted to record the changes, difficulties, and concerns that arose due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, starting from Mezirow's Transformation Theory (1991, 2000) we use the concept of the disorienting dilemma and try to approach the disorganization experiences that resulted in individuals' developing survival strategies and tendencies to readapt. By analysing the above, we aim to contribute to the deeper understanding of the learning processes during crises and highlight the importance of critical reflection and transformative learning that allows us to see the data through a multifaceted and revised look, "more inclusive, discriminating, permeable (open)…." (Mezirow, 1991, p. 71).

Disorienting Dilemma and the Pandemic

The disorienting dilemma is the first stage of Mezirow's Transformation Theory. His theory "refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8). According to Mezirow (2000), individuals face changes in their lives, and this results in assumptions, beliefs, ideas, and feelings — previously acquired within a specific social and cultural context and recorded in their individual biography – not creating a reliable and secure framework for making sense of the new reality. Thus, the need to reconsider the frames of reference of individuals through which they interpret their experiences frequently arises. Critical reflection on the "presuppositions", which guide a dysfunctional perspective, can activate "learning through perspective transformation"(Mezirow, 1991, p. 61). Therefore, the process of transformative learning can occur when individuals are faced with a disorienting dilemma that is, when the experiences that appear are not compatible with their "expectations" or when an "anomaly" arises, which it is not possible to manage using the given and habitual way of thinking (Mezirow, 1991, p. 61). Most often, the disorienting dilemmas "call into question deeply held personal values and threaten our very sense of self" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 98).

Some scholars have contributed to the debate on the concept of the disorienting dilemma, expanding on the factors that cause it. Kokkos (2017) has highlighted the role of art in causing disorienting dilemmas and in developing transformative learning, and has explored the importance of space in the emergence of thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Mälkki (2019) has dealt with "edge-emotions", i.e. the

negative emotions that emerge "when our assumptions are being challenged" (p. 60). These "offer both a tool to transform our meaning perspectives and a gateway to the knowledge, that is inaccessible from our current meaning perspectives" (Mälkki, 2019, p. 64).

According to Koulaouzides (2022) the pandemic constitutes a "collective biographical disjuncture" capable of triggering the process of transformation both at the individual's level and collectively. In his paper, he elaborates on the "disharmony" which emerged during the pandemic as a consequence of reducing social interaction, and the changes in education and employment. Similarly, as Alhadeff-Jones (2021) points out, the experience of the pandemic is a crisis that "brings to the fore deeper ambivalences and tensions, particularly concerning the position to adopt regarding the long-term effects of the crisis and the means used to deal with it" (p. 319).

The Consequences of the Pandemic on the Professional Music Sector

Theoretical work and research studies have pointed out the effects and consequences of the pandemic crisis and confinement in the professional branch of musicians, but not in the light of transformative learning theory. As noted in the text of ISM (2020) "The music workforce, including performers, composers, producers, conductors, agents, teachers, academics, advisers, and sound technicians, have all lost a significant amount of work and income due to the short-notice cancellation of concerts, festivals, and school closures" (p. 7). Similar to the qualitative research by Howard et al. (2021), young musicians were identified with job and financial insecurity, while their dependence on other non-musical employment was highlighted. A related study by Spiro et al. (2021) conducted early in the pandemic in the UK highlighted job

loss, financial hardship, negative emotions such as loneliness, stress, and sadness, "vulnerability" and the lack of support from the State for people working in music and performing arts. In recent research in Greece, similarly, substantially low wellbeing among professional musicians — that were also music students — was recorded during the pandemic and isolation period that followed it (Chrysostomou et al., 2022). However, positive aspects of lockdowns have also been observed. The positive effects were free time to create, compose music, listen to music, practice, discover new activities and acquire new skills (Howard et al., 2021; Spiro et al., 2021). In the aforementioned research in Greece analogous positive effects were attributed to music and its role in promoting wellbeing and mental health in a general population (Chrysostomou et al., 2022).

In addition, the consequences of the pandemic crisis decisively influence the field of education, given that "remote teaching" was used well (Goulas & Karalis, 2020, p. 7). Teachers were suddenly and unexpectedly called, unprepared, to manage a virtual reality (see Anastasiadis, 2020; Cheng & Lam, 2021; Kibici & Sarıkaya, 2021; Fotopoulos, 2021). Understandably, the positive and negative aspects of online teaching have been the focus of theoretical texts and research. Online teaching experience has contributed to teachers' engagement with online tools, strengthened communication channels between teachers, and contributed to the enrichment of in-person learning process with innovative practices, strategies, and digital tools (Encarnação & Vieira, Brunner, 2021; Kivi, Koniari, Özeke & Çeliktaş, 2021). In contrast, the negative side of digital reality, was associated with technical problems, issues of "image and sound synchronization", the lack of technological equipment, difficulties of learning techniques, and difficulties of learning the music style, and triggering stressful emotions which, in turn, result also from the

degree of students' engagement in the online environment (Kivi, Koniari, Özeke & Çeliktaş, 2021; Koner, Gee & Borden, 2022; Medňanská & Strenáčiková, 2021; Ververis & Apostolis, 2020).

Method

In this paper, we present a part of the data from postdoctoral research carried out at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. This qualitative study sought to examine and record the experiences of musicians in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, using Mezirow's Transformation Theory as a theoretical framework, we investigated the disruptive experiences that arose, their contribution to the expansion, enrichment and/or revision of beliefs and assumptions and the role of musical art in the management of the pandemic as these were expressed by musicians themselves. Through the research question we explore the changes, rearrangements, crises, concerns, and thoughts that were triggered in the period of restriction. The research focuses on the professional sector of musicians, as it received a significant work and economic blow during this period. In addition, music teachers were asked to manage the digital reality, teaching remotely. The study involved ten musicians who were selected through purposeful sampling, which enables the researcher to "gain in-depth knowledge" (Merriam & Tisbell, 2016, p. 96). Musicians were selected from different musical fields, such as teachers in schools, in conservatories, musicians who were active in the field of sound engineering and music production, working in entertainment halls and in a professional choir. The qualitative data collection tool was the semi-structured in-depth interview (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, as described by Isari and Pourkos (2015). The

themes that emerged during the research and are presented below were related to emotions created during the lockdowns, changes in the work sector, management of everyday life and spare time, and reflections on human relations along with the role of the Media and the State in managing this crisis.

Results

Theme 1: Emotions Manifested During Covid-19 Lockdowns

Lockdowns created rearrangements on a psychological level, causing difficult emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and anger. These stemmed from the anxiety of contracting the new virus, the lack of knowledge about it, the mobilization of loved ones, distrust of the "truth" projected and spread regarding the virus, work and financial uncertainty and insecurity, and the deprivation of freedom. Additional emotions that emerged were sadness, mainly about the effects of the pandemic on children, melancholy, loneliness *"and the feeling that you don't have someone to talk to face to face … someone to physically touch your hand …"* (Katerina)

However, the positive attitude towards the pandemic and its interpretation as a kind of respite and holiday should also be highlighted. Admittedly:

"[The pandemic] *It wasn't a problem for me because I'm a person who spends a lot of time by myself, I like it, in fact, it was an opportunity to do a lot of work alone, without socializing because my work naturally has a lot of socialization within it. So, for me holiday is being alone, and confinement was a holiday for me* […]*"* (Stefanos)

Theme 2: Changes in the Work Sector

The subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the survey participants' responses related to the professional crisis experienced by some

musicians and the professional work related to distance education.

a. Work Crisis and Career Change

The invasion of the pandemic highlighted the professional impasse that many musicians without a permanent job in the public sector found themselves in. Music events were banned, entertainment centres were closed, and private music lessons were curtailed. The consequence of the above was the emergence of job insecurity and uncertainty.

Work uncertainty has led to career exploration, a search for new survival strategies, and changes in career path and professional roles. Above all, it became clear that working professionally in music was not a reliable way of making a living in times of crisis. As a result, the need arose to be active in other professional areas in order to secure an income. As one of the participants confesses:

"I think we've all redefined our finances, and we should be less dependent on music, we should possibly find other activities, be more involved in other things, find alternative income resources because a pandemic may arise again, and we will have issues [...]*"* (Nikos)

b. The Invasion of Distance Education

Music teachers were asked to manage the challenge of distance education. In particular, they thought about how to implement it and looked for digital tools in order to enhance the participation of their students in the digital reality. One of the tools used is the one described by Hara:

"[...] *I looked online for the digital mandolin. The digital mandolin is a digital-like application that you click on as if you were playing a virtual mandolin through the computer, through your mobile* [...]*"*

The difficulties they faced were many and were due to technical problems, image and sound synchronization issues, and lack of technological equipment on the part of the students. At the same time, the lack of previous experience and specialized knowledge was pointed out, while *"everything was done experimentally"* (Katerina)

Furthermore, most musicians discovered the inappropriateness of online education in learning music, and they emphasized the importance of in-person education. As Panagiotis said:

"[...] *I was ridiculing it* [online lesson] *and I can still make fun of it from the point of view that it is not possible to do work online, it is not possible to teach music online* [...]*"*

Theme 3: Management of Everyday Life and Free Time

As expected, people's daily lives changed to a significant extent. Research participants noted the upheaval in daily habits and the behaviours they adopted to stay safe. These habits were related to the use of a mask, the use of antiseptic, the restriction of moving around freely, the use of technology to carry out daily transactions. Changes in everyday life led to the realization that *"everyday life should not be taken for granted"* (Dionisis), demonstrating the fluidity and instability of reality. Similarly, the false sense of eternity was challenged because, as one participant pointed out, *"time is short"* (Hara). At the same time, forced confinement and isolation at home sparked reflective thoughts on the effect of space on people's perception, highlighting Kokkos' (2017) view of the importance of space in creating disorienting dilemmas.

It is worth noting that the spare time, the restriction of movement and the sudden respite caused *"*[...] *To have deeper thoughts, that is to say an inside turn and start looking* [...]*"* (Christos). As for the pandemic, *"*[...] *it's potentially an opportunity to learn some things, right? It is what the wise men in the East used to say, "that there is nothing bad, everything, through all these things very positive things can emerge"*, reminding us of the ancient Greek phrase "Nothing bad is without something good".

In order to manage their free time, people subscribed to music platforms, as mentioned by two survey participants. Listening to music from online platforms has become a companionship and a way to interact and communicate. Some of the interviewees participated in online musical meetings, such as an online choir and a music group with the aim of collecting poetic texts about the pandemic and diseases, composing musical works based on them and presenting them at a music event. It is interesting that the pandemic triggered the need to convey through music the way people throughout time experience the disease, thereby strengthening the public's understanding and sensitivity on the issue. Additional outlets that creatively covered free time were the systematic study of music and musical instruments, the discovery and deeper study of musical genres. As one participant confessed, the approach to different musical genres and the reconsideration of individual aesthetic meanings became the active causes of the search for the role of the educational context in the formation of her musical preferences.

Theme 4: Reflections on Human Relationships, on the Role of the Media and the State
During the quarantine, reflections arose about the way people think and behave in crisis situations. As it turned out, the lack of respect became visible, the mental gap due to different interests, and the absence of solidarity emerged. As Hara commented *"[…] I saw a lot of individualism, Maria, individualism! Let me live, let everyone else die. And I didn't see it, let's say, in an isolated case [...]"*

At the same time, concerns were expressed about the way the Media and the government managed the pandemic. Some of the participants highlighted their concerns about the virus news and the information made public, about the manipulation of people's consciousness by the Media and the political

world, about the decisions imposed by the ruling class. Simultaneously, they pointed out their complaint about the dominant system that did not provide them with help in this crisis. As noted:

"[…] I have been paying social security taxes for so many years and I thought that in a difficult moment someone would help me, some government structure would help me. Now, no allowance, nothing [...]" (Katerina)

Discussion

It has been suggested that the pandemic induced disorienting dilemmas, as new challenges emerged that affected the way people made sense of the reality. As shown in our research, the pandemic crisis negatively impacted some survey participants. Musicians working as self-employed and/or contracted workers in the private sector faced unemployment and job insecurity. The above condition prompted some participants to explore alternatives, develop survival strategies, and follow new professional paths. The issue of career crisis and uncertainty was presented as a given in the text of ISM (2020) and in the studies of Howard et al. (2021) and Spiro et al. (2020).

The next disruptive challenge that musicians who were involved in teaching were asked to cope with, was the transition to digital reality. Musicians made efforts to maintain the relationship with their students and sought the appropriate tools to cope with the new condition. In our research, the difficulties they faced in the digital context were also highlighted, confirming the findings of Kivi, Koniari, Özeke and Çeliktaş (2021), Koner, Gee and Borden (2022), and Ververis and Apostolis (2020).

The pandemic crisis gave rise to contrast, as on the one hand, there was the dominant need for the salvation of humanity and on the other hand the counter-perception regarding

the "truth" being spread about the existence of the new virus. At the same time, during the pandemic crisis, while the common fate of individuals and the fluidity of things emerged, individualistic and utilitarian views unfolded demonstrating the lack of respect and the selfishness of people.

The result of the imbalance and reversals in the given way of experiencing reality was the emergence of feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, and loneliness. These feelings can be disorienting and lead to alternative understandings of the experience. As stated by Mälkki (2019) "Our abilities to engage in transformative learning and critical reflection on our taken-for-granted assumptions may be significantly strengthened by gently, yet, critically harnessing edge-emotions as our guiding friends in our intellectual and psychological development processes" (p. 70).

In contrast, the research showed that the pandemic was not treated in the same way by everyone. Thus, the positive impact of confinement was expressed, confirming the findings of Howard et al. (2021) and Spiro et al. (2020) regarding the positive side effects of enforced isolation. The period of quarantine was treated by one research participant as respite and rest and for some musicians it was a creative phase for musical development, musical expression, and critical examination of given aesthetic assumptions and experiences. The contact with music appeared to be a fruitful way out of the crisis, which gave the opportunity to individuals to express their spiritual, emotional, and mental world, at the same time provoking thoughtful meanings that mobilized people from lethargy and the anchors of given perceptions. Effectively, music can promote wellbeing, as shown in the research of Chrysostomou et al. (2022) whereas aesthetic experience is an important tool for developing critical reflection and transformative learning, as Kokkos (2017) puts it.

In conclusion, significant lessons have been learned from the experience of the pandemic. Initially, with disarming honesty and willingness to reflect, a dialogue should start between the members of the music community, to exchange ideas, best practices and strategies that were developed during the pandemic. A major challenge is to develop critical reflection on distance education, to embrace its positive elements, and try to resolve issues such as the lack of digital skills and unequal access to digital content. It is also important to reflect on the common fate and course of people, to feel solidarity, companionship, and cooperation. If our individual consciousness is strengthened, so will our collective consciousness and expression at all levels of social life. This will have the effect of meeting the music community, developing a sense of social responsibility, and supporting all those working in the cultural sector. Therefore, the pandemic crisis can stimulate a process of critical examination of assumptions that will lead to transformative learning, to individual and collective awakening with the aim of creating an equal, solidaric and cohesive society of true democracy.

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ABSTRACT

According to transformative learning theory, critical reflection, beyond critical examination of our assumptions, includes exploring new ways of thinking and acting (Κουλαουζίδης, 2019). Within the context of searching for new ways of thinking, we focus on computational thinking. Computational thinking is a cognitive process leading to a form of automatization of thought (Selby & Woolard, 2014), which is associated in the literature with transdisciplinary STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education (Djambong & Freiman, 2016). In this paper, we attempt to highlight the research gap of potential interrelation of computational thinking and critical reflection through STEM education. We also present some research questions that concern us, as long as the way we approach them in the action research we conduct on Second Chance Schools in the Biographical Learning and Transformative Education Laboratory.

Key Words: Computational Thinking, STEM, Transformative Learning, Critical Reflection.

STEM Education

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education is not simply an accumulation of knowledge from different scientific fields, but a holistic transdisciplinary approach that goes beyond the isolation of specialization, emphasizes the study of correlations, persists on interconnected processes and not in the individual phenomena (Psycharis, Kotzampasaki & Kalovrektis, 2018).

Of course, there are different opinions in the scientific community about models and effective approaches to STEM education (Moore et al., 2020). As an example, we cite a coherent proposal by Roehrig et al. (2021) that includes seven key features for integrated STEM education: focus on real-world problems, central role of engineering, integrated context, integrated

content, STEM practices, informing students about STEM careers and twenty-first century skills.

In this paper, we will not refer to technical skills, but we will focus on the way of thinking. STEM education is related to critical, analytical, logical, systematic, open-minded and structured thinking, creativity, innovation, reflection, justification, evaluation, and scepticism deriving from objectivity and evidence (West, 2012). In addition, STEM education is mainly linked in the literature to computational thinking (Djambong & Freiman, 2016), on which we will focus in more detail in the next section.

Computational Thinking

Computational Thinking (CT) gained interest within the educational community and strongly influenced it after the article by Wing (2006) in which she argued that CT should be considered as a fundamental skill and should be added to basic analytical abilities. CT is not just a way of thinking about computers but a framework for finding reasons for solving problems, operating systems, explaining physical and social phenomena (Computing at School Working Group Report, 2012). Shute, Sun & Asbel-Clarke (2017, p.142) argue that CT is mainly a way of thinking and acting and after analysing other definitions and models, they propose the following definition*: "The conceptual foundation required to solve problems effectively and efficiently (i.e., algorithmically, with or without the assistance of computers) with solutions that are reusable in different contexts".*

Computational thinking is a cognitive process that leads to a form of automatization of thought, which is developed using the following main five dimensions (Selby & Woolard, 2014):

- **Abstraction:** Contributes to capturing commonalities and hiding information irrelevant to the problem, and this leads to the empowerment in dealing with complexity (Wing, 2011).
- **Algorithmic thinking:** Developing step-by-step instructions for solving a problem (Tabesh, 2017).
- **Decomposition:** The analysis of a problem and its division into smaller parts (Tabesh, 2017)
- **Generalization:** The recognition and use of known solutions or parts of them in similar or unique problem situations (Selby & Woolard, 2014).
- **Evaluation:** Searching and comparing alternatives and thinking about how they will work in practice (Csizmadia, Standl, & Waite, 2019).

Concerning the assessment of computational thinking, Tang et al. (2020) suggest that it should be based on the definitions of computational thinking, i.e. avoiding questions of programming or computational concepts, as it is emphasized that computational thinking is not the same as computer science. In this context, questions like riddles of the recognized international computational thinking contest Bebras could be used (Dagienė, Sentence & Stupurienė, 2017).

It is remarkable that Tang et al. (2020), after analysing 96 studies, propose the implementation of computational thinking assessments in older age groups such as high schools, colleges, professional development, as they conclude that there is a lack of research data. As our own research interest is related to computational thinking in adult learners, we consider it is necessary to refer to transformative learning.

Transformative learning

According to Mezirow, the significant difference between learning in childhood vs adulthood lies in the fact that learning in childhood is defined as a formative process that composes a new frame of reference, while in adulthood as a transformative process that reconstitutes the existing frame (Koulaouzides, 2019).

Mezirow relies on the fact that we all have formed assumptions, our own constructions of reality that we take for granted, mainly based on our sociocultural environment (Jarvis, 2010). Furthermore, he explains that when a people's perceptions are not in harmony with their experience, it is possible to transform their assumptions after reflection (Jarvis, 2010). Mezirow argued that a transformative process goes through ten successive stages, starting with the disorienting experience. Transformation comes gradually to bring new meaning and reframing that will again lead to social functionality and stability (Koulaouzides, 2019). Reframing refers to a frame of reference that is *"meaning perspective [...] many of our most guarded beliefs about ourselves and our world"* (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16). A frame of reference includes habits of mind, mindsets, meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 2000).

The central role in the implementation of learning as defined above have two important concepts of adult education that we will refer to in the next section: critical reflection and critical dialogue (Koulaouzides, 2019).

Critical Reflection and critical dialogue

Mezirow argues that critical reflection is crucial to transformative learning and adult education in general (Mezirow, 1991). He is among those who conceive critical reflection as a process of thorough evaluation of the credibility of the assumptions that we believe as correct and which we transform if there are valid indications from our experiences that they do not work properly (Kokkos, 2021). The intensity of critical reflection is enhanced if we consider that to a large extent we are our assumptions, as they determine our purposes and give meaning to what we do and what we are (Brookfield, 2017). Brookfield (2000) however states emphatically that reflection is not always critical, and that critical reflection is not synonymous with transformative learning; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition as critical reflection does not always lead to transformation.

Critical reflection is inextricably linked to critical dialogue (Koulaouzides, 2019). According to Mezirow and as explained by Koulaouzides (2019) it is a form of critical and reflective discussion in which people exchange their assumptions and negotiate with them in a structured way, presenting proofs and arguments, which function as evidence of their frame of reference.

In this research, we study critical reflection and computational thinking by implementing a STEM didactic intervention in Second Chance Schools (SCS). Below we will mention some information on SCS and some special features that brought about our research interest.

Second Chance Schools

Second Chance Schools (hereafter SCS) in Greece are public schools for adults, with no upper age limit, who have not completed the nine-year compulsory education, and they aim for a 9th grade qualification (Kagiavi, 2016). SCSs gain particular research interest as their population meet the main characteristics of adult learners, while their specificity lies in the fact that in previous years, they have suffered school exclusion (Kagiavi, 2016).

Common ground: Transformative learning and STEM education

Dewey remarkable affected the way Mezirow theorized transformative learning (Holdo, 2023). The philosopher Dewey envisioned a holistic, unifying way of perceiving education, learning, and life (Cross-Durant, 2001). He proposed the combination of various elements in education such as science, theoretical knowledge, action, technique and cultural context and rejected the isolated teaching of subjects. At the same time, he believed that reflecting on the aspects of a problem and understanding their relationships brings changes to the individual (Cross-Durant, 2001). The above arguments made by a founder of adult education seem to support STEM education.

Furthermore, Kegan, with his work on developmental psychology and the study of learning as a transformative phenomenon, recognizes the value of the scientific mindset (Kegan, 2009) that is evidently related to STEM education. Additionally, Brookfield (2007), although strict in his use of the term "critical", points out that critical reflection learning could also be achieved through science courses, which are also part of STEM education. Subsequently, we try —in brief— to point out the research gap.

Research gap

Our literature review shows that there are surveys and reports on STEM education, its effect on technical-instrumental learning and the acquisition of 21st century skills, mostly on adolescent students (Stehle & Peters-Burton, 2019; Baran et al., 2021). In addition, there are studies on the positive effect of STEM education on computational thinking of younger students (Djambong & Freiman, 2016; Psycharis & Kotzampasaki, 2019). However, our literature review noted a lack of research on computational thinking in adult learners, with which Tang et al. (2020) agree and suggest implementing computational thinking research at older ages. The same view is shared by Ortiz et al. (2022) who argue that little research has been done on computational thinking and especially on reducing the digital divide in adults in the early stages of literacy, a finding that initially seems to agree with our choice of research in SCS. Especially regarding Greece, STEM education mainly concerns childhood and adolescence (Patrinopoulos & Iatrou, 2019). The above makes us wonder what the impact of STEM education on adult learners and their computational thinking would be, especially on SCS learners, a question on which we found no research.

Regarding the evaluation of transformative learning, Romano (2018) explains that the majority of research usually utilizes the basic interpretive methodology with thematic analysis and interview data. Furthermore, few research results exist internationally on STEM education in combination with transformative learning and critical reflection. In the few cases where transformative learning and STEM are found together, references are mainly related to the concept of sustainability (Zoller, 2015; Taylor & Taylor, 2019), the education of teachers of scientific fields (Montgomery & Fernández-Cárdenas, 2018) or career change of scientists (Snyder, Oliveira & Paska, 2013).

Consequently, research is needed on the impact of STEM education and computational thinking of adults on critical reflection and the perspectives of transformative learning. In fact, in Greek literature we were unable to find any research on STEM education and computational thinking in Second Chance Schools.

Objectives and research questions

The goals of our ongoing research are related to an effort to deeply understand how an adult transforms perceptions and attitudes, and whether STEM education and the dimensions of computational thinking could contribute in this direction in a unifying holistic approach. The research questions that our survey will try to answer are:

- What is the impact of this STEM didactic intervention on the dimensions of computational thinking of SCS students?
- Is it possible through STEM education to achieve transformation, in some level?
- Could the potential improvement of computational thinking contribute to critical reflection?

Research methodology

The current ongoing action research has a non-probability sample and consists of SCS trainees. The size of the sample depends on the potentiality of access to the SCS and the consent of the trainees. The researcher plays the role of a volunteer trainer implementing the STEM didactic intervention designed for the needs of the research.

First question: a quantitative contextual approach is combined with an exploratory and descriptive analysis. Computational thinking dimensions are measured before and after the intervention using a questionnaire (pre-post, test) in which questions were selected from the international computational thinking competition Bebras. We chose questions from this competition because prior training nor computer knowledge is required, but mostly have the form of riddles. Thus, the questionnaire aligns with Tang et al. (2020) suggestions.

Second question: we use King's (2009) Learning Activity Survey (L.A.S.), a questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions accompanied by interviews, to examine the perspectives of transformation based on Mezirow's ten stages. It is the most popular tool, and its purpose is to identify whether there was a transformation perspective and if so, which factors contributed to it (Romano, 2018).

The third research question will be answered after analysing the first two questions and studying possible correlations.

The intervention

For the research needs, a STEM didactic intervention was designed in accordance with the principles of adult education. The central subject of teaching is "colour" as a transdisciplinary concept and a connecting link between various sciences, technology, and art. The intervention consists of a series of didactic scenarios in the form of interconnected seminars, lasting two or three hours that include several activities, micro-constructions, automation, physical computing, experiments and use of educational robotics. Didactic scenarios are built step by step so that we will be able to analyse and reflect with the trainees on the way we see things literally and figuratively.

Research progress, limitations, and ethical issues

We started a pilot intervention in an SCS class and afterwards the full intervention was implemented in two classes of second year trainees. The main difficulties of the research are related to the restrictions of access to the SCSs and mainly to the aloofness of the trainees about their participation in research and STEM

courses, as initially, they usually presupposed that "these are hard and not for us". However, after their trial participation in the first didactic scenario, they agreed to participate and enjoyed the lessons. We are currently able to start analysing the data we have collected from the first SCS and await access to the next one.

In the limitations of the study, we consider the sample size, which is not expected to be large. In addition, the duration of the intervention should be adapted to the timeframes defined by the SCS for their smooth operation and the needs of the trainees. Generally, we have taken care of ethical issues such as the voluntary participation of the researched trainees, and the anonymization of the data.

Research consequences and conclusions

Summarizing, on the one hand we saw that STEM education is directly related to the computational thinking (Djambong & Freiman, 2016), on the other hand, the transformative learning of adult education is directly related to critical reflection. In our survey, we assume that there could be a common ground of transformative learning and critical reflection with STEM education and computational thinking. Since critical reflection involves the search for new ways of thinking, we consider whether computational thinking can lead to critical reflection.

Regarding the research consequences for the participating learners, we expect them to benefit from the teaching intervention by developing STEM skills, improving their performance in dimensions of computational thinking, and perhaps reframing some of their point of views based on revised assumptions with a greater self-determination.

We believe that the research can contribute to knowledge by helping to understand how adults transform their perceptions. We hope the research will provide answers on whether STEM education and computational thinking could contribute to critical reflection towards a unifying holistic approach.

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The Kakalidis Method of Analysis as a Transformative Practice in a Group of Adult Students: Presentation of an Experiential Workshop

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an experiential workshop that took place at a Second Chance School as part of the Action Plan (Project), during which three works of art were analysed using the *Kakalidis Method of Analysis*. Following the Method's steps and in an interactive way, the students succeeded in discovering deeper, hidden meanings and symbolisms in the aforementioned works of art and were also able to compose two literary texts themselves. This Method is an educational tool that encourages participation, creativity, and reflective dialogue, activates critical thinking, and makes full use of the students' experiences.

Key words: Transformation Theory, Art, Critical Dialogue, Critical Reflection, Kakalidis Method of Analysis.

Introduction

Can art help adults transform all or part of the perceptions and beliefs they acquire during their adult lives? Can the analysis of art become a transformative process of freeing oneself of old ideas, convictions, and expectations, thus opening up a way for new perceptions and perspectives?

Through education, we can introduce adult students to art and philosophy, encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and awareness of human expressions. The Transformation Theory mainly suggests that what is most im-portant is not the events happening to people, but rather the way they interpret and explain what is happening to them (Mezirow, 2022). The deep processing of the experience through critical reflection leads to transformation (Mezirow, 1989; Mezirow, 2007). Many thinkers in the field believe that observing a work of art, as well as delving into it, in the education of adults is an experience that contributes to the activation of critical reflection and critical thinking (Kokkos, 2011).

For example, Anderson (1993) believes that the systematic and designed effort of understanding a work of art is achieved through

reflective processes for its interpretation and the attribution of meaning. Feldman (1967) describes four reflective phases during the analysis of an artwork: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation; Broudy (1972) delves beyond the sensory observation of external characteristics, penetrating the detection of emotions and messages that the artwork emanates. Furthermore, the reflective model of Perkins (1994) approaches a work of art through the components that structure a methodology that raises questions, provokes a reflective disposition, and activates open thinking as the student learns to observe and reconstitute the data from a more creative point of view.

Kastoriadis (2008) and Boyd (2009) believe that great artworks offer us the potential to process a plethora of symbols, through which we can perceive complex and subtle matters, experience unprecedented emotional states, and generally unveil aspects of the self and reality, that are not easily accessed through the conventional rational approach. Therefore, the analysis of an artwork, by whatever means we approach it, improves the way one thinks, since it is confirmed that there is always within it a deeply hidden wisdom, which, as it is revealed, brings to light the critical thinking, the critical disposition, the creativity, and the expression of both the educator and the students (Kokkos, 2011; Koumentakis, 2021). It is of this hidden Wisdom of artworks that the poet and philosopher *Dimitris Kakalidis* speaks in the *Kakalidis Method of Analysis*, which is based on the indissoluble relationship of Human Being-Humankind-Entity and the position that every person is a complete Being (Kakalidis, 1994; Kakalidis, 1992; Christodoulidi & Kostopetrou, 2014).

This paper uses the aforementioned innovative method for the first time as a transformative practice with a group of adult students during an experiential workshop at a Second Chance School (SCS). It is addressed to adult students who have not completed their compulsory education and aims at their integration into the educational system and society (Chatzitheocharous, 2010). Thus, they are very receptive to the educational process, but at the same time, they have already fixed conceptual schemas and beliefs. The purpose of the educational program was to prove that with the Method as a tool, the students can develop their critical reflection and critical thinking, develop elements of the Being, acquire greater faith in themselves, and, through dialogue, become a group with their fellow students, thus expanding their educational horizons.

The Kakalidis Method of Analysis

The steps of the method
Dimitris Kakalidis, a poet, and philosopher (1943-1995) was an indefatigable worker of the spirit, of the arts, and of inner knowledge, which was discovered as the harmonization of science with philosophy. Kakalidis wrote a poetic trilogy (Kakalidis, 1990, 1991, 1996), the pages of which reveal reflective lyricism and an approach to life from a philosophical point of view. His philosophical works (Kakalidis, 1992, 1994) analyse the works of contemporary Greek poets and littérateurs in an original and unique way.

It is a method based on the principle that everything can be art, that every creation is a spiritual work, and that it is a given that it encompasses knowledge. The course of the analysis seeks and extracts the essence within art, and it develops its argument like a spiral, from the limited to the infinite, from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic. The method proceeds with the analysis of works without engaging in a reviewing presentation/assessment or any kind of evaluation (Papapanou, 1994; Christodoulidi & Kostopetrou, 2014). Through targeted steps, it aims to lead the student to a

broadened, consciousness-wise, transformation of the cognitive process and provide an uplifting perspective and interpretation of the deeper symbolisms. From the way of analysis, it appears that this method is not a technique but a liberating process, whose basic principle focuses on the relationship Human Being-Humankind-Entity. On this basis, the method uses three levels of analysis: on the first level, the analysis focuses on the human being as it experiences its individuality; on the second level, the analysis focuses on what is happening on a panhuman level since the beginning of humankind; and finally, on the third level, the analysis focuses on what has been happening throughout the course of the Being as a whole, which includes the entire cosmos. It is there that we see things through causality within an ever-evolving whole. It is there that we see the evolutionary course of the human being in a universe that is constantly evolving (Kostopetrou, n.d.).

In the project under examination, the analysis of two movies and a poem was attempted according to the above-mentioned method. It falls within the framework of communicational learning, as the students learn above all to understand what others mean, to share ideas and thoughts, to study movies, poems, and songs in groups, and to create their own literary texts; at the same time, they learn to express their opinions, values, ideals, questions, and visions freely, always within the group and in their own way (Mezirow, 2022).

Connection of the Kakalidis Method of Analysis with Transformative Learning
In the theory of Transformation (see Mezirow, 2007, Kokkos & Associates, 2019, Koulaouzidis, 2019, 2008, 2007, Lintzeris, 2010, and also Jarvis, 2022 for more information on the theory of Transformative Learning), there is a reference to the usefulness of metaphors, since, as Lakoff and Johnson point out (1980),

the complete understanding of a sentence is not solely based upon the terms it includes, but it demands the use of a greater group of elements (gestalt). The activation of any schema allows us to understand multiple aspects beyond those that are directly provided in the sentence. As de-symbolization takes place in the Kakalidis Method of analysis, examples of science, mythology, history etc. are used; therefore, concepts like love, human relationships, family bonds, ethics, war, politics, and so on can be comprehended much more easily. This happens because correlations between the conceptual schemas and the self-perception of the students can be created, thus bringing a deeper understanding of the schemas under analysis (Mezirow, 2022).

Parsons (1988) mentions that "The linguistic signs represent reality; symbols present the Cosmos" and clarifies that symbols constitute the form and essence of our experiences; they mediate the configuration and perception of reality, and they constitute an essential aspect of the human experience. Kakalidis (1992) states that symbols preserve the truth they represent and are expressed through people, objects, numbers, ideas, and names. The de-symbolization, as it advances through the stages of the method, creates processes of interpreting an experience, during which new interpretations and experiences are formed. Inductively, the previous knowledge is revised and placed within a new context by applying the knowledge that emerges from stage to stage of a previous thought to the next one in order to attribute a new meaning to an experience. As Kakalidis points out, this functions in the same way that the spiral opens up from the Human Being to Humankind and finally to the Entity. Thus, the process becomes experiential, and, in essence, the knowledge is discovered by the educator and the students at the same time.

The second pillar of the theory of transformative learning, reflective dialogue, is a type

of dialogue that focuses on searching for a mutual understanding and evaluation of the justification of an interpretation or a belief. It aims at bringing forth a clearer comprehension by examining and evaluating the hypotheses that occur (Mezirow et al., 1990; Mezirow, 1998; Mezirow, 2003; Mezirow, 2007). The reflective dialogue concentrates on the exploration of ideas and views, the evaluation of hypotheses, and the exchange of knowledge in order to reach a more spherical and updated comprehension of the matter under examination (Mezirow, 1977; Mezirow, 2007; Kostara, 2019).

The Kakalidis Method of analysis uses dialectics, a method developed by Socrates through which the truth is revealed by question upon question and discussion (Kefalis, 2022). He uses the method of question and inquiry to project objections and doubts upon the views of people so as to achieve the promotion of true knowledge. Through continuous questioning and seeking, Socrates was trying to understand the essence, the principles, and the values that condition the world and human existence. Dialectics within the method comprise an example of critical thought and development of ideas, providing freedom of opinion during the analysis. In this way, the emerging truth and the development of knowledge and wisdom are pursued (Christodoulidi & Kostopetrou, 2014).

Experiential Workshop: "What does the Poet want to say?"

Presentation of the workshop
The plan of action is titled: "What does the poet want to say?" and its main aim is for the students to develop critical thinking and critical reflection through the Kakalidis Method of Analysis, so that the students and the educator, along with them, perceptively discover the hidden Wisdom that emerges through the obvious.

The educational goals of the program that are presented in this paper were classified on three levels:

1. On a level of knowledge, the students form an experiential relationship with art analysis (in the present case, motion pictures, poetry, and songs), and they recognize, through the analysis, the three levels of the Method, Human Being-Humankind-Entity, expressing thoughts and views.
2. On a level of skills, the students practice the way of analysing, synthesizing and using the information to create art.
3. On a level of positioning, the students acquire a positive positioning concerning their ability to interpret the meanings; they develop critical reflection and critical thinking so as to transform their stereotypical views, drawing a new meaning.

In the first lessons, the educational contract between the fifteen (15) members of the group and the educator was drafted and signed. The goals, the rules, the obligations, and the educational methods that were followed were laid out. The *common purpose* (Bion & Ricman, 1943) of the *educational group* (Polemi-Todoulou, 2005), *the educational framework*, *the aim*, *the result,* and *the duration* (Tsimboukli & Phillips, 2008) were defined. All students who chose the project had the Kakalidis Method of Analysis explained to them and were informed of the specific works of art that were to be analysed in the workshop (namely the "Kung Fu Panda" animated film, the poem "The Chess", which has also been set to music, and the motion picture "To Sir, with Love"). An entrance questionnaire was given to the students. This captured their basic characteristics (part A)

and the relationship they already have with the arts, as well as their expectations for the Method of Analysis (part B).

Students were separated into two smaller groups (Polemi-Todoulou, 2006) inclusive of both training cycles and the plan of action was organized into fifteen three-hour meetings. During the next few meetings, the film "Kung Fu Panda" was shown, and a discussion of its meanings took place. Initially, in the smaller groups -a group of eight (8) people and a group of seven (7) people-questions were distributed, which the students addressed at the appropriate times; then, in the plenary session and with the guidance of the educator, their views were discussed, leading to specific conclusions. In the next meeting, an interim questionnaire was given (G. Rotidi, personal communication, 27/06/2023) to the students, which reflected some of their thoughts concerning themselves and how they were experiencing the project from the first meeting up to that moment. During the next meetings, the analysis of the poem set to music "The Chess" took place in the same way, and the film "To Sir, with Love" followed. The last meetings were dedicated to creative writing, a workshop where the subgroups composed a narrative story, utilizing many of the elements of the preceding analyses. One group created an autobiographical narrative and the other a fictional literary text.

The exiting questionnaire followed, where they answered a group of questions in common with the entrance questionnaire that were related to how much the Method of analysis helped them in their relationship with art and deepening into it. There was also a group of questions concerning teamwork and the cooperation they had during the creative writing sessions, as well as the difficulty or ease they experienced. Another group of questions followed that asked for suggestions of new ideas and proposals for the future. Finally, a questionnaire for evaluation of the educational

program and the educator was given. For the requirements and the mandatory limitations of this paper, the analysis provided as an example includes only the poem "The Chess".

Poem: "The Chess"
The group moved on to the analysis of the poem by Manolis Anagnostakis "The Chess", which refers to a game of chess that starts oddly, since in this game, one of the two players moves towards a complete surrender from the very beginning.

The analysis starts with several de-symbolizations. To the question "What does playing chess symbolize?" the answer that it could symbolize the game of life fired up the analysis. The pawns, said the group, symbolize the different aspects of life of people; for example, "someone who does not have willpower", "every pawn is limited, it does certain moves only" and, finally, that black and white symbolizes opposite concepts. At this point, the discussion focused on the Queen, and a student added: "The Queen is the most powerful pawn; she can move wherever she wants; once the Queen is lost, the game ends". Therefore, on the first level, since chess is the game of life, the group reached the conclusion that every one of us is a pawn that has limitations and moves within a certain frame. Every person has their own internal and external confines, and symbolizes both the game and the pawn.

On the second level, the warlike aspect of the game was brought up, as a student remarked, "Chess also symbolizes a war". The antagonistic element that exists throughout humankind and seeks to constantly win was emphasized. Following this, several examples from history were given as a validation of this need that exists in humankind to win and rule. Then, the following questions were asked by the educator: "Who says 'come and play'?" "Why does he give away all his pawns?" "Why does he keep only the fool?" The Poet, address-

ing everyone, knows that the one who surrenders *Everything* is the only winner, as they are imbued with a spirit of *Wise Foolishness.* The name attributed to this chess pawn is not by chance: *the fool.* It refers to the bishop pawn, and at this point, the students attempted to find out who had expressed this characteristic during history.

In the end, is there a winner and a loser in the game of life? Could it be that we are prisoners of our desire to win? Two questions were asked during the analysis on the third level. The answer of a student "that in the end there is no meaning in playing any kind of game in life" fired up the third level of analysis, which takes us to what happens in the entirety of creation, in the entire universe, where battles occur, friction exists, and creation and destruction take place. According to the science of physics, the universe is held in balance because everything happens within it. What the *Poet* urges us to do is play the game of life consciously *both in white and in black*, as he himself does, having erased the warlike field "with an embrace and a smile", as a student remarked.

Results of the questionnaires

The participants had previously attended elementary school, which they had left in the past, and have now returned to complete their education through the SOS. Therefore, basic aspects of the quality and philosophy of the SOS are equal access for all adult education and training, as well as the quantitative and qualitative training of educators that work in educational institutions for adults so that they become a barrier to the outflow (Koutouzis, 2013).

It is noteworthy that a large percentage (80%) of the participants had not previously occupied themselves with any form of art. Nevertheless, contact with the arts is something

liked and inspirational, as the majority (73%) often visits places of culture and art venues. In the interim questionnaire (G. Rotidi, class notes, 20/02/2022), the opportunity was given to the students to express elements of themselves, and then describe, through four specific axes, the difference they observed in comparison to the first meeting.

Specifically, they clearly expressed that in the first meeting, there was introversion, anxiety, indifference, curiosity, difficulty, shyness, and fear at a percentage of seventy-three percent (73%), while mid-way through the project, the same percentage reported feeling extrovert, happy, open, functioning as a team, relaxed, comfortable, cordial, and important. Commenting on this in relation to the Method, it could be said that through the course of the lessons they opened up, they became a group, they focused more, that is, on humankind (the group) and not on their individuality.

In the exit questionnaire, the questions in common with the entrance questionnaire showed that during the project, sixty percent (60%) of the participants were influenced in their everyday lives by the analyses, that the manner of analysis of the artworks had an effect on the way they see themselves and think, and that they also experienced an inner change because of the process of delving into the artworks. For twenty-six percent (26%) of the students, this happened partially, and for fourteen percent (14%) of the target group, this did not happen at all. Concerning the difficulty or ease the target group encountered while writing the essays, it was determined that fifty-four percent (54%) of the students did not have any difficulty, twenty-six percent (26%) had mild difficulty, and twenty percent (20%) had great difficulty. At this point, a positive comment could be added concerning the results of the entrance questionnaire, which shows eighty percent (80%) of the participants having no prior connection to art, alongside the fact that

their knowledge base did not exceed primary education. Concerning the questions related to whether the educational program helped the participants function as a group and cooperate, the results drawn are the following: sixty-seven percent (67%) answered positively, twenty percent (20%) were partially helped, and thirteen percent (13%) answered negatively.

Conclusions

Overall, through the analysis of the information above and the available research evidence, there are three components of definitive importance to the specific experiential workshop that could be mentioned. Firstly, the majority of students selected the particular Project from a choice of another six proposed projects, all of different thematic content, mainly practical subjects to do with construction and creating. This proves the necessity of emphasizing educational programs that include art and deepening into it. The writers found empirically that, especially in the field of adult education, the necessity is created to establish good practices and experiential workshops with reference to art and its analysis, akin to the Kakalidis Method of Analysis, the content, and processes of which will aim at emancipatory learning and development of the self. Secondly, the students drew elements from their everyday lives, their knowledge, their experiences, their lives, their assumptions, and approached the analyses, delving further into critical questions in more subjects of analysis than the predefined ones. Finally, the participants were stimulated and collectively created their own works of art through the synthesis and utilization of all the analyses in terms of the creative writing of two literary texts.

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Troublesome Transformation: One for One or One for All?
Moving from the Individual to Considering the Collective in Qualifying Good Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Transformative Learning theory has been criticized for its lack of clarity regarding both the type and objects of transformation. The paper draws inspiration from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Blackfoot Indians to propose two practices to qualify transformative learning practices, helping to ensure cultural perpetuity and that no harm is done. The first practice includes adopting the mindset of cultural humility as a lifelong learning posture toward other cultures. The other practice is one of beneficence, which encompasses acting with charity, mercy, and kindness toward others. Both practices need to be mindful of the dominant cultures and the power they have, making sure to not only give space and place to non-dominant cultures but to also practice agentic engagement where all have full voice and agency when interacting with each other. These two practices can help to guide transformative learning to a positive outcome that benefits both the individual and society.

Key Words: Transformative Learning Theory, Cultural Humility, Beneficence, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Blackfoot Indians.

Introduction:

The theme of the inaugural July 2023 TEAE Conference was *Reimagining transformative and emancipatory adult education for a world to come*. This conference drew over one hundred scholars and practitioners who exchanged innovative strategies to elevate and reframe adult education for the future through the lens of transformative learning. However, just three months later, the future is not looking bright with escalated geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East, the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war, and Australia's decision against constitutional recognition of its Indigenous population.

Notwithstanding advancements in education, the widespread availability of information and knowledge today, and the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, it seems as if society is less willing to dialogue or seek common ground. Instances of prejudice and hate crimes are on the rise. Many seem entrenched in their opinions, unwilling to engage in self-reflection or seek any sort of transformation. Transformative learning, a process where individuals critically examine their deeply held beliefs and values and undergo significant shifts in their perspective, can act as a potent change agent in numerous settings, but it seems as if these spaces for transformation are decreasing. What is still possible today? To address this

query, it is first necessary to consider some gaps in transformative learning.

Troublesome Transformation:

Despite its popularity and application to multiple disciplines and fields, Transformative learning theory (TL) has received multiple critiques since its inception (Newman, 2012). One critique postulates that *transformation* has not been qualified in terms of positive outcomes, partially because people understand and interpret transformation differently (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Tisdell, 2013). Additionally, Keegan (2008) suggests that transformation is so broadly defined, it could be trivialized to denote any minor change, or conversely, be elevated to signify a profound paradigm shift. Further clarification regarding the nature and outcomes of the transformation as posited by TL is necessary.

Although there has always been an underlying assumption that the transformation is for the better, transformative learning can also be harnessed for detrimental outcomes. Taylor and Cranton (2013) criticized the fact that the premise of transformative learning resulting in 'positive' transformation has not been thoroughly discussed or analysed. Another reason for the lack of clarity around "transformation" is its prolific application across diverse contexts. This confusion has allowed for a fluid, context-driven interpretation, rather than adhering to a standardized definition, thereby diluting its core and potential clarity.

Outcomes of Transformative Learning:

Mezirow has faced criticism for the theory's individualist perspective that seemed to focus on individual transformation overshadowing societal change (Sorensen, 2007). Yet, a closer examination reveals that critical social theory was considered in Mezirow's theory (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). This paper considers this dilemma by posing several questions to consider in the teaching and implementing transformative learning principles. While there are no specific clear answers, numerous practices are proposed that can guide transformative learning practices to be of benefit to both the individual and to society.

Object(s) of Transformative Learning:

Here are many questions to be considered when determining both the nature and the objects of transformative learning.

- What needs to be re-considered within TL theory to ensure that transformation is for good?
- Who determines (or who has been determining until now) whether transformation is a positive one?
- Should the collective always be considered, even in individual transformation? How?

The illustration below depicts the ideal centre of transformation that is benefits all. To explore ways to move toward this centre, inspiration is taken from a re-imagining of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Who (should) benefit from transformation?

What if another is harmed?

INDIVIDUAL

BENEFITS EVERYONE

WORLD

LOCAL COLLECTIVE
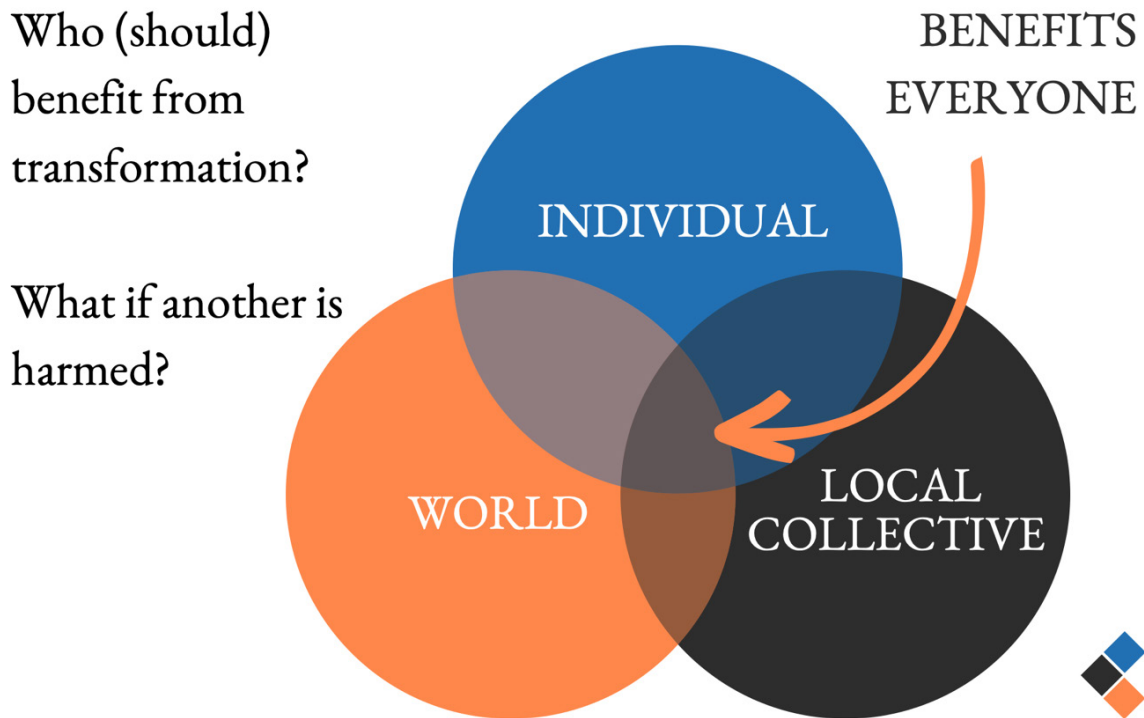
Figure 1 Object(s) of Transformative Learning

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

According to Blood and Heavy Head's lectures (2007), Maslow visited Siksika when he was 30 years old, along with Lucien Hanks and Jane Richardson Hanks. He wanted to see if his hypothesis related to social hierarchies was a universal one or not.

However, he was quite surprised by the Blackfoot community as he did not find them driven by power, but rather by working together and supporting each other. This led to most of the people having enough to eat, having a system of law and justice that was fair, while also being content with their lives. Maslow noticed that around "80–90% of the Blackfoot tribe had a quality of self-esteem that was only found in 5–10% of his own population" (video 7 out of 15, minutes 13:45–14:15). In fact, he felt that many of the Blackfoot community had already self-actualized. The Blackfoot soci-

ety placed cultural perpetuity at the peak of its societal needs and goals. Cultural perpetuity is an understanding that even though an individual will be forgotten, each person has a part to play in ensuring that their culture's important teachings live on.

First Nations look at everything they do within the timeframe of seven generations. This means that one's actions are informed by the experience of the past seven generations and by considering the consequences for the seven generations to follow (Blackstock, 2019). Rather than the individual becoming the centre and priority, instead the focus was the longevity of the culture (Ravilochan, 2021). What can transformative learning take from the Blackfoot community's cultural perpetuity to inform and give contours to 'transformation'? Two practices are proposed below: cultural humility and beneficence.

Western Perspective

① 🏃
② 👍
③ ♥
④ 🏠
⑤ 🍽
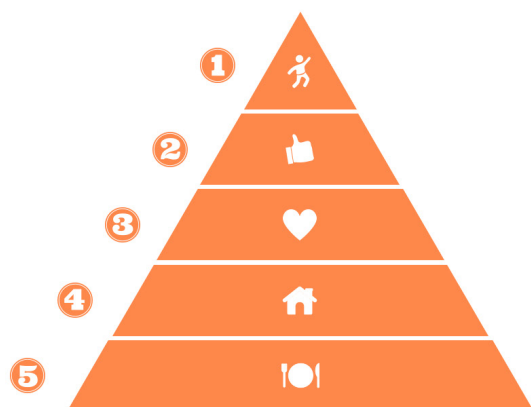
Individual rights privileged one
lifetime scope of analysis

First Nations Perspective

① Cultural Perpetuity

② Community Actualization

③ Self Actualization

Expansive concept of time and
multiple dimensions of reality

Concepts and graphs from Maslow's hierarchy connected to
Blackfoot beliefs by Karen Lincoln Michel

Figure 2 Western Perspective vs. First Nations Perspective (Michel, 2014)

An often-overlooked fact is that although Maslow was interested in hierarchies of societies, the triangle image did not originate with him, instead it was a visual shortcut created by Douglas McGregor, Keith Davis, and Charles McDermid in the 1950s (Bridgman, 2019).

Cultural Humility

In considering cultures and communities, a practice from the medical field offers a way for different cultures to engage with each other respectfully. This practice toward originated among medical workers and how they interacted with indigenous peoples. It was first proposed as the "ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [per-son]" (Hook et al., 2013, p. 2). Doctors and other medical professionals were encouraged to adopt this life-long posture to grow in trust with their patients. Cultural humility has been suggested as a preferable alternative to cultural competency. Often, a competency is a skill that can be learned and completed. The word itself can become a barrier to staying in the posture of a learner, which is essential when it involves relating and engaging other cultures. It is not possible to fully understand or appreciate another culture and therefore, cultural humility offers a mindset approach to ensure that cultural engagement is offered from the posture of a learner with curiosity and without judgement. This attitude is critical in giving marginalized cultures agency and value and essential in the medical field where the doctor-patient relationship has tremendous impact on positive outcomes.

For transformative learning practices, cultural humility offers an approach that reduces power between dominant and non-dominant cultures. It provides each party with their own voice and the right to their own story. If practised with genuine interest and care, it can be a bridge builder and provide the context for transformation that would impact both groups. In one way, this relationship becomes Freirean where the teacher and student both become the learner and teacher of each other. Practising cultural humility offers a guide to practice perspective-taking for new meaning schemes to develop as one learns from the other and their cultural background and story.

Challenges of Cultural Humility

Despite the potential of cultural humility, it has several challenges to consider. First, the group holding the power and privilege needs to be aware of the power differential, and how this can impact relationships. Cultural humility should not be forced on a non-dominant culture and used by the dominant culture to oppress or exploit the weaker one. This can be a challenging scenario to navigate as it requires self-awareness from both parties.

Cultural humility also asks for the individual to consider their privilege and biases and lay those aside, and to trust the other with their story. It chooses not to impose its own prejudices or judgements on the other, but instead holds a judgment-free space for the other. One possible dilemma to consider is that a dominant culture may not be willing or interested in practising and adopting this posture of cultural humility. Without self-awareness or a willingness to lay aside one's power to engage the other on an equal setting, relationships between parties unequally balanced with power will be challenging.

Cultural humility is generally viewed positively because it encourages openness, ongoing learning, and respectful engagement with other cultures. However, certain challenges or negative aspects can arise in discussions or practical applications of cultural humility, especially in the context of broader socio-cultural dynamics. Here are a few considerations:

- Cultural humility emphasizes recognizing one's limitations in understanding other cultures, but if this focus is too encompassing, it can impede confident decision-making or action. It might lead to situations where individuals are so cautious that they become ineffective or overly reliant on others to navigate cultural matters.
- Cultural humility can sometimes focus too narrowly on individual attitudes and behaviours, potentially neglecting the broader systemic inequalities that contribute to cultural misunderstandings and conflicts. Without a concerted effort to address these larger issues, cultural humility alone may not lead to substantial change in institutional biases or structural inequalities.
- If practised properly, attempts at cultural humility could inadvertently reinforce cultural stereotypes. For instance, professionals might prepare for interactions with individuals from different cultures by learning about those cultures in a way that relies on or reinforces stereotypes, rather than approaching each person as an individual with unique experiences.

The world today and distinct culture groups has shifted significantly due to globalization and news and media access. Rather than a multicultural world, the world today

could be characterized as transcultural, where cultures are merging and converging. Individuals and groups come into contact and interact with a variety of cultures, often leading to the blending of different experiences, beliefs, traditions, and practices. This concept recognizes the complexities of cultural transformation and suggests that cultures can no longer be seen as distinct entities but are instead interconnected, influencing one another in dynamic ways. In essence, transculturalism involves a delicate power balance, often reflecting broader geopolitical and social power structures. While there's interaction and blending, there's also competition and struggle in maintaining cultural identity and influence. Cultural humility can also support this transcultural world by advocating for openness and respect for other cultures, by reducing power imbalances and by maintain the posture of a life-long learner who is seeking understanding and adapting and reflecting on what they are learning. When individuals approach cultural exchanges with the humility and respect advocated by cultural humility, transcultural interactions are more likely to be equitable, respectful, and enriching for all parties involved. Another criterion is also important to consider keeping these interactions as well as possible transformation a positive one.

Beneficence

Beneficence is "defined as an act of charity, mercy, and kindness with a strong connotation of doing good to others, including moral obligation" (Kinsinger, 2009, pp. 44-46). It refers to an ethical standard that goes beyond "do no harm" and requires that the objective of any study be for the welfare and/or benefit of all participants (Beneficence (Ethics), 2021). As transformation occurs in individuals, it should not actively harm or hurt either the individual,

someone else, or a society at large. This practice is an imperative while engaging in any human subject research or in the medical field, and should also be a criterion in education. How can transformative learning practices ensure that no harm is done?

In essence, combining beneficence and cultural humility leads to more ethically sound, respectful, and effective care or service. The approach ensures that professionals don't just seek to do good based on their own cultural assumptions but understand the diverse cultural implications of their actions, thereby truly serving the best interests of those they are helping. By considering beneficence, they also look beyond the classroom and individual student, and consider the larger context and implications of what is being taught.

Challenges of Beneficence
What if the practice of cultural humility allows for diverse groups or religions the right to practice beliefs that are harmful to members of the group or to others? Who decides what is harmful or not? Can cultural humility be practised in a way that also does not allow all cultures and faiths to do as they think best?

Even today, these dilemmas are emerging in the news cycle. Is one nation allowed to defend horrific acts of terror with equally horrific acts of terror? Is one religion or faith allowed to mutilate some of its members? Who or whom should never be harmed? While the United Nations has worked and is working on basic human rights, the challenge is to motivate everyone to self-reflect, to grow in self-awareness, and to do no harm. These words are easily written, and yet seem to be practised less frequently today. Has self-actualization encouraged people to create echo chambers where they only must engage with like-minded people?

In addition, far too often, non-dominant cultures feel that if dominant cultures hear

their stories, they will be eager to embrace change and transformation. Yet, far too frequently, dominant cultures are not eager to listen, to release power, or to give agency and voice to the non-dominant culture (Cooley, 2014). What can be done to give power to the non-dominant culture? What measures can work to "start" or "nudge" dominant cultures toward societal transformation?

Conclusion

Transformation is a troublesome term to define, even within the context of transformative learning theory. What is its object, and what should the outcomes be for it to be considered transformation? Adopting cultural humility as a mindset, forces one to be self-reflective and grow in self-awareness, realizing that all cultures are unique and valuable. Beneficence encourages one to consider practices that are harmful beyond the individual but also for the community or the world at large. These two qualifiers can add additional clarity and contours to the tricky part of transformation. Maslow also acknowledged that value of community actualization and cultural perpetuity.

Scott Barry Kaufman (2020) found an unpublished paper from Maslow 23 years after he first published his paper on the Hierarchy of Needs. This paper is called, "Critique of Self-Actualization Theory". Maslow quotes,

> "... self-actualization is not enough. Personal salvation and what is good for the other person alone cannot be really understood in isolation. The good of other people must be invoked as well as the good for oneself. It is quite clear that purely interpsychic, individualist psychology without

reference to other people and social conditions is not adequate."

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Towards an Education of Spirituality and Transformation: the Search for *Theology* in the thought of Freire and Buber

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ABSTRACT

Adult education is a field of educational sciences with a particularly wide field of research that extends from the study of the existential phenomenon of human learning, the research of the policies that govern the field, the understanding of the processes that support the teaching practice up to the understanding of the theology that underpins the field activities. This last research area lags behind the aforementioned ones, probably because there is a general feeling that there is no direct and practical connection of this foundation to the actual teaching practice. However, such a perception limits the scientific field of adult education to an instrumental in nature field of practical applications, which rather detracts from the real value of a field that essentially concerns the conscious biographical path of being human.

Key words: Theology, Spirituality, Dialogue, Existence.

Introduction

In the present study, we attempt an approach to the concept of the spiritual in the teachings of Buber (1878–1965) and Freire (1921–1997) in order to examine their encounter within adult education[1]. We try to trace the way they approach theology by looking for aspects of spirituality in their teaching.[2] In our approach, we

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1   In the present study, Freire is chosen because of the eclectic attitude he developed towards philosophical and religious currents, forming a perspective, which passed through both Liberation Theology and Marxist approaches (mainly the Gramscian tradition).

2   The concept of spirituality according to Freire concerns those internal processes which create existential alertness in man, who interacts with the social and cultural conditions of their life. It is an experience that is in the heart of man but also in their friendship with God. This critical spirituality was also a way of liberating

are looking towards an expansion in terms of the content of adult education, and specifically in terms of the spiritual dimension, by seeking for terms of theology in the work of the above thinkers.

The search for the spiritual is posed as a need to redefine educational policy due to the functionalist practices that have been established in the premises of the prevailing neoliberal policy, where *homo economicus* emerges as the central value of human capital, establishing conditions for his/her objectification. However, in the context of an anthropological/humanistic understanding of education that focuses on *homo socialis*, we believe that the proposal of the two thinkers is considered relevant in order to re-raise the question of spirituality as a prerequisite of an anthropological orientation when designing an authentically transformative adult education (Mayo, 1999).

The question here is whether the concept of spirituality, as read in the view of Freire and Buber, forms a new perspective in the field of adult education, a *hydration*, for the field, a new and harmonizing direction which will form new conditions for dialectics in the field. That is, is it possible for *theology*[3] to constitute a new environment of educational orientation in the field of adult education? Can spirituality heal man's demand for autonomy, as read in the thought of Freire and Buber? Therefore, according to the above conceptual arrangements, it is necessary to first examine the ideological profile of adult education through Freire's per-

spective in order to understand *the theology of the person* by discussing it in parallel with Buber's thought.

Biography as a prerequisite for existential search

The element that connects the two thinkers of the present study is the spiritual search. On one hand, Freire seeks the values of Humanism by constantly constructing new spaces of dialogue in order to shape the conditions for social transformation, and on the other, Buber seeks new fields of spiritual search through both the mystical and the dialogic period of his life. Both thinkers approach the dialogue of the relationship with community that manifests the passion of relationship as the centre of reference. Education therefore constitutes for both of them a pillar of vigilance, reflecting the life of the learner on the basis of a dialogical condition.

The inquiry is also recorded in the ideological influences that Freire received. The way of dealing with and rejecting injustice was passing through the Marxist dialectic, which he used to break through the traditional way of perceiving justice by adopting a new perspective of life. Liberation Theology, on the other hand, constituted the possibility of a new direction towards the world and man, since the assertion of justice and equality started here and now from action as an element of spiritual-

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people from the adverse conditions of their lives in order to participate in God's vision.

3   The concept of theology is defined according to the distinct perceptions of the thinkers, aiming at love as a characteristic of the dialogue between people. Love, for example, according to Freire, is "at the same time the foundation of dialogue and the dialogue itself... it constitutes an act of freedom and bravery" (Freire, 2005, pp. 89-90). In other words, theology becomes a framework for the moral progress of man, and especially of the student, to the extent that he integrates his vision through action in his historical biography. Theology is thus posited as a single substratum of a dialectic of the subject-learner in order to progress by biographically validating the history of his vision.

ity. As he himself notes, *"…but when I met Marx, I continued to meet Christ on the corners of the street-by meeting people" (Freire, 1974a) and "I always spoke to both of them in a very loving way*" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 246).

In the same way, Buber also considered that the dialogic relationship of I-Thou goes beyond the objectification of existence and is traced to the "*synthesis of the 'action and passion' of two individuals…where each finds elements of opposition and complementarity in this constant tension*" (quoted in Friedman, 2001, p. 404), since my experience with the Other "makes the other forever present to him" (Buber, 2002, p. 114).

Action in the educational process, in particular, means trust; that is, I trust the student to criticize the issues raised each time because "*whoever lacks this trust will fail to initiate (or will abandon) dialogue. Reflection, and will fall into using slogans, communiqués, monologues, and instructions*" (Freire, 2005b, p. 66). In addition, critical pedagogy is tested during the liberation of learners from the authority of the instructor, to jointly question the authoritative assumptions of dominant knowledge, but also "to think with our students, to listen closely, and to strive towards mutual learning" (Stenberg, 2006, p. 284).

In the same way, Buber points out that the awareness of social values passes through the educational process. As he typically notes:

> But there is a way for Society meaning at the moment the men who appreciate the incomparable value of the social principle to prepare the ground for improving the relations between itself and the political principle. That way is Education, the education of a generation with a truly social outlook and a truly social will.
>
> (Buber, 1957, pp. 175-76)

The instructor therefore participates in the dialogue as an *agent* who is drawn to further extend his horizons, participating in the research paths of the trainee on the basis of mutual trust. As Buber also notes:

> Trust, trust in the world, because this human being exists— that is the most inward achievement of the relation in education. Because this human being exists, meaninglessness, however hard pressed you are by it, cannot be the real truth. Because this human being exists, in the darkness the light lies hidden, in fear salvation, and in the callousness of one's fellow men the great Love.
>
> (Buber, 2002, p. 116)

In this way, *an ethics of concern* for the learners is advanced, since they are not subject to an objectified condition, but are posited as equals, whom I care for and trust, turning to their perspective, in order to see the world through their own eyes. The way I will experience as a trainer their perspective boils down to a process in which:

> Its elements are, first, a relation, of no matter what kind, between two persons, second, an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other.
>
> (Buber, 2002, p. 115)

The instructor wonders "to 'transpose' oneself over there and in there", (Buber, 2002,

p. 115) which I can explore together with the learner (as a "co-researcher" as described by Freire, 2005, p. 81). Hence, what is achieved through the dialogue is the investigation of the real experiences of the learner by approaching his expressed needs.

Towards a dialogical love

But freedom from the ideological stipulations, which impose the values of a false consciousness and oppress man, comes through the awareness of existence as a historical being and the idea of the transformative dynamics of action. Action, in other words, declares the value of human history in the dialectic of people's unique life stories and radical visions (Morrow & Torres, 2002).

The radical visions are the expression of what is possible to exist within a society that dreams of approaching that place, where we will look for the hereafter, the consequent, the better, regardless of historical and ideological contexts. As Tarkovski notes, "Someone must shout that we will build the pyramids. It doesn't matter if we don't build them. We must strengthen this desire and spread the corners of the soul like an eternal sheet. If you want the world to move forward, we have to hold hands". (Tarkovski, 1983). And this *constant revolution* (Williams, 2011) is constituted by "intellectual and moral reformation" (Morton, 2013, p. 49) promoting "the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love" (Freire, 2005b, p. 40).

It is therefore the power of everyday people that will build the face-to-face relationship and lend unity to their dialogue. That is, the ideal of the "community of communities" (Buber, 1950, p. 136) presupposes overcoming the historical necessities of social life and searching for a new community proposal based on the priority of relationships. As he typically notes: "nowhere, as far as I see, in the history

of the Socialist movement were men so deeply involved in the process of differentiation and yet so intent on preserving the principle of integration" (Buber, 1950, p. 145).

The understanding of dialogue does not belong unambiguously to a dialogic discussion or exchange of opinions, but also involves an ethical dimension that expresses the transformation of the self and the world. The "essence" of dialogue, as Freire notes, posits a truth that passes through critical reflection and action in order to "transform the world" (Freire, 2005, p. 93). Critical reflection, therefore, in the educational process is subject to a continuous movement in order not to introduce any element of compromise, but to aim at the humanization of man through a new vocabulary based on community.

This dynamic of dialogue is proposed by Freire, since dialogue presupposes "…an intense faith in mankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human" (Freire, 2005b, p. 90). In other words, the adoption of a new vocabulary that will go beyond the spirit of "banking education" (Freire, 2005b, p. 84), and will realize the spirit of a free and holistic education goes through a free and equal dialogue, during which the equality of the interlocutors is identified. The same spirit of inclusion and equal coexistence in the field of dialogue is also found in the view of Buber who notes that:

> Without the action of his spirit being in any way weakened he must at the same time be over there, on the surface of that other spirit which is being acted upon - and not of some conceptual, contrived spirit, but all the time the wholly concrete spirit of this individual and unique being who is living and confronting him, and who stands

with him in the common situation of "educating" and "being educated.

(Buber, 2002, pp. 118-9)

We therefore need to realize that Freire's "conscious body" (Freire, 1994, p. 15) is the constantly positioned body of Merleau Ponty in the sense that "our body is not an object for an 'I think', it is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium" (Merleau Ponty, 2007, p. 177). In this way, Freire, adopting the view of the whole person, keeps his distance from those systems (theological, philosophical, political) that do not accept the spirituality of existence. Hence, the educational process needs to convey, in a Platonic way (Whitaker, 2004), moral intelligence in order to achieve political democratization (Freire, 2001).

Conclusions

The formation of a new perspective in the field of adult education can *compose* a new vocabulary for approaching the educational process, since the holistic approach towards the learner and the way it is addressed in the educational community is set as a priority in modern political directions. The question, in the end, is determined more specifically if the learner constitutes another instrumental-utilitarian object in the educational policy or is considered as a distinct psychosomatic entity, capable of actions and doings under a critical awareness of the self, the other, and the world.

So, in these compositions one can detect the way in which adult education can be *hydrated* aiming at the holistic approach of the universality of man. In this context, both Freire and Buber propose a theology of the person subject to the spirituality of the relationship, where the ethics of education approach the bi-

ographies of the I and the Thou in order to include them in the course of the utopian vision.

Thus, adult education needs to return to the roots of Freirean spirituality grafted this time with Buberian vocabulary, inaugurating a new navigation of the mind away from the Platonic shadows of conceptual mediations, in order to consider the theology of the person more clearly as an additional dimension of its perspective. However, this is not yet another moral adherence to the chariot of Kantian precepts, but rather a perspective of life that penetrates the Freirean vision, bringing to the biographies of educators and learners the Buberian ethics of education as a condition of a new condition of the educational process. As Jarvis notes, "the destiny of the person is to be involved with the Divine in the creation of a new world, and growth that denies people their destiny cannot be development" (Jarvis, 1987, pp. 36-7). Therefore, the prerequisite of the freedom of the person is the necessary condition for the achievement of the above path, passing through the field of education. As Buber characteristically states:

> As the higher freedom, the soul's freedom of decision, signifies perhaps our highest moments but not a fraction of our substance, so the lower freedom, the freedom of development, signifies our capacity for growth but by no means our growth itself. This latter freedom is charged with importance as the actuality from which the work of education begins, but as its fundamental task it becomes absurd.

(Buber, 2002, p. 107)

What emerges from our study is that the approaches of both thinkers highlight the question whether we are free from the dictates of modern reality in order to perceive our ways of

reporting on our lives. And, at this point, both thinkers identify the value of adult education, in that it contributes to the mutual (educator and learner) search and investigation of the world that passes through the world of the self and the other in order to redefine the *praxis* as one more social demand which, however, emanates from existence itself. As Jarvis notes again, "through praxis, people are able to act upon the world and transform it; In other words, they are able to fulfill their human destiny and act as co-creators with the Divine in producing a new Jerusalem" (Jarvis, 1987, p. 38).

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Graffiti as a Way of Critical Awareness:
a Modern Implementation of Freire's Pedagogical Program:
The example of STMTS's and KLE's works of art

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SUMMARY

The paper highlights ways of engaging learners in an emancipatory/transformative way of thinking. Two learning approaches are proposed that enables us to redefine ourselves in modern society, by observing various political/social stimuli through street art. The paper suggests that, by using street art as a visible stimulus, we can be critically empowered to deal with social challenges. From the wide range of street art, an artwork of Stamatis Mitsios (STMTS), as well as an artwork of Kleomenis Kostopoulos (KLE) have been selected due to their strong symbolism.

Key words: Street Art, Emancipatory Transformative Thinking, Codification, Decodification.

Introduction

The paper is divided into two sections. Firstly, the role of art in the learning process is established theoretically. Secondly, learning applications of coding/decoding street art are attempted, along with the argument about the value of street art in terms of awakening learners towards a critical way of experiencing and interpreting the world. For copyright reasons the works of art mentioned above are not visible to the reader, however they can be searched according to bibliographical references. Final thoughts, along with proposals for further inquiry on the subject, are also included.

Theoretical framework

Theorists of the subject agree that systematic and thoughtful observation of works of art provokes critical thinking and reflection (Dewey,1934; Freire,1970; Marcuse, 1978; Perkins, 1996; Greene, 2000; Kokkos, 2021). Some of them — among others — also agree that observation of art can offer to cognitive development (Perkins,1994; Gardner, 1993; Broudy, 1978), whereas others assume that thoughtful observation can release imagination (Greene, 2000) or even re-adjustment on our points of view in addition with a critical awareness towards cultural status quo (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1990). Other important thinkers of emancipatory learning (e.g., Dewey,1934; Adorno, 1977; Marcuse, 1978; Gramsci, 1996; Hooper-Creenhill, 2010) have developed the statement that "…aesthetic experience-understood as contemplating the meaning of

important works of art and critically associating it with our perceptions and life experiences- may considerably contribute to the reassessment and reconstruction of our conventional or unjustified assumptions" (Mega, 2020a, p.130).

Generally, all theorists mentioned previously agree that to foster critical awareness by observing art, works of art must have qualitative characteristics like unconventionality, universality, authenticity, uniqueness, in combination with messages, symbolisms, interpolations, activation of emotions, along with high quality of aesthetics (Kokkos, 2020). It is also worth noting that Freire (1970) himself followed more or less the same selection of criteria in order to cultivate critical awareness in students. In addition, concerning interpretation of art, he also pointed out the need to be comprehensible and close to observer's experiences through specific learning approaches.

Having that in mind, the learning approaches that follow in the next paragraphs are inspired mostly from Freire's points of view about art. Before proceeding to the learning applications, it would be worthy to elaborate on whether or not the proposed works of art mentioned in this study meet some of the criteria that lead the observer to a reflective way of thinking. Although the aforementioned characteristics are going to be discovered by readers themselves in the following paragraphs, we can assume that regardless of content/type/movement of a work of art, there are qualitative characteristics inherent in them that lead us to the conclusion that they can be used in learning processes that see our critical awareness.

Observing KLE's and STMTS's works of street art, we can easily distinguish features that are universal, unconventional and make us wonder or think out of the box. Both are full of symbolism and carry messages that activate our critical and creative thinking, in addition to the activation of emotions. Mostly, those two (2) works of art are relevant to contemporary culture and to conventional life experience of today's learners. Thus, today's learners feel that the expressed representations in those works of art are familiar to their own existential situation (Freire, 1970). As Freire himself suggests, what we observe in works of art (coding) must be "simple in their complexity and offer various decoding possibilities." (Freire, 1970, p.115).

Based on that assumption about works of art, a learning process is developed in the following paragraphs to approach KLE's and STMTS's street art with the aim of developing emancipatory and/or transformative ways of thinking among learners.

Modes to approach street art

1st mode: Coding/Decoding-Critically/Questioning (CD-CQ)
Initially, KLE's artwork is approached by asking the observers a simple question like: *What do you see?* Thus, productive words-phrases are recorded by the educator, without judgments or interpretations (coding phase). Then the decoding phase follows, in which deeper issues arise from productive words-phrases (thematic representations). To achieve such a goal the educator asks: *What general/abstract/ holistic concept do you think your initial observation represents?* (decoding phase)

Example

Codification: *What do you see?*	Decodification: *What general /abstract /holistic concept do you think your initial observation represents?* Or else: "What lies behind what I see"
Indicative answers	
children of different races	globalization/multiculturalism
children in traditional/ casual clothes	unity
children's profile	culture
e.g., curiosity, creativity, thinking	21st century life skills
heart artery	cultural continuum
digging a hole in a wall	exploration of the structure of society/introspection past political-cultural structures
a scene from life in a Western European palace during 17th century/ Western European civilization	awareness of the historical past/older cultural mind-set/traditional structure of Western European society
a painting of the Baroque period inside a work of graffiti/"Las Meninas"	timelessness of art/cultural integration

Based on the resulting decoding, the educator seeks for critical questions. To make such an endeavour happen, the educator identifies key concepts and integrates them into opens questions. Such questions require an open and thoughtful mind to be approached. Such questions could be divided in the following categories, although other scholars have suggested other classifications (Taylor, 2010; Perkins, 2015; Brookfield, 1995; artful thinking project):

- What (finding out critical questions),
- Why (hardcore critical questions),
- Creative (pop out questions/what if questions),
- Self-reflection (diving into critical questions)

The questions that could emerge from the previous categories vary. Some examples are mentioned below:

What	What past cultural mindset do we reproduce/accept? What *analogies* do we find between the historical context of 17th century and 2023? What *consequences* does introspection in culture have for the citizen of tomorrow?
Why	*According to your opinion,* why are traditional political/cultural structures located in the centre of the heart? *According to our experiences*, are we approaching or moving away from Western European civilization, and why? *According to our belief system,* do we prefer to accept the traditional structure of Western European society, or do we prefer to explore it and why?
Creative	What work of art from your cultural heritage would you choose to replace "Las Meninas" to approach the Central Idea of heritage?
Self-reflection	How can I help myself to deal with *contemporary problems* considering the past? Is there any difference from the previous question? Am I cognitive and emotional ready to take a *critical stance* against my historical past/ Have my initial points of view on the learning subject *transformed* somehow? *Which comments from your classmates* –during the learning process- helped you with this shift? Which elements of artwork contributed to this shift?

Highlights in relation to critical questions

All previous questions are characterized as critical because they invite us to be open and rethink about pre-existing assumptions. Initially, learners are exposed to the 1st degree of difficulty questions in order to activate their critical thinking (What questions). For this reason, key words (marked with italics) are used for identifications, comparisons, or conclusion (Ennis, 1996; Project Zero: Visible/Artful Thinking).

Learners are also exposed to the *Why questions* to justify their points of view, by stimulating more advanced critical thinking skills like justifications-explanations (Efland, 2002). These questions require answers based on criteria derived from the repertoire of learners' experiences than just pure documentation (Freire, 1970). In this way, experiential facts strengthen any justifications. During this process, agreements and disagreements are welcome as they reinforce the tendency for thoughtful thinking. Then, the disposition of thoughtful thinking increases through questions that stimulate creative thinking *(What if questions)*. Using What, *Why and What if questions*, learners are invited to activate their critical/creative way of thinking. Through this introductory process, they become ready for a clearer approach on the matter of interest.

Finally, personal points of view expressed previously are going to be further explored or

even challenged in connection and contradiction not only with personal experiences but also with contemporary social issues through Self-reflection questions (Mezirow, 2022 p.140). In addition, learners also elaborate on how the educational team (classmates and educator) helped them to think more critically, openly, and even transformatively (Brookfield, 1995, 2006).

Indicative educational framework for implementation

The previous learning approach can be seen as a part of a hypothetical teaching framework including learning subject, educational context and development of learners' attitudes. More specifically:

Learning subject: cultural Heritage under the Central Idea: Culture then and today: threat, knowledge, or new beginnings?

Educational Context: training of teachers who are adopting intercultural pedagogy.

Development of values/life attitudes: understanding the historical and social context in general, exploration of cultural values, cultivation of broad and more inclusive ways of thinking in order to welcome diversity, unity, and multiculturalism.

2nd mode: Brainstormed Observations BO / Critical Questions*

Initially, STMTS's artwork is approached by the learners through the same simple question, *What do you see?* All observations are recorded (productive words/phrases), without any judgment or interpretation (coding phase). To facilitate the process of brainstorming, the artwork is divided into discrete sections, following the aesthetic rule of perspective. According to this process, we distinguish five (5) thematic units:

1st Big city/ 2nd Public transportation/ 3rd Adults-workers-citizens/ 4th Two children and a dog/ 5th The work of art per se

Subsequently, the educator encourages learners to express critical questions based on a thematic unit of their interest.

Brainstormed observation (BO) emerges from the skill of taking a closer look on a work of art. During this process, objects, forms, colors, materials are observed in their interconnection. It is worthwhile to notice that the more time we spend being in the mood of BO the more undetected elements, colors, forms, interconnections came to the surface.

Example

Thematic Unit: Adults-Workers-citizens BO	Indicative critical questions
Employees, dressing according to their profession. People on the move, in tension. People absorbed by their thoughts/lack of eye contact. People are going in different directions. Different clothes, different bags. Shopping. Different roles.	How "**important**" are my professional goals in terms of life fulfilment? /Who do they **serve**? Are mine **professional choices** really mine? Have we ever thought about possible **community** goals apart from our **personal** goals? Although people have different professions, they move in the same way (fast and absorbed by their inner world). What needs to impose those **patterns of behaviour**? Are those patterns really "**ours**"?
4th Thematic Unit Two children and a dog	Indicative critical questions
Two children on the move look in the same direction. A boy and a girl. Boys' and girls' dress: the girl wears a pink dress; the boy wears blue pants and red blouse: the clothes refer to previous decades. Bicycle. Camera.	Which **goals** from our **adolescent** life were fulfilled over time? How much do we **enjoy** the journey of our **daily lives**? What **prevents** us from feeling the adventure of each day? Who deprived us of disposition of **surprise and discovery?** To what degree are we responsible for this deprivation?

Learners along with the educator are grouping the critical questions into two categories.

The first category confronts learners with socio-political issues raised by the learner's observations, while the second category confronts learners with themselves, provoking them to a transformative way of thinking.

Critical questions with a social political orientation:

- Who do my professional goals serve? /Based on what assumptions am I professionally acting?
- Have we ever thought about possible community goals apart from our personal goals?

- What personal needs impose patterns of behaviour like isolation and luck of communication? Are those patterns really "ours"?

Questions oriented towards self-knowledge:

- Are my professional choices really «mine»?
- Which goals from our adolescent were fulfilled over time?
- How much do we enjoy the journey of our daily lives?
- What prevents us from feeling the adventure of each day?

- Who deprived us of disposition of surprise and discovery? To what degree are we responsible for this deprivation?
- How "important" are my professional goals in terms of life fulfilment?

Highlights in relation to critical questions:

- Thematic units allow the observer to focus separately on them, offering more opportunities for focusing on deeper issues that are not visible at first glance. In addition, learners have to choose to observe the thematic unit that they found closer to the learning subject. This process gives them "voice" and commitment to the process of learning. Nevertheless, connections between thematic units are welcome and inevitable.
- Critical questions arise directly as a natural result of the process of brainstorming observation. Therefore, the more elements of the artwork are observed, the more triggers are created to generate of questions.
- Questions should gradually lead to deeper reflection related to the learning subject. In our case, the learning subject is related to professional development and self-improvement. The educator can facilitate the process of critical reflection through reference to key concepts such as professional choices, achievement of goals, personal fulfilment, personal development, social life etc. If this is the case, the educator can rephrase some of the critical questions that have been expressed by the learners.
- As has been mentioned previously, the educator along with learners divide critical questions into two categories. The first category refers to the relationship of the individual with the social system. This category reflects Brookfield's disposition on how an educator can set questions in advancing critical thinking (Brookfield, 2012). In fact, the proposed critical question reminds learners of their social identity and their commitments that derive from being social members.
- The second category of critical questions refer to the relationship of individuals with themselves. They give value to personal needs, priorities and goals, reminding of the right to fulfil personal dreams. Thus, social responsibility and introspection go hand in hand, creating the conditions for conscious decisions and meaningful life paths (Taylor, 2010).

Educational context:
Learning subject: professional development. Educational Context: In the context of this article, STMTS's street art is proposed to be used in approaching adults' professional orientation. *Development of values/life attitudes:* realization and respect of personal needs, actions for the common good, awareness of oppressive structures in professional field, autonomy, enjoyment of everyday life, living a conscious life.

Final thoughts

The ways in which the street arts were approached are not the only ones. A systematic process of approaching works of art either for the development of critical/creative thinking or for the development of transformative disposition has been established by theorists and researchers of the field, with Freire's approach itself remains fundamental. (Freire, 1970; Perkins, 1994; Kokkos, 2021, Project Zero). In addition, other educational transformative learning techniques have already been tested from the Hellenic Open University postgraduate students (Mega, 2020b).

The originality of the two educational processes presented in this paper refers to the fact that two works of art have been selected for observation and reflection that are not isolated in museums or hidden in "important" books of aesthetic experience or need to be searched from internet sources.

On the contrary, they breathe with us on our daily outwork activities. Street art comes much closer to Freire's original intention concerning works for critical awareness. It is known that Freire himself commissioned the artist Francisco Bernnand to create a series of works of art that reflected the secretly oppressive reality experienced by his illiterate students (Morris, 2008). This oppressive reality, through the process of coding and decoding, was gradually revealed in Freire's "cultural cycles". The two works of street art selected for critical awareness in this article reflect exactly the same: a casual real-life situation that we avoid realizing because it makes us emotionally vulnerable and throws us out of our comfort zone.

The way to approach these street arts is managed by the learners smoothly: what I see (coding)- what lies behind what I see (decoding)- why I see the way I see (critical questions)- What all this means for me (self-reflection).

Based on what has been mentioned in this section, it is clear that the KLE's artwork entitled "Heart (w)hole" is full of messages, symbolism, revelations, surprises, and provocations. Therefore, it forces us to re-see in a comparative, more thoughtful way what we usually take for granted without questioning. Through this process, learners, along with the educator, confront their own choices as citizens and individuals. Likewise, "Heart (w)hole» is possible to wake us up, contributing to the journey of emancipation and transformation. Accordingly, STMTS's artwork is also full of messages, symbolism, revelations, surprises, and provocation. In a way, it forces us to revisit in a comparative way our paths through life and to rediscover our place in society more consciously, redefining our goals towards a meaningful life.

In conclusion, the paper confirms that street art, can be a kind of "praxis" according to Freirean philosophy: a reaction to our social reality. In addition, street art waits for us to critically reflect upon this reality to transform it through further action and critical reflection.

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Modern Challenges in a Constantly Changing World and the role of Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education: The ethical and Political Dimension of Critical Reflection

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Project is to highlight, on the one hand, how the postgraduate students of the H.O.U. consider the dual dimension of critical reflection — ethical and political — based on the work of P.Freire, J.Mezirow and St. Brookfield, through highlighting the similarities and differences and, on the other hand, to highlight the role of Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education to address contemporary challenges through indicative Examples. For this reason, the research was based on a text-centred method, with analysis and synthesis of data. From this research, it seems that the postgraduate students recognize the basic characteristics of the political and ethical dimension of critical reflection through the work of the above-mentioned thinkers, but also underline their necessity in Adult Education. After all, in the framework of Transformative and Emancipatory Education, the role of the adult educator is decisive not only in providing academic knowledge, but also in providing the ethical framework, without imposing it. Through indicative Examples, it is clear that qualitative Art and especially Literature, in the aforementioned framework of Transformative and Emancipatory Education, is able to answer to this question through the combination of works of Art, contemporary challenges and hands-on experiences of adult learners.

Key words: Critical Consideration, Transformative and Emancipatory Adult's Education, Freire, Mezirow, Brookfield.

Introduction

In a constantly changing world, modern man is called upon to deal with various challenges. Many of these are related to the advancement of Technology and Science, and others are the result of the abandonment of man by man himself on a global level. Some of these challenges are reflected in the 17 goals of sustainable development. However, the goals of this chart seem to be constantly increasing (combating poverty, hunger, ensuring healthy living conditions for all, abolishing social inequalities, protecting the environment, eliminating violence, ensuring the balance between health and freedom of the individual in relation to the use of machinery and technology, safeguarding the above-mentioned rights and freedoms of man, guaranteeing a dignified and quality of life for all, etc.)

The 17 sustainable development goals (https://unric.org/ el/17-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B- F%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%B9-%CE%B2%C E%B9%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B9%CE%B- C%CE%B7%CF%83-%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE% B1%CF%80%CF%84%CF%85%CE%BE%CE% B7%CF%83/)

The attempt to address these challenges in the framework of Transformative and Eman-

cipatory Adult Education was the starting point of our reflection. Through the aforementioned account, the responsibility of all of us for a better world of humanity and solidarity is underlined, which surely passes through the new generation and its ethical constitution, connecting Adult Education with Youth Education even For this purpose, we propose the safety of the group in the environment of a classroom as a refuge, along with an educational concept that does not want the adult educator to function as an educational authority. Education, after all, is interactive, two-way, energetic, cooperative, but also communicative, sharing, laying down one's soul and life experiences (Ραμουτσάκη, 2020).

We cannot ask our learners to be active participants in a learning procedure when we are passive recipients of an adult educator. That is why we should be the first to have already appropriated this role, which we ask of from our learners (Ραμουτσάκη, 2020).

From this perspective, we will present the point of view of the H.O.U. postgraduate students on the political and ethical dimension of critical reflection, based on the work of P. Freire, J. Mezirow and St. Brookfield and the role of Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education to deal with contemporary challenges, through indicative Examples, with the assistance of Literature.

The opinion of current H.O.U. postgraduate students on the political and moral dimension of critical thinking according to Freire, Mezirow and Brookfield

Critical thinking, the base of Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education, is a point of reference in the learning process. The postgraduate students identify the political and ethical dimension of critical thinking almost 100% and their interrelation with the work of the three Theorists of Adult Education.
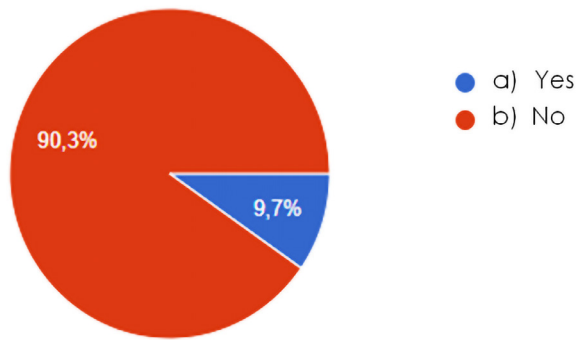
Question 1 - Do you think that the concept of critical reflection includes the concept of its ethical and political dimension from all 3 theorists?

To document this point of view, but also to highlight individual parameters, we utilized research data. The sample is indicative consisting of the male and female students of the H.O.U. Department, which is used with their consent. It was based on the completion of a digital Questionnaire with the Google form, in the context of their revision for the final exams.

The political and ethical dimension of critical reflection for P. Freire, through the eyes of the H.O.U. postgraduate students

As it is known, Freire (1921-1997), one of the most important founders of Adult Education and Critical Pedagogy, dealt with vulnerable social groups and the understanding of the causes of their oppression, which he named "critical consciousness" emphasizing the importance of critical thinking for this process and placed Learning for social change at the centre of his interest.

In the question: How post graduate students understand the meaning of critical consciousness. They answered, "all the above" and it received the greatest percentage of responses.

Question 2 - How do you perceive the concept of critical consciousness according to Freire?

They point out that, according to Freire, only when the people understand the social framework in which they belong, will they take the initiative not only to transform society, but also to make it fairer (Freire, 2006; Τσιρίδη, 2023; Ραμουτσάκη, 2021). It is important that in the question that examines that if critical thinking based on Freire a) is identical to critical consciousness or b) if critical consciousness is the result of critical thinking.

Most respond that critical consciousness is the result of critical thinking.

For Freire, critical consciousness, therefore, is the capstone of an essential and indepth understanding of the world, which aims at the fulfilment of man and which will ultimately lead him to new knowledge, new life attitudes and therefore to social change (Patton, 2021; Τσιρίδη, 2023).

The postgraduate students point out that the inability to overturn "the Culture of Silence" is linked to the fear of freedom, as the oppressed are afraid to oppose and act against established practices (Freire, 1977; Μελισσαράτος, 2022).

The dialogue (Freire, 1977) is a key tool of transition from one level of consciousness (Βαϊκούση, 2019) to another. Through dialogue and critical-productive questions, dominant social perceptions are deconstructed. The adult educator creates the appropriate conditions and instigates the dialogue (Κόκκος & Κουτρούμπα, 2010; Mezirow & συν., 2007)

not as an all-knowing but as the "orchestrator" of a productive process. He/She functions as a "cultural worker", who does not remain neutral or a passive spectator, but actively participates, and can also become a learner. Thus, it moves away from the image of the traditional teacher (Jarvis, 2007; Κόκκος, 2005), creating better and fairer learning conditions, with the aim of social awakening, which will lead to social change (Τσιρίδη, 2023).

The political and moral dimension of critical reflection for Mezirow, through the eyes of the H.O.U. postgraduate students

In the late 1970s, Jack Mezirow developed the theory of Transformative Learning, which critically examines dysfunctional assumptions, aiming to empower learners (Kokkos, 2019). A key principle of this theory is to empower individuals to think critically and freely without any prejudice. Moreover, "Transformative Learning" is critical rethinking/ the challenge of problematic assumptions, understanding reality more creatively and objectively and acting on the basis of the now new, transformed perceptions (Κόκκος, 2017; Ραμουτσάκη, 2021).

To the question: "How do you understand the concept of critical reflection according to Mezirow?" the majority of the H.O.U. postgraduate students emphasize that it is the means for

● a) Critical reflection is identified with critical consciousness?

● b) Critical awareness is the result of critical reflection?

88,9%

11,1%
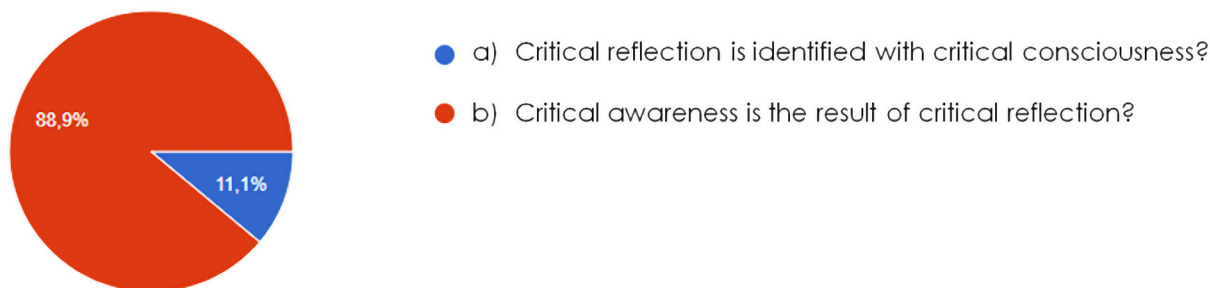
Question 3 - Do you think that according to Freire…

- As a means of toppling the dominant ideology by the people?
- As a means of understanding the frame of reference?
- As a channel for detecting and understanding the causes of people' s oppression?
- As a means of taking an active role in shaping new social structures?
- As a process of thinking and conscious processing of experiences?
- As a means of thinking, conscious processing of experiences, but also awareness, re-examination and transformation of dysfunctional assumptions?
- All the above

Question 4 - How do you understand the concept of critical reflection according to Mezirow?

the transformation of dysfunctional assumptions of adult learners, for the improvement of their social behaviour or of the social groups through their role in society, contributing, predominantly to the epistemological constitution of the field of Adult Education (Βαϊκούση & Κόκκος, 2019).

For Mezirow, the political and social framework is important, since it affects the way in which a person thinks, without this meaning that political ideology occupies a central position in critical thinking, and that one must always critically examine the dominant ideology (Κουλαουζίδης & Ανδριτσάκου, 2007; Πλαγίσου, 2023). Postgraduate students also believe that he focuses on his educational contribution in a more academic way, stressing that Mezirow was incited to formulate the view that taking individual or collective action is a key goal of Transformative Learning (Κόκκος, 1998, 2020), in a dialectical environment of interaction.

The political and ethical dimension of critical reflection based on Stephen Brookfield, through the H.O.U. postgraduate students

Stephen Brookfield (1949-) built his Theory of Critical Thinking based on two assumptions: a) there are strong economic-social inequalities in Western societies and b) there is so much influence from every prevailing ideology that citizens passively accept reality (Brookfield, 2019).

According to Brookfield, if critical reflection does not examine hegemonic assumptions and power relations, it does not lead to transformation. Therefore, the re-evaluation and the processing of hidden power relations and the uncovering of hegemonic assumptions are the important goals of critical reflection in the educational process.

To the question: "How do you understand the concept of critical thinking according to Brookfield?", almost all of our fellow students respond that critical reflection is the means that does not simply lead to a re-examination of dysfunctional assumptions, but focuses on analysing how dominant structures prevail ideologically, imposing beliefs that reproduce the current and often unjust socio-economic status.

- ● As a means of toppling the dominant ideology by the people?
- ● As a means of understanding the frame of reference?
- ● As a channel for detecting and understanding the causes of people's oppression?
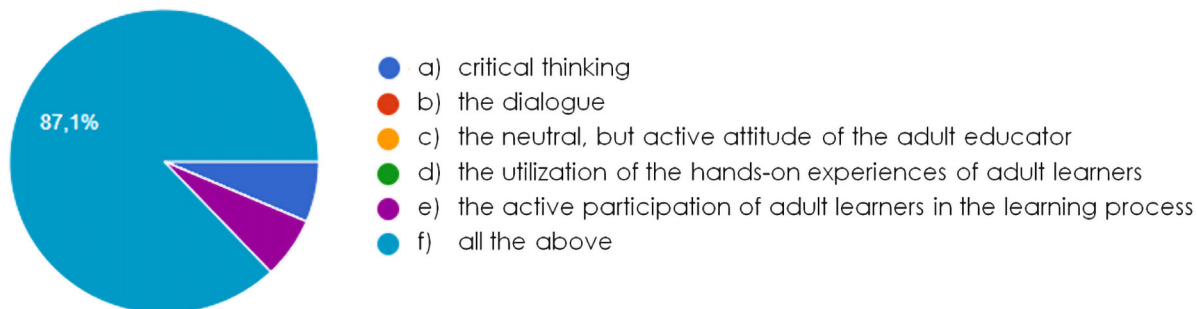- ● As a means of taking an active role in shaping new social structures?
- ● As a means that does not simply lead to a re-examination of dysfunctional assumptions, but focuses on the analysis of the way in which dominant (capitalist) structures (social and political) hegemony ideologically i.e. impose beliefs that reproduce the current and often unjust socio-economic status .

Question 5 - How do you understand the concept of critical thinking according to Brookfield?

In conclusion, Brookfield, like Freire, emphasizes the role of the critically thinking citizen, who, now emancipated, cares for the social whole and, through the criticism of the dominant structures, takes on initiatives and action. At a time when Mezirow is treated by the scientific community as an absolute authority in the field of Adult Education and his theory of Transformative Learning is completely dominant, Brookfield gives to it the political dimension that it lacked. Critical reflection on assumptions is for Mezirow necessary for "our harmonious integration into reality", while for Brookfield, it has a de facto political dimension and is the means to change reality.

- ● a) critical thinking
- ● b) the dialogue
- ● c) the neutral, but active attitude of the adult educator
- ● d) the utilization of the hands-on experiences of adult learners
- ● e) the active participation of adult learners in the learning process
- ● f) all the above

Question 6 - In your opinion, what are the common elements of Theories of the 3 thinkers of Adult Education (P. Freire, J. Mezirow and St. Brookfield)?

- ● a) the purpose of critical reflection
- ● b) the purpose of the transformation
- ● c) the nuance of the political dimension of critical reflection
- ● d) their view of collective action and social change
- ● e) the type of social action
- ● f) the role of the adult educator
- ● g) all the above
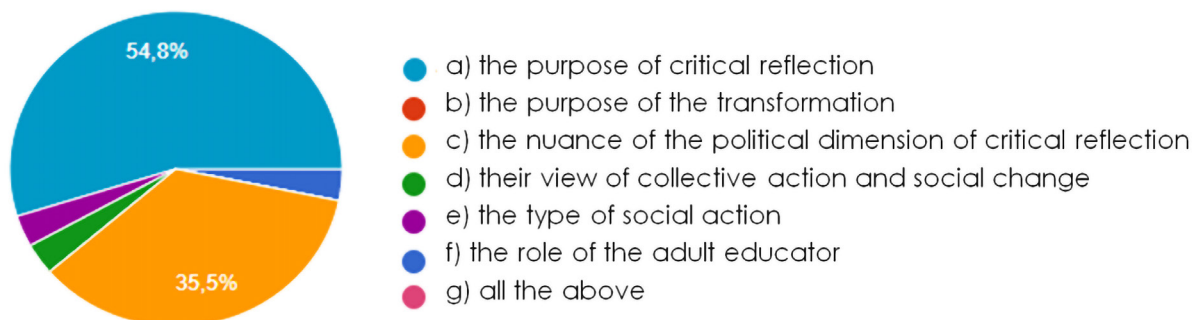
Question 7 - In your opinion, what are the elements that differentiate the Theories of the 3 thinkers of Adult Education (P. Freire, J. Mezirow and St. Brookfield)?

Literature at the service of the political and moral dimension of critical reflection, in the context of Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education

Undoubtedly, one of the safest means of Culture and Education, but also of supporting critical and creative reflection, is Literature. Let us not forget that the shift towards Mediterranean nature and tradition in the 19th century provided our writers with the models for more humanistic visions of distinct cultural identity, which "come in dialectical opposition to the stream of globalization" (Καψωμένος, 2012).

Moreover, Transformative Learning, to be completed, does not only need the motive to provoke critical reflection, but also a connection with the hands-on experiences of the learners (Freire, 1977), which will cause the "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 2007) and the reframing of the individuals themselves, to lead them to the intended transformation and social action (Brookfield, 2020). The reference point here is the literary text, which is used as a case study or to recall all applied elements, in the framework for the implementation of the Greek version of "Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience Method" (Kokkos, 2017).

For example, in case we use Dionysios Solomos "The Free Besieged", which refers to the 2nd Siege of Messolonghi by the Ottomans (1825-1826), during the Greek Revolution, we can discuss with the learners the stable and non-negotiable Moral Code of the Free Besieged highlighting their principles and values. A reframing of the former assumptions based on learners' experiences is then attempted and questions that support the political and moral aspect of critical reflection in terms of P. Freire, J. Mezirow and St. Brookfield can be formulated:

1. Have you ever been in a difficult situation where you have defended your values against the odds?
2. Eventually, did you defend them, or did you cower in the face of fear and difficulty?
3. How could you uphold in your daily life timeless values and life attitudes, at a time when everything around you seems to be violated?

In this way, all three aspects of the role of adult educators are supported: the role of the "cultural worker", "political fighter" for Freire (2006, as cited in Βαϊκούση & Κόκκος, 2019), the "cultural activist" for Mezirow (2007, p.68) and the "active citizen-fighter", respectively, for Brookfield (Brookfield, 2012).

Dialogue and critical reflection can also be enhanced with works of Art related to the Siege of Messolonghi, which will allow the emergence of both the artists' (Delacroix, *Greece in the ruins of Messolongion* and Vryzakis, *The exit of Messolonghi* from the Greek National Gallery) and the learners' different perspectives:

The two painters' perspectives (Ramoutsaki, 2021)

Delacroix, *Greece in the ruins of Messolongion* https://www.nationalgallery.gr/ektheseis/eugenios-ntelakroua-i-ellada-pano-sta-ereipia-tou-mesologgiou/ **Delacroix** (French, Philhellenic is closer in time, in the historical events and moves in a more classical space) Dipole: The ruins (the destruction) and the stake: Greece, the defence of all values Dipole: Greece/Freedom-ruins The ruins: in practice they are lives, disasters, properties, in the name of the national Idea The painting has the element of idea, the stake of war and the ruins: to defend the idea, you often go through sacrifice and destruction	Vryzakis, *The exit of Messolonghi* https://www.nationalgallery.gr/artwork/i-exodos-tou-mesolongiou/ **Vryzakis** (quite distant from the historical event) Vryzakis expresses the religiosity, the sanctity of the act and idealizes the Exodus. There are no national symbols, apart from the flag and some elements in the warriors' clothing, which are not at all visible. National justice is in the Light. The enemy element is in the dark. The Exodus and the Struggle are sanctified in the radiance of the Holy Light.

Conclusions

From the above, it becomes apparent that the challenges in today's era are many and various, with effects on Education and Art. The main similarities between Freire's and Mezirow's positions are related to their pedagogical principles of Transformative and Emancipatory Education. The use of dialogue and critical questioning, the construction of learners' knowledge and attitudes through the distinctive rather than the manipulative pedagogy, through the dynamic role of the adult educator, who acts as an animator, group coordinator, fellow traveller on the journey of knowledge and empowerment and the active role of the learners.

The H.O.U. postgraduate students also point out that due to the different social frames (Freire in a poor country, with many illiterates and Mezirow in a predominantly capitalistic country) there were dissimilarities relating to critical consciousness. Freire used this concept to deal with class inequalities through socio-politically oriented processes, while Mezirow developed the theory of Transformative Learning for the removal of individual dysfunctional beliefs, without necessarily including the socio-political element.

The above views are also enriched by Brookfield, who focuses on social change, which occurs through Education and critical reflection. The formulation of critical questions and the correct choice of active educational

techniques and Art stimulate the interest of the learners and critical reflection, strengthen the free expression of different points of view and assist them in identifying and transforming their own possible hegemonic assumptions (Μελισσαράτος, 2023), with the ultimate purpose of social action.

In this case, the Learning Subject is activated and does not passively accept the educational material. In particular, the works of Art are not displayed and do not simply function as stimuli, but are reframed through critical questions, motivating learners to a process of emotional intelligence, self-criticism, reflection, introspection, and decision-making (Ραμουτσάκη, 2020).

It is also important to emphasize that every Art or Method is not sanctified. Transformative Learning, in order to work, positively needs good incentives. The result of Transformative and Emancipatory Education depends on motives and intentions. If these are goods, then they will also lead to a positive result. Otherwise, they may cultivate authoritarian individuals or breed fascist formations, another challenge for the modern world. Alongside, the elimination of fear is another challenge for modern man, as worldwide attempts are being made to consolidate a climate of terrorism, imposition of things and deprivation of freedoms. In the framework of Transformative and Emancipatory Education, Art again responds in an absolute manner. This voice of justice and humanity breaks the silence in the face of every injustice.

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Transformative Learning Theory in Talent Development process

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ABSTRACT

The submitted contribution deals with the issue of learning theories in Talent Development process. In the introduction, attention is focused on the basis of TD process, the HRD – its definition and current trends, as well as on the definition of TD and usage of learning theories in TD literature. Yet not published systematic literature review (2023) showed, that paradoxically, it cannot be argued that the theories of learning and adult education significantly dominate research in the field of TD, even though it is about the learning and development of adult workers. The second part of the text focuses on the application of transformative learning theories in TD and HRD with suggestion of further possible directions in research of this topic.

Keywords: Talent Development, Human Resource Development, Transformative Learning.

Introduction

The current concept of human resource development (HRD) emphasizes the level of employee development, whereby it is defined as a complex of *"organized learning experiences provided by the employer at a specific time in order to offer an opportunity for performance improvement and/or personal development"* (Nadler, 1989). HRD is part of the area of human resource management and focuses both on the development of employees and also the entire organization. Ju (2018) found that the goal of HRD is primarily to improve individual and/or organizational performance and efficiency, in several cases, the organization itself was understood as the target of HRD action in order to improve performance. In the field of HRD we can encounter two main paradigms. The first one is the learning paradigm, which mainly promotes focusing on learning improvement (Chalofsky, 1992), or on the change that can be achieved through learning, in which case the development of individuals is the main goal (Bierema, 2000). Proponents of the learning paradigm consider learning to be the most important goal of the HRD field, see Watkinson's (1989) definition, which focuses on fostering long-term work-related learning ability. The second one is the performance paradigm, which emphasizes that HRD

is a process of improving performance through learning (Swanson, 2001, 2022). Proponents of the performance paradigm seek continuous improvement in performance through employee development. In this paradigm, learning is only one of the tools that is used to improve performance.

Nowadays, the trends are moving especially towards skills development and workplace learning. In particular, it includes informal learning that helps people build the skills and knowledge they need to do their jobs and develop their careers, as well as adapt to changing labour market conditions. The reason may be, for example, a turn to critical self-reflection in the field of HRD and an emphasis on a greater balance between organizational and individual needs, not only an emphasis on organizational needs, and therefore a performance paradigm (as was the case in the 1990s, when within the framework of the theory of human capital was an insight into a person in terms of measurable human capital for the organization). Striving for a balance towards individual needs leads to an emphasis on lifelong and workplace learning, although the aim is still the same, namely, to increase the competence of adults for the future (ILO, 2019; OECD, 2021). However, it abandons formalized processes and rather promotes continuous learning and its facilitation. It is HRD staff who are considered co-responsible for setting the organizational climate and opportunities for workplace learning and for valuing learning (CIPD, 2022).

As for the talent development process, which we consider a formalized part of the HRD field, even after 30 years, it still serves organizations to increase the attractiveness of recruitment for potential employees, as well as to maintain or increase their performance, productivity, and competitiveness (Hedayati Mehdiabadi & Li, 2016). The difference from HRD is rather the strategic nature of the talent devel-

opment process (and its management), which is dealt with, for example by Rothwell (2004), who claims that talent development is mainly a strategy, specifically a process of organizational change for the development of competencies needed to maintain the organization's competitiveness while emphasizing the responsibility of all involved (managers, leaders, personnel, workers, management)in the development of people in the organization. Hedayati Mehdiabadi & Li (2016) define the TD process as a comprehensive system that consists of a set of values, activities, and processes aiming to develop all motivated and capable individuals for the mutual benefit of individuals, the organization, and society as a whole. Most of the studies conducted on TD, explicitly or implicitly, are determined by a resource-based view of the firm, which is related to thinking about the person as a unique resource for the organization's competitive advantage (e.g. Holland et al., 2007; Lehmann, 2009).

It follows from the above that the talent development process is highlighted for its positives, yet we were interested to what extent the process is examined through a learning theory. Learning theories focus on explaining how actors in organizations learn and how they contribute to the learning of the organization itself. At the same time, their importance lies not only in the fact that they help to understand the transfer of learning content of the organization's employees within the framework of HRD processes, but also that they approach the analysis of organizations in a different way (Yang, 2004). In addition, theories such as self-directed learning, transformative learning connect the individual learning of adults with social and political systems, respectively contexts (Yang, 2004). The relationship between theories of learning, or adult education and HRD were also discussed by Yang (2004), who states that learning theories also bring a focus on informal and incidental learning to the HRD

field, while HRD is often associated more with formalized processes, i.e. formal education.

The results of our systematic review study (2023, not yet published), which worked with 25 studies in the field of TD, showed, that paradoxically, it cannot be argued that the theories of learning and adult education significantly dominate research in the field of TD, even though it is about the learning and development of adult workers. This can be attributed precisely to the insufficiently perceived importance of the field of adult education (andragogy) for researching topics related to the field of HRD, such as TD, even though it forms one of the mainstays of the HRD field. These findings can be used for further theoretical and empirical research. From a theoretical point of view, it is interesting to look at the topic using theories from the field of adult education, for example the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997), which makes it possible to focus on the individual's experience of receiving the talent label, its reflection and impact on the perception of self-efficacy.

Transformative learning in TD and HRD

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning appears among the development trends of HRD field theories, which means that this theory can also capture the topic of the talent development process. This is another of the possible theoretical lenses that focus more on the individual and his or her experience of reality. Mezirow (1990, p. 1) defines such learning as a process that takes place through critical self-reflection leading to a reformulation of perspectives of meaning that enable a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's own experiences and learning, thereby causing action based on these perspectives. The ultimate goal is to *"achieve self-eman-*

cipation" through self-knowledge thanks to systematically overcoming of distorted perceptions, thereby strengthening one's own autonomy. Transformative learning combines experiential learning with an emphasis on reflexivity and world-view transformation, and leads to personality changes or changes in the organization of the self, and is characterized by the simultaneous restructuring of a cluster of schemas and patterns in all three dimensions of learning—and the disorientation that typically occurs in as a result of a crisis situation caused by challenges that are perceived as urgent and inevitable, leading to the need for adaptation and transformation (1990, 1991). Senge (1990) sees transformative learning and the practice of critical reflection, which enables the transformation of personal frames of reference, as the basis for creating new cultures of learning in which critical reflection provides the basis for dialogue that when developed, can facilitate and support employees at all levels to go beyond their understanding of their assumptions and views of reality and thus gain a broader insight for developing their thinking and actions (Marsick & Volpe, 1999). However, as Segers and De Greef (2021) state, culture cannot be easily changed. The first step for organizations is to become aware of their cultural biases through reflection, communication, and questioning and thus become observers of their own thinking (Senge, 1990). Nevertheless, barriers can be mainly the fear of the unknown and the power of socialization, which means the power of habits in which people feel comfortable (Mezirow, 1990). Based on Mezirow's (1991, 1997) stages of transformation theory, Döös et al. (2015) proposed different transformative learning conditions to line managers and employees in the workplace. For example, the trigger for such learning is cognitive conflict, which acts as a motivator for learning. If it is perceived as important and if there is interaction between managers and em-

ployees, then it can happen that managers support the critical reflection of their employees and the acquisition of new competences and insights into reality.

Transformative learning is further developed by Wildemeersch and Stroobants (2009, p. 219), who describe a theoretical framework in which changing educational methods can be viewed against the background of changing social conditions. The actions of individuals can be viewed through the process of individualization, which is also relevant in today's society, when individuals are held responsible for their decisions and choices regarding their professional life.

However, such processes of individuation increase the need for individual and social reflexivity. Individuals must therefore be able to control their so-called self-reflexivity in order to react to changing environmental conditions. At the same time, educators must also reassess their role in order to teach individuals how to react to these changes. The theory of transitional learning presented by the authors (see also Stroobants et al., 2001) is a descriptive and explanatory framework that aims to make sense of individuals' learning processes in relation to work and their initiatives in adult and further education, which emphasizes reflexivity. This helps to balance the needs of individuals with the needs of the labour market, but it is necessary that it takes place in cooperation between the facilitator and the individual who needs to be developed and in such a way that there should be a mutual search for an individual solution. These lead educators to use, for example, a biographical approach to learning and critical and creative thinking.

If we were to think about the development of talents through the above-mentioned theories, then it would not have to be a formalized process because the development of actors in the organization is a common goal of both educators and HRD workers and line manag-

ers, as well as employees in the organization. The key factor here is the support of critical thinking towards reflexivity, which enables the emancipation of educated people anchored in various structures, for example: organizational, socialization or at the macro level, political and ideological. These often lead individuals in certain directions for their own needs — for example, organizations for the needs of their own profit. Nonetheless, an individual may feel pressure on their individual responsibility for continuous learning and development without their internal motivation for development or without a broader idea of their career path. He or she can blindly accept this because he or she trusts HR staff and line managers to identify his strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, we consider it essential from the point of view of the sciences of education and adult education to ask how talented workers (who have accepted this label) actually learn and think about their development, rather than how to set up the talent development process to be effective, possibly with what metrics to measure this effectiveness.

At the same time, we consider it critical to ask how HRD workers and other actors (e.g. the organization's management, which is responsible for the identification and development of talents) are developed in this issue. They have the responsibility to correctly identify strengths and weaknesses, and to choose the right forms, methods, and techniques of learning. In the event that they are not educated in this issue and do not have an overview of current topics and trends in the HRD field or TD issues, an inclination towards intuitive development practices is a prerequisite, which may not always be ideal. As a solution, we suggest dealing with this topic at a theoretical level and critically reflecting on formalized processes in which HRD workers and line managers have an essential role, pointing out constructs that appear in practice and are accepted uncriti-

cally (e.g. talent development process), and supporting the education of all participants, so that learning (and transformative learning) of adults takes place, in various ways, but especially on the basis of a thorough andragogic diagnosis of their educational needs. For this purpose, it is possible to choose, for example, narrative interviews, which can support the reflection of the actors and their learning if asked correctly. We can also create such model situations that allow individuals to try out different ways of thinking and break established thinking structures, orusedifferent techniques of experiential learning, thanks to which the acquisition of specific experiences is supported, which can also lead to the transformation of previous experiences. At the level of HRD workers and line managers, we propose education at a similar andragogic minimum, in particular how to analyse educational needs, how to support individuals in reflecting on their learning styles, what forms, methods and techniques of adult learning exist, as well as what specifics of adult learning and education occur and lastly how important is the adult's internal motivation to learn and develop.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this theoretical study is to suggest possible other ways to researching the talent development process. First of all, we propose to investigate workers identified as talented, for example, in narrative or biographical research, which would be focused on their ways of learning and development, i.e. how these workers learn. It would be interesting to compare different groups of workers — e.g. examine the ways of learning and development of talented versus non-talented groups in one organization, or examine employees of different types of organizations and observe how the culture and setting of the organization enables

or does not enable transformative learning of their employees, whether it supports current trends in the field of HRD in practice, or rather works on the uncritical acceptance of set rules, norms, and structures with the aim of profit, especially of the organization. By uncovering these constructs and consciously pointing out the sometimes overly formalized processes in organizations that uncritically work with the talent label, the impact of which is different on different individuals, it is possible to open a discussion on the topic of development and learning of adults that the organization labels as talented. Therefore, we place this work in a critical stream of literature in HRD, which is also one of the current trends, and which points to the existing tension between learning on one hand and productivity or performance on the other. A critical perspective is important in order to reflect on the functionality of interweaving adult education in the field of human resources development, as this also brings a learning paradigm into the HRD field and not just a performance paradigm (Rocco et al., 2020, p. 235). Human capital and its theories do not see a person as someone who can develop and change, on the contrary, they only see him or her as someone who should bear results, which is indubitably a reductive approach.

An individual cannot develop his potential if he or she does not have a space for learning that has personal meaning. These alternative views help to see learning from different perspectives, which is one of the efforts of a critical approach in the field of HRD, which tries to break down preferred ways of thinking, question the existing habits of activities in the field of HRD and facilitate the emancipation of learners (Sambrook, 2009; 2014). J. Mezirow's transformative theory applied in practice can thus support the critical reflection of various actors involved in the talent development process.

Acknowledgement

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Life at the Camp: Intercultural Awareness in the Community and Refugee Children at the Forefront

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the inclusion or not of refugee children's cultural identities in the learning environment and to focus on working community's practices concerning intercultural awareness. A qualitative study was conducted while the methods deployed were participant observation, semi-constructed interviews, and arts-based methods. Data collection tools were field notes, semi-constructed interviews, activities from MiCreate Handbook and identity texts. The participants of this study were 4 people working in the camp, as well as 23 refugee children, aged 6–17 years old. The findings demonstrated that through arts-based activities, refugee children bring elements of their cultural identity in the learning environment, as well as teachers implemented inclusive activities as part of their intercultural awareness. Moreover, the working community of the camp highlighted the significance of traditional celebrations in refugee people's lives, and mentioned interculturally aware practices that respond to the refugee community's needs.

Key words: Cultural Identity, Intercultural Awareness, Refugee Children, Arts-Based.

Introduction

Theoretical framework: Recent Migration and Refugee Flows to Greece

Concerning the sociopolitical context of the recent migration and refugee flows to Greece, it is essential to underline the reported number of 50,000 third-country nationals trapping in Greece in March 2016 (AIDA, 2022) while the countries of origin that were reported by AIDA (2022) are Middle East countries, and African countries. According to the UNHCR (2023) in

the Mediterranean region the total number of refugee arrivals in 2023 is 7,763 with 5,872 sea arrivals and 1,891 land arrivals. The Greek islands are still in the frontline as they host most refugee/migration flows. For instance, on Lesbos Island 2,688 refugee/migrant people arrived within the first months of 2023 while the main countries of origin of refugee population are the State of Palestine, Afghanistan, Somalia etc. (UNHCR, 2023). Concerning management and administration for refugee education in Greece, the Ministry of Education has launched a Special Office which coordinates all departments. In detail, Regional Educational Directorates and Local Educational Authorities in cooperation with Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs) organize refugee/migrant children's registration in specially appointed schools in which operate either Reception Classes or Structures for the Welcoming and Education for Refugees (DYEP). Last to be underlined is that the population of approximately 15.793 persons –most of whom were children (39%/)– were accommodated in mainland camps known as Closed Temporary Reception Structures. Specifically, the variety of characteristics of refugee children includes the language background communities, the culture, and the prior schooling experience in educational system as well as the socio-economic background. All the above characteristics are factors that enhance intercultural awareness within school communities and promote the respect of children's cultural identities.

Objectives

In this context, the main objective of this study is dual: firstly, to identify the inclusion or not of refugee student's cultural identities in the learning environment by illustrating children's narratives and by presenting teachers' practices; secondly, to focus on working community's practices concerning intercultural awareness by detecting practices followed to that point.

Research purpose

The main purpose of this research is to elaborate on refugee student's cultural identities by illustrating children's narratives and by presenting teacher's practices. Additionally, it is of high priority to focus on the working community's practices concerning intercultural awareness by detecting practices followed to that point.

Research questions

Directly related to the main purpose as well as to the research objectives, the researcher set the following research questions and attempts to give answer through the analysis of research data as well as through the interpretation and discussion based on the results. The research questions to be answered are:

1. "Do refugee children living in a camp bring elements of their cultural identity to the learning environment?"
2. "Do teachers working in a refugee camp include in the learning process refugee children's cultural identities?"
3. "Is the community of people working in a refugee camp interculturally aware?"

Research Method

This research belongs to a qualitative approach and follows a narrative research approach in which the researcher studied the lives of indi-

viduals in a camp and asked one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives through art (as stated by Riessman, 2008 as cited in Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, specific methods that were deployed are participant observation, semi-constructed interviews, and arts-based methods as the latter empowers participants to explore intuitive parts of their cultural identity through a plethora of ways.

Concerning data collection tools that were deployed in this research were field notes, semi-constructed interviews, activities from Mi-Create Handbook, Living in Multicultural Schools: Handbook for Teachers as well as identity texts. Following, as a content analysis technique was deployed, the thematic analysis allows the researcher to make sense of collective meanings and experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Research Site and sample

The research took place in Schisto refugee camp in the Attica region in which approximately 750 refugees live in. In the camp, a plethora of organizations, either governmental or non-governmental (NGO) provide services to the camp's population (e.g., psychosocial, law, health services, food distribution, formal and non-formal education programs etc.).

Moreover, DRC-NGO which was the host-organization for the conduction of this research, offers its services in Schisto camp by providing non-formal education program for children aged 6–17 years old as well as by organizing psychosocial support and meetings for the parents of the enrolled children, implemented by the social worker.

This research was addressed to 4 adults professionals working in Schisto camp, and to 23 refugee children aged 6–17 years old. Specifically, the sample of this study consisted of 4 female adults; 2 educators,1 psychologist, and 1 mid-wife who work in different units and/or services inside the camp's facilities (table 1: working staff). As it concerns the children's profile, they all attend public school, outside the camp, and they attend DRC's homework support program daily. (Table 2: children)

Participants' status	Age	Gender	Country of origin
Educator	32	Female	Greece
Educator	29	Female	Greece
Midwife	35	Female	Greece
Psychologist	37	Female	Greece

Table 1: working staff.

Participants' status	Age	Gender	Country of origin
Student	8	feamle	Afghanistan
Student	8	female	Afghanistan
Student	7	female	Afghanistan
Student	7	female	Syria
Student	6	female	Iraq
Student	7	female	Iraq
Student	6	female	Iran
Student	8	female	Iran
Student	7	female	Afhanistan
Student	9	female	Afghnaistan
Student	9	female	Afghanistan
Student	9	female	Afgnaistan
Student	10	female	Afghanistan
Student	12	male	Iraq
Student	12	male	Iraq
Student	13	female	Iran
Student	14	female	Afghanistan
Student	14	male	Iran
Student	15	female	Syria
Student	15	female	Iran
Student	15	male	Syria
Student	15	male	Syria
Student	17	female	Iran

Table 2: children

Furthermore, DRC's educational time schedule already consisted of classes for three age groups, 6–8 years old, 9–12 years old, and 13–17 years old. This scheme was also followed by the researcher for the implementation of this research.

Last, regarding gaining access to Schisto camp, the researcher had an initial contact with the Education Officer of DRC-NGO who provided the former with an agreement between the two. Later, there was a contact with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, and specifically with the Directorate of Southern Greece Facilities-Reception and Identification Service Department to receive the approval concerning the access and the conduction of this research to the site. Last,

the chief of Schisto camp was the key person to approve the research on the field.

Data collection

The research data collection was conducted in December 2022 in Schisto refugee camp. Four interviews were conducted with professionals working in the camp's facilities. Firstly, a consent form was given to the participants to get informed about the research's purpose. Additionally, the agreement ensured the anonymity of the interviewee as the interview would not be audio-recorded due to ethical and confidentiality reasons activated by the Directorate of Southern Greece Facilities-Reception and Identification Service. Last, the interview lasted approximately 15' during which researcher kept notes on the interviewee's utterance.

The selection of the semi-constructed interview as a data collection tool was an adequate way to collect research data. As argued by Newcomer (2015), conducted conversationally with one respondent at a time, the semi-structured interview employs a blend of closed-and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions.

Furthermore, the interview questions were based on the relevant literature as well as on the research questions of this study. For that, the researcher designed the interview outline with a gradual emergence of questions. Additionally, field notes were also the tool to collect data from teacher's- student's interactions as they provide useful information concerning children's utterances related to different elements of their cultural identity, which enriched this research's findings. The researcher had the notebook open, visible to children.

Last, concerning the use of identity-texts as a data collection tool is considered as one of the most adequate tools of student's abilities empowerment as well as it challenges the im-plicit devaluation of students' languages and cultures within school (Cummins and Early, 2011). In relation to that, a series of multimodal activities were applied in order to achieve the highest sample based on student's narrations, and to affirm the power of the variety of dimensions of their cultural identity.

Last, MiCreate Handbook was used as a data collection tool, and provided a list of activities that addressed the purpose of the study and offered space for refugee students' identity affirmation and reflection towards their creations.

Data analysis and interpretation

In this qualitative study, the method used for the analysis of data was the thematic analysis of the data obtained from both interviewees and students. Additionally, the researcher presented, analysed and interpreted all data in categories to connect similar information received by multiple sources with a focus to responding to research's questions. The thematic categories identified were the following:

— Children's narratives through art as a way to express different dimensions of cultural identity

— Teacher's practices towards the inclusion of children's cultural identities in the learning environment

— The use of mother tongue as a way to effectively communicate and express needs

— Community events and traditional celebrations as an expression of the community's intercultural awareness

— The importance of collaboration between different units of the staff working inside and outside the camp

Results

The findings of this study attempt to answer the research questions that set the basis for the research.

Do refugee children living in a camp bring elements of their cultural identity to the learning environment?

It was apparent throughout the whole research that children bring elements of their cultural identity in many ways which denote the importance in their lives. For instance, children's narratives that refer to past experiences, family's background, country of origin etc., are in the spotlight of their lives. Another element is the use of children's mother tongue during lesson time, either when talking between them or when implementing MiCreate activities. Children's visual narratives also highlighted their hobbies and interests as part of their cultural identity as either during circle time activities or through art, children's preferences give an insight of their world. Characteristically, during the implementation of the activity #15 Language Portraits from MiCreate Handbook, refugee students depicted themselves as well as the languages they speak in a multimodal way, by drawing or adding colours, symbols, letters etc. A multimodal approach enables learners to move between linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural and spatial modes of meaning-making and learning (as argued by Kalantzis & Cope, 2005, as cited in Rajendram, 2015).
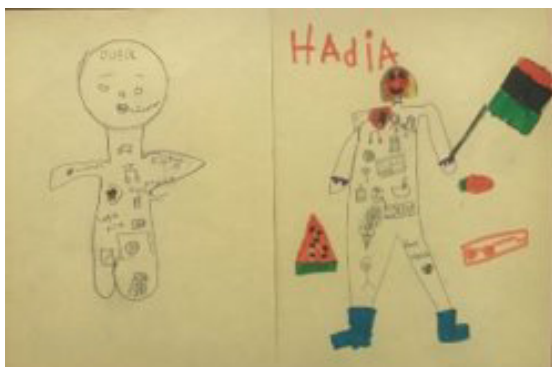

Figure 1

Figure 2

Furthermore, arts-based activities from MiCreate Handbook gave space for children's voices to be heard as the latter expressed their feelings concerning different places in the camp. Specifically, in activity *#9 Photo Safari-Places of Well-Being* from MiCreate Handbook, teenage refugee students were asked to choose places in the camp in which they feel either happy or sad, safe or unsafe, comfortable or uncomfortable and to take photos by using a tablet. Several photos were taken, indicating the children's mixed feelings concerning the places of the camp. The results of the intervention in the photos either by extending them or by adding extra characters/features showed that children consider school, places of hobbies such as football area, their house in the camp with family members around as safe places.

On the contrary, children's choice concerning the places in the camp that made them feel sad are associated with buildings such as the psychosocial and law services. As reported by Moore (2017, p.48), in a similar study concerning refugee children in Athens, "simple photography concepts were introduced, and discussion centred around self-expression, strength, and identity".

Figure 3

Figure 4

Do teachers working in a refugee camp include in the learning process refugee student's cultural identities?

Teacher's practices concerning effective learning were detected either by observation or during interviews. Teachers seem to be aware of the background experiences of their students (e.g., prior schooling experience, countries of origin, languages spoken) which indicates their awareness towards the humanitarian aspect of their classroom. Both educators report that collaboration with cultural mediators is crucial, as the latter inform teachers about fu-

ture celebrations and traditional events of the community.

Additionally, teacher's practices show student-centred approaches such as collaborative learning which enables learners to be exposed to unique cultural knowledge that peers offer (as argued by Gurin, Nagda, and Lopez, 2004, as cited in Toyoda, 2016). Teachers refer to the use of art-practices such as music, dance, photographs, drawings etc., and mention the use of visual boards that enhance children's linguistic capital as part of their cultural identity.

Furthermore, teachers report techniques used in the classroom, such as translanguaging towards the encouragement of refugee children to choose in which language they prefer to express themselves. As noted by Garcia, Sylvan & Witt (2011) *translanguaging* is a product of border thinking, of knowledge that is autochthonous and conceived from a bilingual, not monolingual, position.

Another important finding that deals with teachers' practices towards the inclusion of refugee children's cultural identities in the learning environment has to do with the celebration of big traditional events from student's cultural background. Educators report incorporation of these celebrations in the curriculum of the class as an inclusive practice that supports children in the learning environment.

Is the community of people working in a refugee camp interculturally aware?

All four interviewees agree on the importance of celebration of traditional events with refugee people living in the camp. In the classroom , as reported by educators, refugee children are dressed up in festive clothes, and they bring sweets while teachers focus on celebrating with them as part of an inclusive and intercultural approach. As reported by the European Commission, 2020 as cited in Koehler, Palaiologou & Brussino (2022) inclusive education is implemented through individualized

approaches, targeted support and cooperation with families and local communities.

Moreover, it is highlighted by the other two interviewees (midwife and psychologist) that the community of people living in the camp is self-organized concerning these events and generally refugee people are free to propose ideas for celebration to the administrative unit of the camp.

Furthermore, the collaboration between different units inside the camp seems to be a crucial point to this research. On the one hand, educators report that meetings take place once per month and mainly focus on information exchange process with a focus on children's integration in formal schooling in Greece. On the other hand, the psychologist, who works in the psychosocial unit and coordinates protection meetings, refers to frequent community meetings with an open invitation to everyone who lives in the camp and topics chosen either by refugee people or by the administrative unit.

What comes to the collaboration with NGOs and public services outside the camp is successful with a plethora of organizations and professionals collaborating to address refugee people's needs. In detail, as argued by Dimitriadi & Sarantaki (2019) a pluralistic picture emerges with the involvement of various types of actors involved in the reception field.

Limitations

Firstly, it should be underlined that the findings of this small-scale qualitative research cannot be generalized, as it concerns a small-scale sample (4 employees, 23 refugee children). However, the findings of this study can serve for further investigation towards intercultural awareness within refugee communitcin camps, as they are considered as valid findings.

Additionally, it should be noted that there were delays regarding the approval of access to the Schisto camp related to ethical and confidentiality reasons activated by the Directorate of Southern Greece Facilities-Reception and Identification Service as well as work overload. Consequently, the period of the implementation of this research in the field clashed with the Christmas Holidays. Hence, children's low participation in non-formal education program of DRC-NGO resulted in changes in target groups for both refugee students and working staff of the camp.

However, the aforementioned should not undermine the significance of this study, which could be elaborated for future investigation. Considering that within Greece operate several refugee camps, future research could focus on a wider range of participants with an intention to have a broader image of intercultural awareness within the camp's community.

Importance of the findings/further implications

The results of this small-scale study revealed that refugee students bring different dimensions of their cultural identity to the learning environment, especially through art-based activities. According to these findings, children seem to be more affiliated with their mother tongue, as well as their interests and hobbies as part of their cultural identity. Furthermore, clothes, symbols such as flags, and songs are part of refugee children's cultural identities. The most important part of the findings of this research deals with the significance of traditional events and celebrations in children's lives, either as a community practice or as an expression of their cultural identity.

This study also brought up findings concerning teacher's practices towards the inclusion of refugee student's cultural identities in the learning environment. It is indicated that teachers follow student-centred approach-

es, and collaborative methods to place refugee students as active agents of their learning. Additionally, teachers implement a series of non-verbal activities such as circle time, ice-breaking activities etc. and follow an arts-based method which enables both teachers and students to freely express themselves and to identify parts of their cultural identity. Furthermore, emphasis is given to the participation and celebration of traditional events of the community as both teachers mentioned that to acknowledge and celebrate with refugee student's traditional events, it is of high importance in the learning environment and brings them closer to their students.

Similarly, it seems that the rest of the people working in the camp, in different units, acknowledge the obstacles and difficulties for refugee people. For that, they underline the significance of frequent community meetings and refugee people's self-organization towards celebrations and events organized in the camp. Specifically, the administrative unit seems to encourage the community of the camp to share ideas about events and organizes workshops for refugee children inside or outside the camp. Last, findings show that a well-connected system of collaboration between units established in the camp and external organizations and NGOs is in progress and facilitates refugee people's integration in the Greek society.

The above indicates that intercultural awareness constitutes one of the most important factors when discussing intercultural education, and specifically, refugee children living in refugee camps. Along with policies towards an inclusive education, the role of intercultural awareness should be taken into consideration by administrative chiefs of refugee camps by acknowledging, respecting, and acting towards the inclusion of refugee people's cultural background within the community of the camp.

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Reflecting on the Differences in Motivation of Adult Migrants to Participate in Educational Programmes: Implications for Host Countries

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SUMMARY

Adult Education (AE) programmes for migrants' effective integration in the European Union (EU) context have long been at the forefront of the political agenda. Against this backdrop, several may queries arise: Why do migrants participate in AE? Is it for the main reasons that individuals belonging to the general population do, or do the reasons differ significantly? Do participation factors coincide in different EU countries, or do they vary? What are the implications for AE policies? On these grounds, the present quantitative study sought to investigate the motives that drive migrants to participate in educational programmes, through a comparative approach. The study took part in, Greece, and Sweden with a convenient sample of 210 adult migrants having participated or aspiring to participate in language programmes. The results, in alignment with previous research, indicated that extrinsic motivation has a decisive part to play in guiding migrants' participation in AE.

Key words: Migrants, Adult Education, Participation Factors, Motivation.

Introduction

With the numbers of displaced people constantly increasing, multiple challenges arise for migrants' integration and social cohesion in the host countries. Adult Education (AE) is a powerful vehicle for advancing social justice by combating exclusion, fostering equity and equality, (Elken, 2015). Adults constitute the core of society's producers, reproducers, and transformers, and as such, besides human rights, their integration safeguards a non-negligible "human capital" dimension which cannot be sidelined (Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007). Moreover, when engaging in learning initiatives that bear transformative dynamics, individuals can develop an awareness of novel possibilities and perspectives, thereby entering a process for moving towards more complex ways of viewing themselves and where they stand, increasing potentially personal responsibility for the societies they live in (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000).

The optimal integration of migrants is largely determined by their ability to master the language of the host country (Desjardins, 2020), which enables them to reach a much deeper understanding of the host culture and society (Zachrison, 2014). It also makes it easier for them to make sense of their new life situation and enhances social participation (Valtonen, 1998; Muhrman & Anderson, 2021). Understanding therefore the reasons that affect migrants' participation in educational programmes is pivotal in the integration process. However, the bulk of AE research largely draws on economically and educationally privileged learners, disregarding the learning experiences of less privileged individuals (Bridwell, 2012). Against this backdrop, the present quantitative study sought to delve into the motives that drive migrants to take part in educational programmes, through a comparative approach between one of the first countries of entry, Greece, and a Northern European country, Sweden, whereby migrants have undergone a rigorous evaluation process to be granted permission to relocate (European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018).

Migrants' participation in AE: luxury or mandate?

There have been several studies delving into the parameters that influence migrants' participation in AE in host countries (Horverak, Langeland, & Diary, 2020; Muhrman & Anderson, 2021; Taylor, Wingren., Bengs, Katz, & Acquah., 2023). According to Kemuma (2000), positive psychology exerts extensive influence on migrants' participation and learning, largely determined by their sense of identity and openness to the culture of the host country. This is, however, influenced by the vast heterogeneity among different ethnicities, as well as within an ethnic group itself, with varying educational backgrounds, skills, and abilities (Den-

Brok & Levy, 2005). It should also be noted that migrants in the EU are primarily low-skilled individuals that lag and thus demand more targeted approaches (Griva & Panitsides, 2013). It is therefore a sine-qua-non for AE initiatives to accommodate and respect diversity related to migrants' educational, social, and cultural capital (Muhrman & Anderson, 2021).

Taylor et al. (2023) demonstrated that although there are multiple educational policies, services, and guidelines in place, they fail to support migrants' smooth integration. In their qualitative study, they identified various shortcomings mainly related to a) variances in students' knowledge, skills, and experience; b) lack of flexibility in adjusting classwork and materials to suit diverse needs; c) perception of adult migrants as workers, not students, resulting in a disconnect in expectations. The study also outlined that some migrants suffer from serious emotional trauma, which naturally makes it even more difficult to concentrate on learning.

Indeed, the traumatic situations most migrants have lived through could be pivotal for their learning. According to Mezirow (1991), transformative learning and identity formation can result from an inevitable change, such as a life crisis, which often prompts individuals to adopt new and more relevant identities (Morrice, 2014). In general, newly arrived migrants get more favourably inclined towards learning when they start facing the vast challenges of their new life in the host country, such as employment. The loss of one's occupation in his/her country of origin, and consequently the loss of financial independence, has been described as a major motivational factor for joining educational programmes (Bellis & Morrice, 2003; Kemuma, 2000).

Especially motivation to learn the language of the host country is considered a cornerstone in the integration process, as mastering the language is fundamental in enhancing migrants' adjustment and participation in the new socioeco-

nomic environment (Valtonen, 1998; Muhrman & Anderson, 2021; Zachrison, 2014). However, learning in adulthood can be a major challenge, often influenced by negative reinforcement due to lack of respect towards migrants' native languages and cultural backgrounds (Bellis & Morrice, 2003; Horverak, Langeland, & Diary, 2020). The idea that migrants should act like natives in the host country is unrealistic, and that they can do so upon arrival is even more so (Taylor et al., 2023). In their study on migrants' education in Cyprus, a country which has many similarities with the Greek society, Gravani, Hatzopoulos, & Chinas (2021) argue that the AE system has remained monocultural, regardless of the growing presence of a non-native adult population, whilst most often the policies endorsed are underpinned by a narrow conceptualization of integration.

Methodologies that aim to increase intrinsic motivation should be at the forefront of any targeted approach to reach vulnerable social groups (Panitsides & Moutsiou, 2019). Horverak, Langeland, & Diary (2020) suggested a five-step motivation method to support adult migrant learners increase their intrinsic motivation and develop metacognitive and self-development strategies. Its main tools rely on students defining their success factors and obstacles, followed by reflection and class discussions, whereby learners support each other to find solutions and draft strategies to work towards their goals. Peer support through social interaction with other migrants has also been indicated as a predominant factor in facilitating better understanding of the new life situation they find themselves in and the relevant challenges they face (Valtonen, 1998; Muhrman & Anderson, 2021).

Yet, extrinsic motivation cannot be ignored either. Gardner & MacIntyre (1991) investigating the effects of integrative motivation[1] and instrumental motivation[2] in language learning, demonstrated that both integrative and instrumental motivation facilitated and promoted learning. It was also identified that instrumentally motivated students even tended to study longer than non-instrumentally motivated ones.

Aims and scope

In light of the above assumptions, an exploratory quantitative study was conducted with a purposeful sample of migrants in Greece and Sweden, with the aim of recording participants' perceived views on the parameters that motivate them to participate in AE programmes. The research questions guiding this study were:

- What are migrants' perceived views on the motives that drive them to participate in AE programmes?
- Is there any correlation between participants' perceived views and demographic variables?
- Is there any association between participants' perceived views and the host country (Greece and Sweden)?

The study sought to record potentially statistically significant differences between the views expressed to set the basis for further in-depth investigation in subsequent research, as well as to identify areas of interest and poten-

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1   personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group
2   in the form of some reward, monetary in the specific study

tial interventions for both policymakers and stakeholders.

Methods and tools

Sample
The study was conducted with a stratified convenience sample of 210 adult migrants having participated or wishing to participate in language education programmes, in Greece and Sweden.

In Greece, the sample was drawn from the "Closed Controlled Access Centre of Samos", which, according to the Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum[3], was developed with a capacity of 3000 guests.

In Sweden, we were denied permission to access any hosting centres or educational bodies for migrants and thus, participants in the study were reached through snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961), comprising individuals who had already participated in language education programmes. We opted for stratified sampling in order to ensure representation of migrants' ethnic diversification.

It should be noted that the whole procedure was carried out with the help of translators, working at hosting centres for migrants in Greece and Sweden. The participants' consent was obtained after they were duly informed about the purpose of the study, while it was explicitly stated that participation was entirely voluntary and that their anonymity would be ensured. In Greece, the questionnaires were administered by the researchers at the premises of "Samos Volunteers" and "Just Action" NGOs, whilst in Sweden, the questionnaires were administered online.

It is worth reiterating that several limitations emanated from the fact that migrants are a research population difficult to reach, whilst a strict bureaucratic procedure had to be followed to be granted permission to conduct the research, which in the case of Sweden was not given. Besides being time-consuming, the sampling process posed significant methodological limitations, as the researchers did not have direct and full access to the population. Hence, our results are limited as per size and convenience sampling, which restricted both statistical analyses and the generalization of the findings. Moreover, it should be stressed that the results merely reflect the subjective views of the respondents.

Measures
To conduct the study, the questionnaire was structured in two sections: the first consisted of demographic data, while the second consisted of 11 closed items/statements[4], relying on the Participation-Reasons-Barriers (PRB) (Karalis, 2018) scale, which underwent adjustments to reflect the specific context, aims, and limitations of the study.

PRB comprises 14 items related to motivation, falling under "professional advancement", certification", "interest in learning" "personal/family life" "social participation" and 22 items related to barriers (Karalis, 2018). In the present study, only 11 items related to motivational factors for participating in AE were included, as more relative to the specific population. PRB underwent translation from the "source language" (Greek) to the "target languages" (English and Swedish). Multiple translators were employed to avoid personal misinterpretations and ensure linguistic and conceptual accuracy.

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3   https://migration.gov.gr/en/ked-samoy-kleisti-elegchomeni-domi-samoy/
4   these being less time-consuming and eliciting more manageable responses

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS (Version 22). The significance level of all statistical tests was predetermined at 0.01. The data initially underwent analysis by descriptive statistical methods to construct frequency tables. At the second stage, inferential statistical analyses were conducted to compare inmates' views with demographics.

Results

Respondents' Profile

The participants in the sample (Table 1) who were hosted in Sweden were slightly more (53.3%) than those hosted in Greece (46.7%), whilst most of them were women (60.9%). The vast majority were married (60.5%), with children (58.1%), but there was a significant percentage of singles (30.5%) as well. The educational background of the respondents presented significant diversity with almost half of them having no or lower education (46.2%, No Education/Not graduated from Elementary school/Elementary school), while on the other hand there was a high percentage of Higher Education graduates (24.3%) and an impressive 17.1% having Master's Degrees and even PhD holders (2.4%). Finally, as regards prior participation in adult education, the majority of participants (56.7%) reported that this was their first time, but there was also a significant percentage (42.9%) who had previously attended AE programmes.

Demographic characteristics	Profile	n	%
Host Country	Greece	98	46.7
	Sweden	112	53.3
Sex	Male	94	44.8
	Female	116	55.2
Marital Status	Married	127	60.5
	Single	64	30.5
	Divorced	18	8.5
	Widowed	1	0.5
Parents of children under 18y	Yes	122	58.1
	No	88	48.9
Educational background	No Education	35	16.7
	Not graduated from Elementary school	42	20.0
	Elementary school	20	9.5
	High school	13	6.2
	Vocational Education	7	3.4
	University	51	24.3
	Master's Degree	36	17.1
	PhD	5	2.4
Prior participation in AE programmes	Yes	90	42.9
	No	119	56.7

Table 1. Profile of participants in the sample

What motivates migrants to participate in AE? What should be noted is that most respondents (89.9%) stated that they would like to participate in an educational program in the next 12 months, to improve their knowledge and skills (Fig. 1).

The perceived views of respondents about the reasons that influenced or influence their participation in AE are depicted in Fig. 2.

Quite predictably, "to start a better future" was selected by most of the respondents (51%) as the primary reason for participating in AE, followed by their aspiration to find a bet-ter job (11.4%), and of course, to improve their financial situation (10%). Quite interestingly, they were also concerned about setting a good example for their children (10.5%).

To determine whether there was any correlation between age and participation in adult educational programmes, the Kruskal Wallis test was used. The results, depicted in Table 2, have indicated that there is a statistically significant correlation (p <0.001, H = 46.150, df = 1), denoting that participation in AE is influenced by the age of the respondents.

For the next 12 months you would like to participate in an educational program to improve your knowledge and skills

Yes
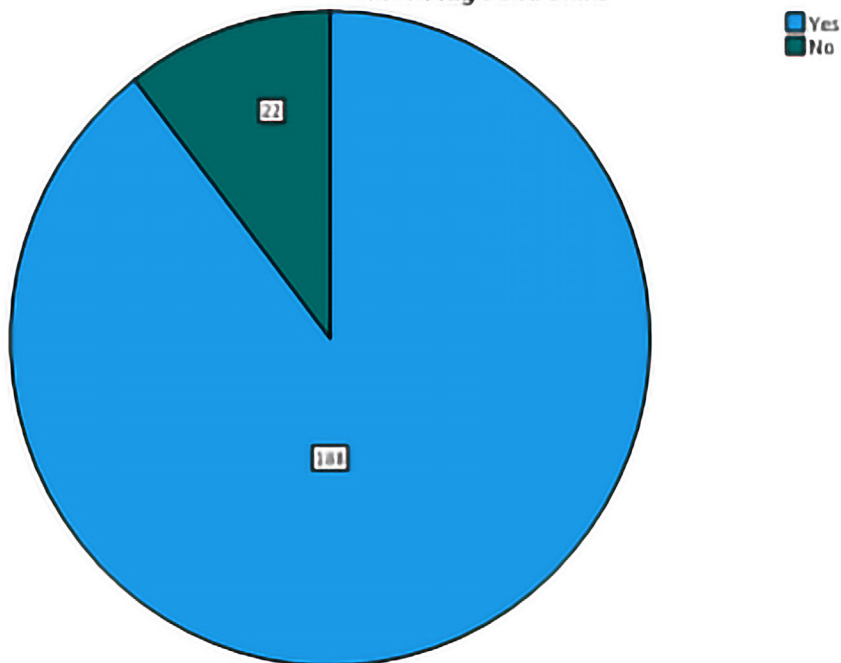No

22

181

Fig. 1. Intention to participate in AE programmes
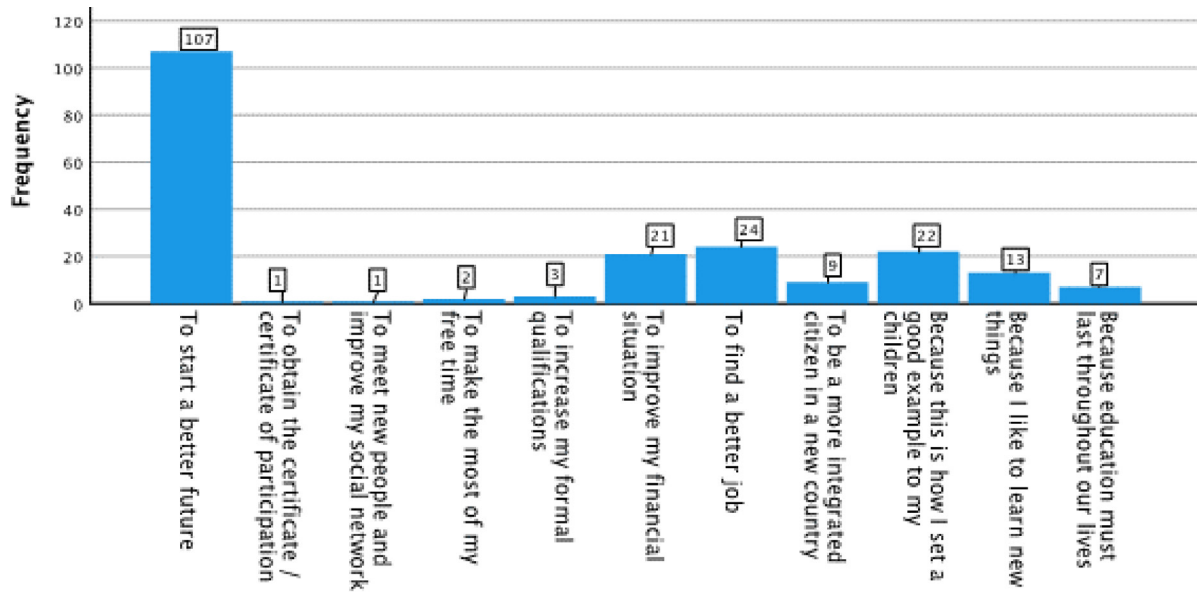
Fig 2. Factors that influenced or influence respondents' participation in AE

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Year of birth:
Kruskal-Wallis H	46.150
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Previous Experience

Table 2. Correlation between participation in AE and age

In the following diagram (Fig.3), we have depicted respondents' perceived views about the reasons that influenced or influence their participation in adult education, in relation to their age. What can be clearly identified is the prominent role of their aspiration to "start a better future", which is significantly increased for younger migrants (born from 1990 onwards)
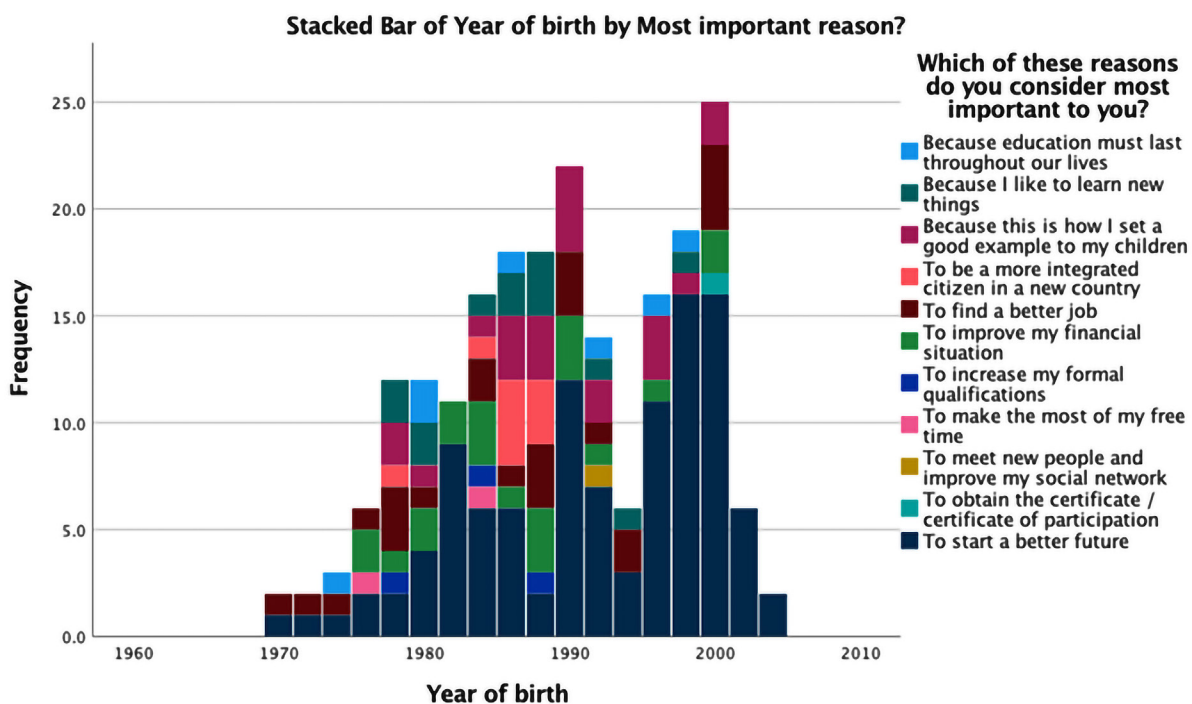

*Fig. 3. Factors that influenced or influence respondents' participation
in AEin relation to their age*

Comparative Analysis as regards migrants' host country: Greece & Sweden

Do motivational factors coincide in different EU countries, or do they vary? It was therefore worth investigating the role of the host country in respondents' perceived views about participation in AE. Fig. 4 depicts the wide differences recorded between respondents in Greece and Sweden, as 76 out of 98 participants in Greece selected "to start a better future" as the primary motivational factor for attending AE programmes, whereas in Sweden, the equivalent figure was 31 out of 112 respondents. In general, in Sweden the perceived views of respondents were more balanced with the second more popular motivational factor being "to find a new job" (21 individuals).

This difference was further investigated by Spearman's rho, which indicated a negative correlation (-0.593, p<0.001) between the factor "to start a new future" and respondents in Sweden (Table 3). Whilst this was the migrants' primary motivational factor in Greece, this was not the case in Sweden.

We also investigated the differences in the educational background of the respondents, as well as that of their parents. Apparently, the educational background of respondents in Greece was very low, whereas those hosted in Sweden had accomplished a significantly higher educational level. Most respondents in Greece (94 out of 98) had barely graduated from primary school (no education, dropped out or graduated from primary school), compared to the impressive 90 out of 112 respondents in Sweden who had Higher Education Degrees (graduated from College, University or even completed post-graduate studies) (Fig. 5). The same applied to their parents' educational background, with the parents of migrants in Greece having particularly low educational level (Fig. 6).
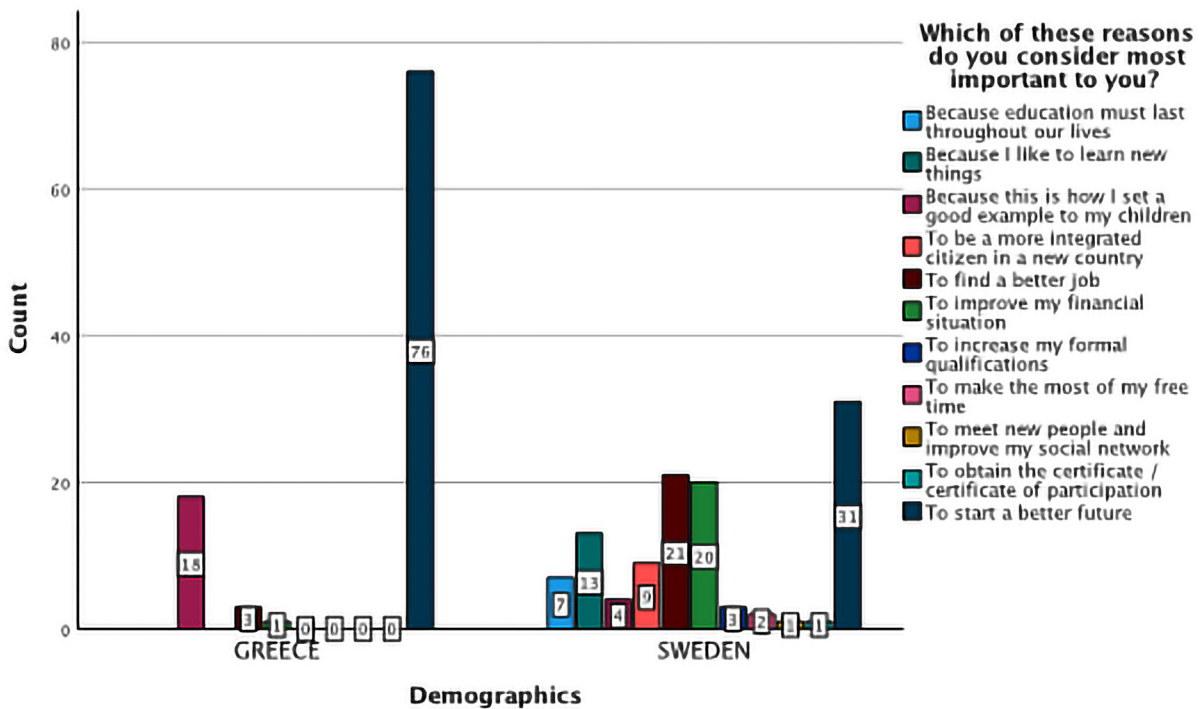
Fig. 4. Differences recorded between respondents in Greece and Sweden

Correlations

			Demographics	Which of these reasons do you consider most important
Spearman's rho	Demographics-Coded	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.593[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	210	209
	Which of these reasons do you consider most important	Correlation Coefficient	-.593[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	209	209

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Correlation between host country and main motivational factor

Fig 5. Educational background of respondents in Greece and Sweden

Educational level of parents (Mother) by Demographics

Fig 6. Educational background of respondents' parents in Greece and Sweden

Discussion & Conclusions

Hence, what motivates migrants to participate in AE? Our results indicated that to get a chance to start a better future, equipped with more knowledge and skills which will get them into employment, and improve their financial situation, while setting a good example for their children, are the main motivators for attending AE programmes. Our findings come in line with relev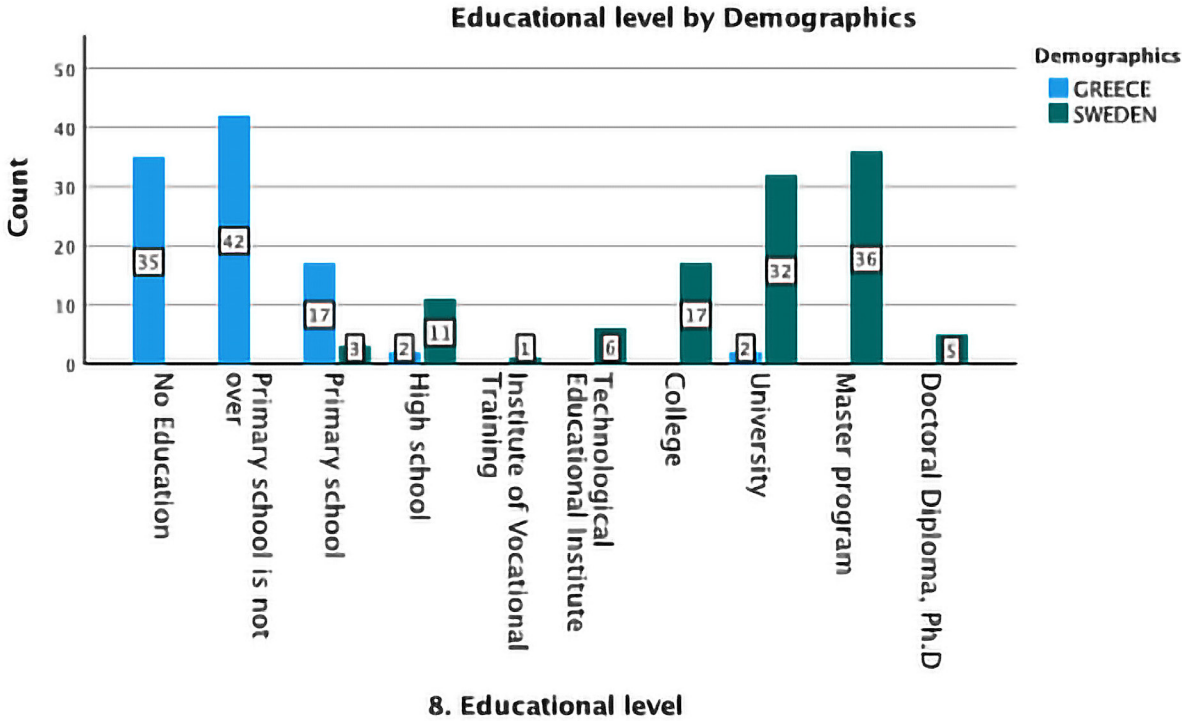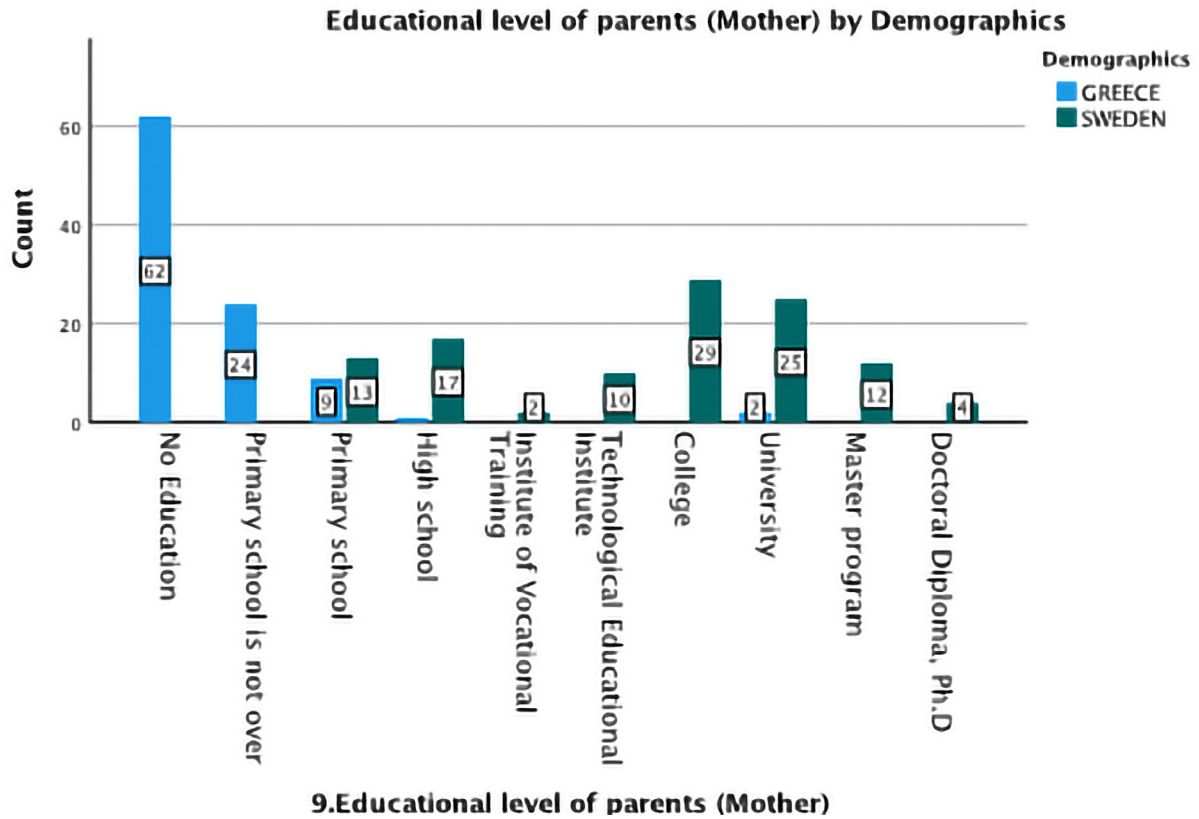ant literature (Bellis & Morrice, 2003; Kemuma, 2000; Taylor et al., 2023), positing that newly arrived migrants get favourably inclined towards AE upon facing the vast challenges of their new life, indicating employment and financial independence as the major motivational factors. Respondents' eagerness

to join AE programmes in the future to enhance their knowledge and skills was also anticipated, considering the challenges lying ahead for their settlement.

It can therefore be assumed that migrants are mainly goal oriented (Houle, 1961), prioritizing factors related to outcome expectancies (Bandura, 1977), such as better prospects for getting into employment to ensure a better future, especially when it comes to younger migrants (born from 1990 onwards). Extrinsic/instrumental motivation plays thus a decisive role in migrants' participation in AE, which also comes in line with relevant research (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). The emphasis on extrinsic motivational factors, however, contradicts findings of relevant research conducted in general

population, whereby intrinsic motivation, such as "interest in learning" was highlighted as one of the strongest motivators (Karalis, 2018).

Yet, what was most striking in our results was the heterogeneity of respondents between Greece and Sweden. The fact that there is a great deal of heterogeneity among migrants, with educational background and skills varying from individual to individual has been highlighted by relevant research (Den-Brok & Levy, 2005; Taylor, et al., 2023). Our results though have indicated that migrants in Sweden and migrants in Greece are two distinct groups, with those in Sweden having a solid educational background, coming from families with a high education level, too. Conversely, their counterparts in Greece, both them and their families, have a particularly low educational background. The results from the comparative analysis demonstrated that these differences influence motivational factors and participation in AE. In this respect, further attention should be drawn to the source of this heterogeneity. It could be assumed that it originates from EU policies which grant European countries the right to allow or deny the relocation of migrants, following a screening process that relies on criteria they set themselves[5] (European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018). These practices practically constrain low-skilled migrants in the entry points[6], while the skilled ones, and thus easier to integrate, relocate to Northern European countries. It is clearly an issue with weighty implications for all, societies, economies, and individuals, and of course for solidarity in the EU.

The important aspect in the present exploratory study, although limited in scope, was the fact that it enabled migrants' views in different countries to be recorded, compared, and taken into account in the future design and implementation of education programmes. Our results further elucidated the multidimensionality of the factors that influence migrants' participation in AE, confirming the assumption that different motives operate among different individuals, depending on personal traits and given situation. Yet, our findings are limited by our sample and methods, and need to be tested with larger samples and through combined methodological approaches, to avoid linear simplifications.

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5   i.e. in the case of Sweden, security checks were conducted

6   i.e. Greece and Italy

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When Women Refugees Confront their Past and regain their Future in a Transformative Way

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ABSTRACT

Physical survival in extreme situations, mostly depends on the help someone can get from the outside world. First step could be fleeing from the danger. However, life ahead is hardly described or imagined ever safe or easy. The initial challenges for women refugees could first be seen at the temporary settlements (after an unquestionably traumatic journey) and are depending greatly on various circumstances (i.e., age, family, education etc.) in addition to typically inadequate accommodation, health, and educational facilities. Nonetheless, the profound impact of those women's journey on their well-being, needs of treatment, therapy, care, monitoring, sense of safety and trust, empowerment, opportunities for work, education, and transformation even in their exile. Foundational principles related to the philosophy of critical thinking, creative dialogue, critical reflection, and the importance of relationships in learning that can result in their emancipation and social action could be considered necessary.

Keywords: Women Refugees, Trauma, Reflective Dialogue, Transformative Learning.

Women Refugees and displaced

All the refugees and displaced individuals, but specifically women refugees, are usually confined within their own suffering in survival mode. Their traumatic experiences create humiliation, suspicion, mistrust, and fear to confront their past and dream of a better future. Their competence to think and reflect on upheld assumptions is presumably limited and needs to be revised and enhanced in a recuperation setting. It is likely, however, that the time available in a setting such as in a camp the necessity of a survival strategy could allow a psychological numbing with suppressed or reduced anxiety (UNHCR, 2020).

Help from the hosting countries and communities will always be insufficient, because there can be no one that can meet all the requirements of such large groups of traumatized people. Usually, people become refugees because of socio-political factors and their primary needs in the asylum country entail safety, shelter, food, medical care, granted asylum, family reunion, work opportunities and regeneration of their lives (IPOL, 2021). Therefore, the environment where they will settle, is of vital importance. It is recognized that the reaction to stress is related to its intensity, repeatability, and duration of the traumatic experiences. Additionally, post-traumatic mental health issues combined with the lack of

education and many times their illiteracy, assemble great barriers to their reinstatement. Therefore, the question here is 'how specialists can find a way, an attitude, to support migrants learning' and moreover, empower their coping strategies (Eschenbacher, 2020).

Throughout the years, there have been several dilemmas in the treatment of vulnerable persons, such as women refugees and displaced. Research shows that the most successful projects have been envisioned and organized outside institutions and health care system (Lavic et al., 1996). Re-establishing personal, social, and even professional functions for these vulnerable individuals, to the greatest possible extent , can be a complicated and lengthy process which necessitates the collaboration of a multidisciplinary team. A team that aims to an active, and independent life in the society and community. Medical, psychological, social and professional (i.e. occupational orientation) are equally important components that are needed to transform the existing damage to an adequate wellbeing.

As Cranton (1996) asserts, during the process toward Transformative Learning, the individual needs to recede and examine the self from the outside position. Questioning, thinking, reflecting, confronting its past cannot be simple. An effective adult educator could possibly facilitate such an emancipatory strategy for those women to change perceptions, assumptions, and beliefs associated primarily with traumatic conditions.

Critical Theory as a holistic approach to reintegration

The ultimate aim is towards a holistic approach for an educative work within an interdisciplinary team that is based on an introspective understanding that integrates self- and cultural reflection. In other words, educating women ref-

ugee population, to have a critical view of society and the world. When you educate marginalized groups of society, such as the vulnerable human beings with a refugees' and therefore a traumatic background, about their own potential, showing them that they have the power to change themselves and the world around them for the better.

Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed as a tool that transforms trauma into power.
Emanating from Freirean empowering education is a critical-democratic pedagogy focused on interaction and active intervention. It approaches the development of the individual as an active, collaborative, and social process enabled by the inherent interdependence of the individual in society (Papathanasiou, 2023). McLaren describes the pedagogy of empowerment as the process by which students learn to approach knowledge and aim critically to broaden their understanding of themselves, the society in which they live and beyond and, ultimately, its possible transformational cultural lifestyle (Shor, 1992, pp. 16-18).

It is obvious that Freire (1984) perceives the educational process in relation to the influence of the existing power structure as a process of confrontation and conflict of interests. He argues that various kinds of power use education to *reproduce* the oppressive ideologies that prevail in the space-time environment at the expense of the popular masses and against which the educator must take a stand.

As a result, the basic demand of Freire's theory is education for all, with the aim of freeing the population from all forms of oppression and inequality in order to achieve the transformation of society (Morrow & Torres, 2002, p.116). Deepening our study, we recognize that Freire perceives education as a political act and not a mere transmission of knowledge and skills—a sociological experience (Shor, 1992; Guadiano & de Alba, 1994, p. 132) which, as a transformative act, is constructed by ordinary

people who are given the opportunity to work out their potential in a collective political-social context (Guadiano & de Alba, 1994, p.132-3). There, based on dialogue and communication, critical awareness emerges in a progressive process of self-liberation and collective liberation (Freire, 1976, pp.158-9). Therefore, in order to solve the educational problems/difficulties of his/her students, the educator should look for solutions in the general cultural, historical, economic, and political context of each society (Darder, 2002, p. 35), utilizing the experiences –even traumatic ones– that the learners bring at all levels to be critically processed with the help of the active participation (Freire, 1985, p. xx). That processing is accomplished, both by introducing the topics of interest to learners in the learning process for reflection and, through a structured dialogue with clear goals, rules, and directions, elucidating how to understand reality and seek their transformation (Freire, 1977, pp. 101-109). In Freire's (1976, p. 20) pedagogy, the educator isn't a simple transmitter of knowledge addressed to passive recipients. Rather, they act as leaders that create the conditions for an effective search for knowledge by learners, to strengthen their curiosity; their questions and energy; and to encourage constructive dialogue aimed at awareness and liberation (Freire, 1976, pp.76-90); and ultimately to drive action and change.

According to Freire (1970), Pedagogy of the Oppressed, is a dialogic teaching method where all actors share, exchange, construct knowledge through constant dialogue and all subjects are taught in a manner that connects every academic discipline to the reality and interests of the participants. In this way, the vulnerable actors are encouraged to pursue self-reflection, self-improvement, critical thinking, and socioeconomic and class awareness, thus overriding their "predetermined" present and future (Eschenbacher, 2020).

As can be seen, there are two foundational elements of Freire's theory, recognized as its pillars in their transformative action for the women refugees as an integral part of the vulnerable person's community. Those are dialogues (face to face) and "critical awareness" in the process of which learners, as learning subjects, gain insight, not only of the reality that shapes and surrounds their lives, but also of their ability to transform, reshape and recognize this reality, and the choices that are opened to them (Freire, 1977, pp.74-84, 1985, pp. 72-80). Freirean dialogue nurtures love, humility, hope, faith, trust, and critical thinking/contemplation (1976, p.114), and is directed from action to thought and, from there, to *new* action (Perry, 2000, p.17).

In addition, Freire developed a model of literacy, based on the evolution of the cultural circles of the Popular Education movement, which flourished in Brazil in the 1950s (Freire,1972). In Freire's methodology of "Dialogical Problem-Posing", where knowledge is sought collectively through dialogue and critical thinking, and is not transmitted, and follows three interrelated stages:

a. *Discovering the "generating themes",*
b. *Codification, and*
c. *Reflection.*

The first stage is when a problem that derives from a person's context and concerns is posed for inquiry. Learners then begin 'Codifying and Decodifying' almost instinctively, their prior experiences and knowledge and consequently new knowledge is acquired. Actors' critical awareness of existing issues leads, according to Freire (1974, p.46-54), to critical conscientization which ultimately empowers them. The third stage, that of Reflection, coincides with social action. Freire considered this stage as the best way to maintain meaningful communication. Through the completion of

the three stages, learners can achieve awareness, that is, they can then understand how their view of the world and their place in it was formed by social and historical powers that ultimately operate at their expense (Freire, 1972). The novelty of Freire's theory lies in the belief that adult learners, once they realize the conditions in which they live, will act with the aim of social change by overthrowing the existing order. Freire believed that the goal of learning is to lead individuals to emancipation and consequently to the change of social structures (Freire, 1973).

The central proposition of his theory, that no education is neutral but rather a political instrument, has been criticized. In Jarvis' view, Freire's theory is treated primarily as political, argument rather than as a theory of adult education. It is also questionable whether this model can be transferred to Western societies, as the conditions (political, socioeconomic, and cultural) are quite different from those in Latin America. However, Freire's theory, despite the criticism it has received, has influenced many contemporary scholars of adult education such as Mezirow and Jarvis, who also believe that education should lead to emancipation (Freire, 1998).

Mezirow's Transformation Theory: from Trauma to Hope

When studying Transformative Learning theory (TL), one would find that in the related streams of adult learning that there is a concomitant plethora of perspectives that span a very broad range of foci in social-science research: "rational vs. extra-rational processes, the individual vs. social change, autonomous vs. relational learning, and many others …" (Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p.3) with similar outcomes in learning. It is, however, a continually

evolving adult learning theory in the complex field of adult education that allows educators to inspire their diverse learners through their self-directed learning paths toward and to transformation.

Beginning in the past two decades of the 20th Century, Jack Mezirow contributed to the complicated domain of Adult Education, the theory of Transformative Learning that offered both the educator and the learner who follow its precepts the opportunity—and challenge—of profoundly revising the way they see and make meaning of the world. This through a process of serially correcting now dysfunctional assumptions that were acquired, often unconsciously, in earlier years so that they are replaced by ones that are more open, permeable and in harmony with the operational reality in which the person lives. Within its lens, learning may be defined as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action, what we perceive and fail to perceive, and what we think and fail to think, that earlier were powerfully influenced by ingrained habits of expectation that constitute our frame of reference—a set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret our experiences" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1, 1991, p.11).

Mezirow defined transformative learning as a process of reflective transformation in a specific frame of reference in which "all of a person's mental habits are challenged and subject for possible revision so as not to be a hindrance to the evolution of life" (1991, p. 196). Based on this logic, he considered it necessary for the learner to reflect and then redefine and transform the personal perceptions which have been adopted through experience, even the most traumatic ones. More specifically, Mezirow stated that "transformational learning refers to the process by which we transform given mental sets to make them more inclusive,

diverse, open, emotionally ready for change through critical reflection, in order to generate beliefs and perceptions and to proceed for action based on the new perception that has emerged" (2003b, p. 58-59, 2007b, p. 47). Furthermore, "Transformational learning" is a term that describes a learning process in which "one critically realizes one's own established positions and assumptions as well as those of others and then evaluates their relevance in order to construct an interpretation." (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4).

As a frame of reference, Mezirow defines "the cultural, ethical, philosophical and linguistic structures through which we give meaning by giving coherence and importance to our experiences. He sees two aspects—the mental habits and the assumptions that derive from them" (2009, p. 128). *Mental habits* have been defined as the specific way in which a person thinks, feels and acts influenced by the above-mentioned structures, and which are structural elements of a person's personality and change with much greater difficulty from the previous perceptions and assumptions that are, themselves, comprised of clusters of beliefs, feelings, judgments and consequent behaviours (Mezirow, 1991, 2007b). They are among the principal components of TL theory and identified as precisely what needs to change for transformational learning to occur.

The next element, similarly, essential for the theory, is what Mezirow bequeathed to the next generations as the ground elements of critical reflection, the critical perception that a person has of him/herself (critical self-reflection) and rational, dialogue-discourse. These two, critical reflection and rational dialogue, have been placed at the centre of Mezirow's theory (1990, 1991) and are perhaps the most important conditions contributing to the process of transformational learning.

It is acknowledged that Mezirow was not the first to refer to critical reflection as a significant element in adult education. Some references to it are found even in the works of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (Kokkos, 2010). Specifically, he stated in detail that with critical reflection we do not just look back at experiences, events, attitudes, emotions, but proceed to a critical evaluation of them (Kokkos, 2019). In this way, critical reflection becomes the means for re-examining, understanding, controlling, and redefining past experiences. By this process, the individual tries to recognize, evaluate, and reshape any problematic attitudes or views held in relation to the content, the process, and the premise of previous knowledge (Mezirow, 1991, p. 107-108).

Mezirow holds that "[r]eflective discourse and its resulting insight alone do not achieve TL. Acting upon emancipatory insights, praxis is also necessary" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 12). Social action, in some form and in certain contexts, to change distorted meanings and assumptions can also be the purpose of a "consciousness-raising group" in settings as even in a refugee camp and/or accommodation centre (1991, p. 181). A direct correlation between individual and social life is evident in many of Mezirow's written texts; he considers the process of transformation to be a personal affair, but one that also requires the acquisition and exercise of social skills. Transformational learning requires risk-taking, as well as a willingness to be vulnerable and to accept our perceptions and mentality being strongly challenged (Dirkx, 1998).

Thinking and reflecting cannot be *taught* from one day to the other. But they can be *practised*, grown, and nurtured. Women refugees, as in this case of discussion, should have the opportunity to ask questions, to think, to reflect, to reason, to decide, and act. This whole process reflects the thinking of the human mind. The key to deep thinking, then, would be to ask dynamic questions, reflect on one's own and on others' ideas, perceptions, and assump-

tions, and explore multiple possible answers, as there cannot be only one in each case in each time frame and context. The power of thought is fuelled by the dynamics of our questions that, in turn, direct the search for different paths that may or may not be based on experiences that may be personal or not, previous, or new ones. Such a way can be considered rather risky in regard to the intense symptoms of agitation, distrust, fear, unreal expectations that refugees and displaced individuals, in addition to gender inequalities. Nonetheless, when their immediate needs are gratified and the realistic material sources are allocated, then trust, as perhaps the most vital variable, needs to be substantially evident, first individually and gradually in a group setting where small communities can be generated.

Socrates, thousands of years ago, signified that participating in a dialogue is examining possibilities, discovering alternatives, recognizing the perspective of others, and creating a community of inquiry where everyone and each idea and question has value and discussion acts therapeutically. Actors' questions are drawn to provoke deep thinking into dialogue and make the learners responsible for looking at a perplexing question from different angles. The internal or external dialogue that is born from the question or questions can become the spark to ignite new learning and hope for the future. That must optimally occur in a safe environment, conducive to fresh thinking and dialogue, where learners discuss, think, express themselves freely and learn that the power lies not in each of us individually but in the interaction of the participants.

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Aristotle's critical questions as the beginning of Critical Questions in the work of Freire, Mezirow and Brookfield: Transformative Emancipatory Adult Education and Rhetoric Art

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to highlight, on the one hand, the logical basis of the critical questions in the work of Freire, Mezirow and Brookfield, which goes back to Ancient Greek Literature and in particular to Aristotelian Philosophy and Logic, and on the other hand, the importance of Rhetorical Art in the context of Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education. First, the relationship between the critical questions of these 3 thinkers and the critical questions, which originate from Aristo'le's 10 Categories, is explored. Then, the contribution of Aristotelian and Sophistic Rhetoric is highlighted through an indicative Example of Transformative Learning in Adult-Teacher Education. The research, text-centred method is used, as well as active techniques of exploratory and discovery learning, in combination with the aut'or's experiential experience from Education-Teacher Training. From the above research, it appears that the critical questions in the work of P.Freire, J.Mezirow and St. Brookfield originate from and are in absolute correspondence with Aristo'le's 10 Categories, as well as the fact that Rhetorical Art is a dynamic means of activating critical reflection and, by extension, the transformation of dysfunctional assumptions of adult learners.

Key words: Transformative Learning, Adult Education, Critical Questions, Aristotelian Philosophy, Rhetoric.

Introduction

The concept of critical reflection as the basis of Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education is absolutely intertwined with the formulation of appropriate critical questions in the Theory of all three main thinkers of Adult Education, Freire, Mezirow and Brookfield. As we know, critical thinking requires the critical re-examination of our beliefs, upon which all our beliefs are built. It can be expressed by drawing conclusions, generalizations, analogies, clarifications, comparisons, evaluations, the process of solving problems, etc. (Mezirow, 1990, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2009. Ματσαγγούρας, 2007), in an effort to search mainly for "why"" and for "how"".

These questions, to be critical, should:

- to be open and to encourage / accept the expression of many points of view and not only of their author
- to address all trainees
- to raise critical social reflection, enabling critical dialogue, reflection and reflection to begin.
- to organize the topic around some thematic axes (focuses)
- aim to detect the parameters that influence our perceptions,
- to provide triggers for deepening and multidimensional reflection, for comparisons, searches, investigation of different perspectives and re-evaluation of the factors that shaped (and continue to shape) the individual frame of reference of trainees (Κόκκος, 2017a, 2017b; Mezirow, 2007; Μελισσαράτος 2023).
- form a background of thinking, which in the future can lead to action.

In the theory of the three thinkers, elements of pre-Socratic ontological questions, of Socrates' midwifery, but, above all, of Aristotle's 10 Categories can be detected. These similarities and the interest in highlighting the logical basis of critical questions, which refers directly to Aristotle, formed the starting point of our reflection on the preparation of this paper. In their attempt to combine Transformative Learning, Critical Theory with Logic, the three Theorists use, basically, Aristotelian schemes. In fact, their critical questions are a reformulation of Aristo'le's 10 Categories, which we will present below, with the necessary correspondences, through illustrative examples of application.

The 10 Categories of Aristotle and the critical questions of Freire, Mezirow, and Brookfield

Aristotle (384-322 BC), an ancient Greek Philosopher, writer and scientist, in his attempt to
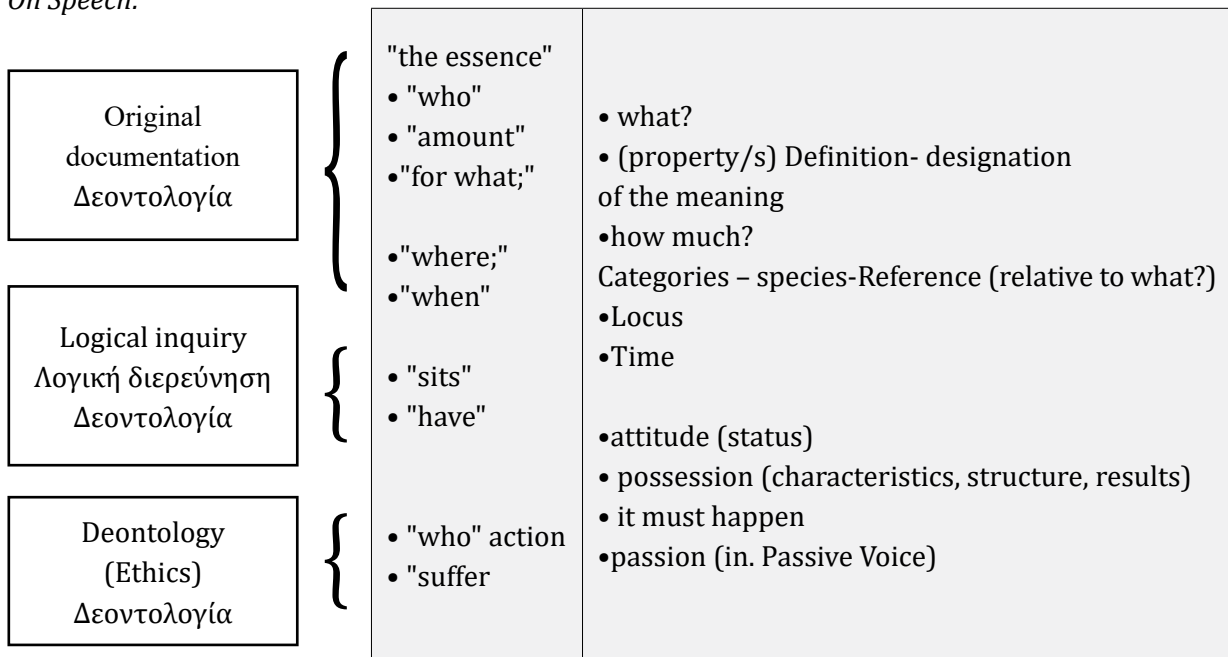
On Speech:

Figure 1: Aristotle's 10 Categories

reach the depth and truth of a concept, defined specific criteria for its determination, the Categories of its semantic approach, in the homonymous Chapter *Categories,* 1.4. of his work.

Based on the table below, we notice that Aristotle's 10 Categories are in correspondence with the critical questions of the three thinkers, as all the Categories are included in them. We could say that they are a reformulation of Aristotle's 10 Categories. We would use a passage from N. Kazantzakis' novel, Captain Michalis, which constitutes a special case of non-formal adult education. Based on this passage, we will highlight the correspondences of critical questions in the work of Freire, Mezirow and Brookfield with Aristotle's 10 Categories. Kazantzakis' grandfather, Captain Michalis, (Καζαντζάκης, 1962), wants to learn how to read and write in his old age and asks his grandson, Thrasaki, to teach him letters:

N. Kazantzakis, *Captain Michalis* (excerpt):

«...The old Sifakas bent over the tablet, holding the pen as lightly as he could, so as not to break it, and wrote one by one struggling with the alphabet. who was resisting, managed to move beyond the yotes and now draw beautifully, cleanly all the capitals...

Today, Thrasaki, said the old man, you will not complain, I have learned my lesson, by heart. Look over here!

He said and proudly showed the plate, full of capitals.

- the whole alphabet! the grandfather did, boasting everyone from the alpha to the omega.

- Well done grandpa! Today I give you a ten! How did you do it all of a sudden?

- The weather won't take me anymore My brave, I stubbornly pressed on. And now the time has come, hear my secret. Do you know why I wanted now in my old age to learn the letters? To read, you dare? You're not bored! I'm a hun-

dred years old, I know everything, and I know nothing, my purpose was different.

-Other; Who, grandpa?

- Teach me to write one thing, one thing only, my Brave, so that I don't die before I learn it.

- What thing?

- Here's a Cretan conversation - put your little hand over my hand, I'll lead it - teach it to write these three words.

Grandfather lowered his voice:

"Freedom or Death".

- Ah! shouted Thrasaki, that's why! Now I see!

- You still don't understand, my Brave, take your time and you'll see. Wait, I was driving my dick.

Thrasaki took hold of the grandfather's wooden, weathered hand with both hands and began to drive slowly, patiently, and to carve on the slab, in bold capital letters:

"FREEDOM OR DEATH".

The correspondences of Aristotle's 10 Categories and the critical questions of the 3 thinkers

The correspondences of Aristotle's 10 Categories and the critical questions of the 3 thinkers are as follows:

Aristotle's 10 Categories and Freire's critical questions

When Freire emphasizes that the dialogue between the trainer and the trainees is a dialectical, democratic relationship, which must take into account their problems, needs, experiences and be connected to critical questions of the type: -What? Why; For what purpose? By whom, for whom? Against whom /at the expense of whom? etc. directly restates Aristotle's 10 Categories.

However, if the adult educator knows Freire's technique, he could also use sketches to visualize the concepts in each case study or lead the learners to represent them in their own way. In addition, Freire enriched the dialogue with the Practice of Coding and Decoding, utilizing mainly sketches, which were related to the experiential experience of the trainees and the so-called "productive" words. Through this educational play with words, which is more a

Aristotle

		What is the topic of the text? What is **literacy** and What is **illiteracy**? What does **school** mean?

"the essence"/
• "who"
	• what?
	• (property/s)
	Definition- designation
	of the meaning
		In dictionaries based on
		    experiential
		    experience
		
		How do you understand the concept?
		---------------------------- 	

• "amount"	•how much? Categories – species-	2. What forms can it take? How is the necessity of literacy manifested? To what extent is it manifested?
•"for what;"	Reference (relative to what?)	In his old age he wants to learn from school, he considers it a deficit that he did not learn school How necessary it is (attitude)
•"where;"	•Locus	**What is pedagogy considered?** **(On what factors does the Education of each person** **depend?** **What elements determine what each time?)**
•"when"	•Time	
• "sits" • "have"	•attitude (status) • possession (characteristics, structure, results)	**Who benefits from illiteracy?** **Where can one learn letters?** **When ?** **In what way;**
"who" action		
"suffer	• it must happen	**What are the consequences?** **of illiteracy?**
	•passion (in. Passive Voice)	**What must be done, to** **are there no illiterates?** **What are the possible consequences of illiteracy?**

Figure 2: The correspondences of Aristotle's 10 Categories and Freire' s critical questions

technique of Plato (Πλάτων, 1992) and not of Aristotle, he helped them to better understand the world around them, leading them to take initiatives for society (Freire, 2006), so that she can be transformed and become more just.

This dialogue was again based on critical questions, which refer us to Aristotle's Categories.

Freire

	These words function as «productive» words	
		The concept of Pedagogy, of Lifelong Learning, the necessity of literacy and school's
	--------------------------------------	------------------
	(in terms of the psychology of the small child and in terms of the psychology of the adult The school is examined by the grandfather's willingness to learn letters)	

Aristotle's 10 Categories and Mezirow's critical questions

Jack Mezirow's Theory of Transformation, supported by the critical review of dysfunctional assumptions and the emancipation of learners (Κόκκος, 2019) is led to formulate critical questions that cover the full spectrum of a problem. Its investigation and resolution is done with a comprehensive view, through critical questions, which are derived from Aristotle's 10 Categories, focusing mainly on "how" and "why", with the aim of a more creative and objective perception of reality and action based on new, transformed perceptions (Κόκκος, 2017β; Ραμουτσάκη, 2021).

Putting the adult trainer not only to motivate the trainees in social action, but also to have an active role in the social struggles for the consolidation of Democracy, introduces the concept of "cultural activist". However, in order to reach this level himself, self-criticism and introspection is required by using corresponding critical questions: It is no coincidence that Mezirow distinguishes 10 steps in the transformational process, as many as Aristotle's 10 categories, but also the 3 forms of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1998; Κόκκος, 2019; Ραμουτσάκη, 2021):

a. *Reflection on the content:*
b. *Reflection on the process: how and how effectively do we carry out the above actions? And*
c. *investigation of the biographical, cultural, social causes, on the basis of which we think in the specific way*

(e.g. the values and perceptions we have been shaped by our environment in the past lead us to possible wrong/inadequate/exaggerated or right judgments/perceptions about a subject) and the consequences of that judgment/valuation fits perfectly with the tripartite division of the 10 Categories into:

a. *original documentation*
b. *logical inquiry (deeper inquiry, which includes how and how much)*
c. *ethical approach (what should be done)*

The Three Types of critical meditation according to Mezirow

	Aristotle		Mezirow
Original documentation	"the essence" • "who" • "amount" •"for what;" •"where;" •"when"	1. A disorienting dilemma. 2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame. 3. Critical evaluation of epistemological, socio-cultural and psychological assumptions. 4. Acknowledging that others share the frustration and transformation process, and that they have experienced similar changes. 5. Searching for options for new roles, relationships, and actions. 6. Planning an action plan. 7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills to implement the plan. 8. Temporary testing of new roles. 9. Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships. 10. Reintegration into life, according to the conditions set by the new visas.	a) Reflection on the content b) Reflection on the process: how and how effectively do we carry out the above actions? c) Reflection on previous perceptions: - investigation of the biographical, cultural, social causes, on the basis of which we think in this particular way (Mezirow, 1990, 1991· 1998·Κόκκος,2019)
Logical inquiry	• "sits" • "have"		
Deontology	• "who" action • "suffer		

Table 1: The correspondences of Aristotle's 10 Categories and Mezirow' s 10 steps in the transformational process

For the adult trainer to process Mezirow's 10 steps and make them understandable, he should formulate critical, helpful questions and provide examples, guiding the trainees through the transformative process:

Aristotle

| "the essence"/
• "who"
• "amount"
•"for what;"
•"where;"
•"when"
• "sits"
• "have"
"who" action
"suffer | • what?
• (property/s)
Definition- desig-
nation
of the meaning

•how much?
Categories –
species-

Reference (rela-
tive to what?)

•Locus
•Time
•attitude (status)
• possession
(characteristics,
structure, re-
sults)
• it must happen
•passion (in. Pas-
sive Voice) | What is the topic of the text?
What is **literacy** and
What is **illiteracy**?
What does **school** mean?

In
How do you understand the concept?

----
2. What forms can it take?
How is the necessity of literacy manifested?
To what extent is it manifested?
In his old age he wants to learn from school, he considers
it a deficit that he did not learn school. How necessary
it is (attitude)

What is pedagogy considered?

(On what factors does the Education of each person depend?
What elements determine what each time?)

Who **benefits from illiteracy?**

Where can one learn letters?
When?
In what way;
What are the consequences?
Of illiteracy?
What must be done, too?
Are there no illiterates?
What are the possible consequences of illiteracy? |

Table 2: The correspondences of Aristotle's 10 Categories and Mezirow's critical questions

Mezirow

1. The presentation of the excerpt from Kazantzakis's work, Reference to Greco, constitutes **the disorienting" dilemma** for learners, which shakes any dysfunctional assumptions they may have about giving up on life or the inability to educate/inability to support Lifelong Education due to age. --------------------------------------- 2. **Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame.** 2. Through critical questions, the scene is reframed in the lives of the trainees themselves, who gradually recognize the source of their dissatisfaction: -**There were times in your life when you wanted to learn letters, but circumstances did not allow you to** **What does it consist of /What does it consist of? This admission?** How does the grandfather feel in the text, and how did you feel about it? **In terms of the psychology of the small child and in terms of the psychology of the adult** **(The school is examined by the grandfather's willingness to learn letters)** 3. What factors led to the formation of these perceptions? 3. There are other people around you like the quote's grandfather? -------------------------------- **Where can an adult learn letters?** **What time period is most suitable?** **When do the adult classes start?** How can one learn letters at this age? **They decide to ask the Municipality for supportive Greek lessons** **What are the consequences of this decision of yours in your life?**	The concept of Pedagogy, of Lifelong Learning, the necessity of literacy and school's --------------------------- 3. Critical evaluation of epistemological, sociocultural and psychological assumptions. -------------------- **5. Searching for options for new roles, relationships, and actions** και **6. Planning an action plan.** **7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills to implement the plan.** Temporary testing of new roles. Together with friends, they decide to enrol in an Evening School 9. Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships. **Their confidence is boosted, their mood changes:** 10. Reintegration into life, according to the conditions set by the new visas.

Aristotle's 10 Categories and Brookfield' s critical questions

When Brookfield also directs our attention to the power relations latent in the assumptions, which can be detected and will emerge through critical questions, he also refers us to Aristotle's 10 Categories, reframing them from his own perspective, with focus again on ''how'' and ''why''.

This reference to Aristotle is further strengthened by the critical text analysis proposed by him, which is supported by critical and political, as he calls them, questions related to the examination and analysis of the text and the parallel highlighting and analysis of the power relations that exist in this, they also explore whether the ideas and opinions of the text favour or hinder actions for more social justice. For him, a critically thinking person is one who (Brookfield, 2012, 2022):

Aristotle

"the essence"/ • "who" • "amount" •"for what;" •"where;" •"when" • "sits" • "have" "who" action "suffer	• what? • (property/s) Definition- designation of the meaning	What is the topic of the text? What is **literacy** and What is **illiteracy**? What does **school** mean? In ↙ how do you understand the concept? -----------------------------
	•how much? Categories – species-	2. What forms can it take? How is the necessity of literacy manifested? To what extent is it manifested?
	Reference (relative to what?)	In his old age he wants to learn from school, he considers it a deficit that he did not learn school How necessary it is (attitude)
	•Locus	
	•Time	**What is pedagogy considered?** **(On what factors does the Education of each person depend?** **What elements determine what each time?)**
	•attitude (status)	**Who benefits from illiteracy?** ------------------------
	• possession (characteristics, structure, results)	**Where can one learn letters?** **When ?** **In what way;** **What are the consequences?** **of illiteracy?**
	• it must happen	**What must be done, to** **are there no illiterates?**
	•passion (in. Passive Voice)	**What are the possible consequences of illiteracy?**

Picture 2: The correspondences of Aristotle's 10 Categories and Brookfield 's critical questions

- recognizes these assumptions behind his thoughts and actions.
- checks the assumptions for their accuracy and validity.
- sees ideas and actions from multiple perspectives.
- proceeds to take informed action.

He also admits that critical thinking is a survival skill of adulthood and the search/recognition of alternative points of view, which will obviously emerge through critical questions and dialogue, such as those he mentions (Brookfield, 1996; Βαϊκούση & Κόκκος, 2019), which correspond directly to Aristotle's Categories. In this particular case study, we will see the critical questions proposed by Brookfield to which of Aristotle's 10 Categories correspond:

Brookfield

1. $\longrightarrow$ -------------------------------------- 2. **Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame.** 2. Through critical questions, the scene is reframed in the lives of the trainees themselves, who gradually recognize the source of their dissatisfaction: -**There were times in your life when you wanted to learn letters, but circumstances did not allow you to** **What does it consist of /What does it consist of?** **this admission?** How does the grandfather feel in the text and how did you feel about it? I**n terms of the psychology of the small child and in terms of the psychology of the adult** **The school is examined by the grandfather's willingness to learn letters)** 3. What factors led to the formation of these perceptions? 3. There are other people around you like the quote's grandfather? -------------------------------- **Where can an adult learn letters?** **What time period is most suitable?** **When do the adult classes start?** How can one learn letters at this age? **What are the consequences of this decision of yours in your life?**	1.Certainly Brookfield also begins the investigation of a topic by identifying the concept/theme under consideration **3. What power relations do you identify in the text and how did these prevent the grandfather from learning letters at school?** **Further exploration of power relations** 3. **Whose (social and political) interests seem to be served by the text, through the perpetuation of apparent "normalcy"?** **6. To what extent does the text emphasize the individual and downplay the role of the collective, social and cultural dimension, or through the individual is the Palladian demand for throwing off the Turkish yoke and Union with Greece presented?** **7.To what extent are views and perceptions contained therein presented as "objective" and "beyond doubt" realities, which are supposed to lie beyond human intervention and possibility of change;** **9. Does the text contribute to the cultivation of conditions for undertaking collective action initiatives to change and improve reality?"**

Rhetorical Art and Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education

Rhetoric, from ancient times, was associated with the work of the sophists, as they, early on, had included its teaching in their program. Rhetoric allowed its owner to organize, nicely, his argumentation, in his attempt to succeed and distinguish himself, especially in the field of politics (Αριστοτέλης, 2004).

After the sophists, Plato criticizes the extremes of sophistic rhetoric, as what is required for him is truth and not persuasion (Πλάτων, χ.χρ., 2004).

Then, Aristotle systematizes the knowledge about Rhetoric, reducing it to a more scientific context, connecting Art with Science and "practical" knowledge. (Αριστοτέλης, 2004).

In the context of Adult Education, the techniques and tools that can be utilized today are more dedicated to the Rhetoric Art of the sophists and to Dialectic, with the emphasis on the dual Discourses (Discourse-Antilogue) and, by extension, argumentation and less to the Rhetorical Art of Aristotle, which as the Art of Speech is what today we call "applied Linguistics".

Particularly, among the educational techniques proposed by Brookfield is the utilization of the Art of Rhetoric and in particular of double arguments, as supporting the technique of argumentation he talks about Argument of the instructor – counterargument which constitute double reasons, proposing the following steps:

- Two or three trainers critically analyse an issue or concept or technique in the group of trainees.
- They try to understand each other's position in the best possible way and ask each other questions.
- Clarify their points of disagreement and share the evidence and reasoning behind each disagreement.

In Freire also through the dialogue and the 4 levels of consciousness, the learners are gradually led to critical awareness from the stage of untranscended consciousness (initial stage), which constitute 2 opposite sides. The path to the final stage presupposes persuasion of the trainees through argumentation and mainly double reasons.

Indicative Application Example

After we find that the expulsion of a child who exhibits negative behaviour from school is a common occurrence, so the dysfunctional assumption is that punishment is the only solution to dealing with a child's negative behaviour, we resent an indicative Application Example.

In the context of the training of the Educators and the corresponding Learning and Collaboration Community of the author's competence, we applied the method of Transformative Learning - Education through the Art of Rhetoric, to teachers and students, with a common reference topic in both groups the following:

"Expulsion or pedagogic handling of mischief at school?"

> a. *In an Experiential Laboratory for Teachers and in a simulated school community environment, we utilized specific tools of Aristotelian Rhetoric and especially double speeches that means: argument-counterargument, reconstruction. In particular, in working groups, the teachers studied a specific case study, related to the topic, aiming at reflection, self-criticism, and the transformation of any dysfunctional perceptions, which accept that only expulsion as a punishment for*

a negative behaviour can have the desired results in the school unit.

b. *In a second Experiential Workshop - Exemplary Teaching and in a natural environment of a school department, we applied the same method to students, aiming, respectively, at reflection, self-criticism and the transformation of any monolithic perceptions, which respectively accept that only the expulsion as a punishment, which the students suffer (or advocate or co-sign in favour of it so that it is given to a classmate), may be the appropriate solution and have the desired results in the school unit.*

Through experiential exercises of expressive reading, active listening, the working groups, initially, developed, based on their real status, arguments for and against expulsion, as a means of dealing with a bad behaviour of a student/ student at school.

Then, in a role play with role reversal, they highlighted different perspectives and positions and proceeded to identify the logical gaps in the other's speech, to reconstruct arguments, to use supporting evidence, to attribute the results to their causes, to compare the phenomenon, underling similarities and differences, positive and negative points.

The whole process helped the trainees to realize the complex and multidimensional character of pedagogical issues, but also the care with which such phenomena should be treated in school. After the reflective dialogue, their willingness to transform and change their dysfunctional perceptions on the subject under consideration was evident.

Through role-playing, speaking, active listening, empathy, identifying the weak point in the other person's argument, reconstructing the argument, practising precision and clarity,

it emerged, through experiential experience and in the best way, that Rhetoric, precisely because it utilizes a larger set of interactive tools (role-playing, theatricality, observation, comparison, contrast, reconstruction, reduction of the effect to its cause, etc.), which are connected to the methodology of developing critical reflection, is a valuable educational and more dynamic tool, compared to the simple observation of works of Art, process, which contains more elements of spirituality.

Conclusions

In this work, we attempted to connect learning not only with adding knowledge to existing knowledge, but also with change, initially with internal self-improvement and then with social change (Freire, 2006; Freire et al., 2011; Mezirow, 1990), through the examination of the logical basis of the critical questions of the 3 thinkers of Adult Education, P.Freire, J.Mezirow and St. Brookfield. The knowledge of Aristotle's 10 Categories and the reduction of their critical questions to them provides our students with a more complete picture of approaching the examined topics-concepts and formulating corresponding critical questions.

The 10 Categories form the basis of a logical investigation of each object, and with the 10 categories the parameters of its investigation are exhausted. Highlighting the Aristotelian approach is a challenge. The Aristotelian approach is the archetype of any logical and scientific approach to a subject, and in this respect, modern theorists simply enrich Theories.

It is reasonable with what something is to examine thematically what it is in space and time. The Aristotelian approach is the basis of the critical approach to knowledge. It is a specific pedagogical approach, the didactic adaptation of the 10 categories: a way to research

reality, and it is interesting to see the starting point, but also what new is added to it.

At the same time, we connected the transformation of dysfunctional perceptions, which either concern the teaching objects, or the behaviour of the members of a community (e.g. the negative behaviour of a student, which is experienced by the other members of the educational group, is a form of circumvention of the rights of the others and, according to Freire, could be considered a form of oppression towards them), with the development of critical reflection, with Rhetorical Art as the main supporting tool and not Art in its traditional forms (Painting, Sculpture, Sketching, Cinema, Theatre, Photography etc.).

So, while until now, the theory of Transformative Learning was built above all on the utilization of aesthetic experience, Art, in its traditional forms, with our proposal, it emerges that Transformative Learning and the development of critical, democratic and creative thinking can achieve more effectively, through the Art of Rhetoric, as it provides wider and more varied tools for interaction. And it cultivates more abilities and skills than the simple observation of works of Art, which constitutes an intellectual process.

Through it, we can improve the ability to communicate with others, through active listening and the development of dialogic habits, train our students in democratic habits, strengthen their critical thinking and creative ability, through a process of democratic dialogue, dialectical interaction, formulation and re-formulation of arguments and reconstructions. (Ραμουτσάκη, 2018).

Through practising precision, clarity, symmetry, distinguishing the essential from the unessential, by perceiving the logical gaps in the speech of their interlocutor and, accordingly, reconstructing and completing their argumentation, their criticism is cultivated thinking, while, through the exercise in the dialectical coupling of opposites, in argumentation, which is formulated with courtesy and respect for the other, in empathy and in active listening, their democratic thinking and consciousness is cultivated.

In the examples we presented, the learners (here adult teachers) were able to be led, gradually, to introspection, self-criticism, understanding and internalizing principles, values, and norms.

Gradually, they began to transform teaching methods and pedagogical practices for the cultivation of values and life attitudes, for the better transmission of knowledge, for more effective crisis management. In particular, the teachers understood that Rhetoric and Philosophy provide us with excellent working tools, to use language as a tool of persuasion, but also to express truth and authenticity in communication. That transformation and improvement occur thanks to the interaction of members, through such dynamic processes.

Such a pedagogical approach and, particularly the didactic adaptation of the 10 categories, is a way to research reality and it is interesting to see the starting point, but also what new is added to it.

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Transformative Pedagogy informs Adult and Higher Education e-Learning: Looking forward from the pandemic to the post pandemic era to Re-frame Transformative pedagogical Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

The present paper analyses and composes findings derived from theoretical and empirical research regarding e-Transformative Pedagogy (TP) during the pandemic crisis. Guided by the methods of integrative and systematic review, the paper first presents the spectrum of theoretical approaches, tools and teaching strategies applied in e-TP adult and higher education settings. Subjectively, it discusses the multiple dimensions of e-TP as they were conceived and implemented during the pandemic era. Looking forward to the post-pandemic era, the present research concludes with an expanded theoretical framework of T. Pedagogy/ies which can inform adult education and university pedagogy/ies in e- or face to face Transformative Teaching and Learning processes.

Key words: Transformative Pedagogy/Learning, E-Learning, Adult Education, Higher Education, University Pedagogy, Academics, Adult Educators, Pandemic Crises.

Introduction

Transformative pedagogy (TP) is defined as the construction of learning environments and processes that create transformative learning experiences which allow learners to examine their assumptions critically, grapple with social issues and engage in social action (Meyers,2008 in Taimur & Onuki,2022). It combines different epistemological stances and theoretical approaches–i.e. constructivism, post-positivism,

pragmatism etc. (Wang et al., 2021), intending less to enhance the accumulation of knowledge and more to guide a collective journey of self-determination and processes of political and emancipatory actions (Fleming,2022). TP calls for "transformative meaningful engagement" and critical consciousness, rooted in personal commitment and mutually depended on the transformative power this engagement has on both personal/epistemic and on societal change, collective action and transformation (Bylund et al.,2022; Pennington, 2021; Taimur&Onuki,2022). TP is a process of social/ collaborative/collective/communicative learning which develops and applies learners' feelings, rational and emotional attitudes towards the world, by prioritizing the transformative relationship between educators and students, concerning human connection, care, and agency (Mihailidis et al., 2021(a); Skaidrīte, 2022; Zhu & Li, 2019).

TP was perceived during the Covid-19 pandemic as critical pedagogy, thus, as a personal, social and political praxis. At the same time, it was emerged as an appropriate "pedagogy of Covid-19 crises" in adult, higher and distance education settings. Without any doubt, the pandemic crisis constituted a kind of "disorienting dilemma" itself or a "collective biographical disjuncture" and a time of complex ambiguity which was recognized as an integral part of a "transformative experience". It also suggested a turning point where normal frames of reference were questioned, while the capacity of critical and emotional intelligence, interrelationships, self-awareness, regulation, and consciousness was emerged (Basem & Sohaib, 2022; Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2022; Koulaouzides, 2021) In this sense, instructors were led to become more flexible, creative and innovative, to re-imagine their definitions of transformative learning (TL) experiences, and to retool their teaching practice when they shifted to on-line learning. By implementing

TP and applying the principles and practice of critical pedagogy and TL to the digital, they ensured quality education and tackled pandemic obstacles (i.e. trauma, uncertainty, inequalities etc.), (Rapanta et al.,2020; Rusa,2021; Taimur& Onuki,2022;Vikas & Mathur,2022;).

To sum up, adult educators' and academics' self-reflective practice and experimentation with different digital tools and practices during the pandemic was driven by transformative styles or clusters of pedagogies, either derived from different existed approaches of TL theory and practice, or from innovative conceptualizations of TP (Corrie et al.,2021; Reese,2021; Mashiyi,2023; Morkel et al.,2021; Sembiring, 2021). This expanded and inclusive theoretical framework and context of on-line TP presides in this research paper. Since pedagogy shares the Greek root "παις+άγω/pais+ago", meaning "child+drive/guide", the present theoretical research, aims at re-framing the theory and practice of TP, first answering the question "Who, Where and How" on-line TP drives/guides, and then, looking forward to discussing the "Why" of TP, during and after the pandemic crisis in adult, higher and distance education settings.

Methodology

Problem formulation and literature search: Implementing a systematic and integrative review methodology, as the most appropriate method for assessing and synthesizing the literature, so as to provide new insight into the concept of 'e-TP', we first conducted an extensive computerized research (Google Scholar), putting specific key terms ("transformative pedagogy", "e-learning", "adult education, "higher education", "pandemic crisis"), searching for empirical and theoretical works published during the period 2019-2023 (Avant,1993; Russell,2005).

Data collection and evaluation: The inclusion criteria which were adopted (time frame

of publications, study focus, explicit methodology, inclusion of most of the key terms we searched for, correlation with the concepts of interest in the study), resulted in a final body of 37 papers, which were first thoroughly studied and critically reviewed in order to make sure that they meet the inclusion criteria (Carnwell & Daly, 2001).

Data analysis: we proceeded in the codification of our data by critically reviewing, analysing and integrating the findings from the theoretical and empirical studies. More specifically, we divided the literature into distinct themes (according to the research questions of the study), applying an inductive approach (content analysis and categorization of research data), which came from within the literature itself (Cohen & Manion,1994).

Interpretation and synthesis of data: Finally, the validation, review, and modification of data interpretation and synthesis, was followed by a review by each of the co-authors of this research, in order to limit as much as possible, the subjective interpretation of the findings, contingent discrepancies, inconsistencies, incongruities, and omissions (Avant,1993).

Findings
Who and Where TP guides?

"Whole persons" in a dialectical process of being and becoming
TP as critical digital pedagogy is understood as a political process more than an educational model, community-based and collaborative, open to diverse voices. It is a method of resistance and humanization of the digital teaching-learning approach (Anderson,2021; Rusa,2021). According to "maxiagogy" as an online-TP, students are considered as fully autonomous, self-directed/determined human beings, motivated and inspired to be more curious, feel at home and fell in love with learning (Sembiring,2021). From a TP teaching perspective, (Duduzile et al.,2022; Mashiyi,2023; Taimur&Onuki,2022) learners perform in an authentic context, they are perceived as empowered, confident, and active participants in the teaching-learning process, capable to reflect the way knowledge is used in real life, to understand their cultural, social and political spaces, and to re-negotiate their assumptions, roles and identities. Thus, they are able to achieve critical consciousness of larger frameworks of media systems, authoritative forces and situations of oppression (libidinal, epistemic, institutional or environmental) that limit rational control over their lives, which, however, have been taken for granted, and to transform them (Anderson, 2021; Corrie et al., 2021; Mihailidis et al., 2021(b); Nalani et al.,2021; Reese,2021; Skaidrīte,2022; Spooner&John,2020). Learners are motivated to perceive the world in a connected way (personal experiences are connected with previous experiences and broader social issues, being interconnected with each other's views, opinions, and inputs). Undergoing epistemically and personally disruptive/transformative experiences, they enter a stressing, suffering and painful process of being and becoming, where "being in relation" and "being in becoming" are interlinked (Botes&Barnett,2022; Eschenbacher&Fleming,2022; Farren, 2016; Fleming,2022). This process guides a person with awareness to become "whole" –mind, emotion, spirit, and body– (holistic approach), and "coherent", to search for a new self-understanding, to edify himself towards self-awareness through shared humanity and solidarity, and to integrate inclusive ways of learning, doing and being. Learners are entering a zone of critical engagement, where they are positioned as "problem framers and solvers", and change agents, while individualized thinking is freely voiced and shared (Botes&Barnett, 2022; Gerodimos, 2021; Mihailidis et al.,2021(a);

Zhu&Li,2019). They are recognized as ethical human beings, bound to others by ties of recognition and concern, capable of self-government and responsibility, being considered as the starting point for transformation (Bylund et al., 2022; Fromm, 2021; Nalani et al., 2021; Reese, 2021).

How do we guide?

TP strategies towards affective, cognitive, dialectical and collective transformative experiences, and relationships

Online TP is a learner centred approach giving emphasis on learning process and context, focusing on critical reflection, transformative/ disorienting experience and discourse. It asks for simultaneous and interdependent cognitive, emotional, social, teacher, and student presence (Delikonstantinidou, 2021; Sembiring, 2022; 2021; Taimur &Onuli, 2022). In this view, elements of Distance learning (i.e. use of social platforms for facilitating learning and students' need for presence, closeness and belonging, use of short video-lessons with traditional didactics, shared links that direct to multiple learning recourses and interpretations of meanings, online presentations prepared by learners, small group work through break-out sessions, use of flipped classroom technique etc.) lead to a paradigm shift in the teaching-learning process. The educator-student and peer-to-peer authentic relationships of trust and mutual respect empower the collaborative creation and equitable power distribution (Branchetti et al., 2021; Mashiyi,2023; Morkel et al.,2021). Teaching strategies such as "Design Thinking" for example, allow participants to frame and solve problems collectively, as "a community of practice" and critically reflect on their previous understanding, by exposing them to different perspectives, establishing shared understanding (meaning making through discourse). To this end, emphasis is put on the teaching content which is in a real-life context/problem, while learners participate directly in teams via the selection of appropriate teaching and digital tools (i.e. Zoom, MS Teams, You-tube, Google Meets, Viber-Teams etc.) (Branchetti et al., 2021; Mashiyi,2023; Morkel et al.,2021). From another point of view, the association of the learner with the community – "transformative engagement" in a community of inquiry–, or "with the universe as a recourse for learning" – "communalism-based learning" –are teaching strategies to achieve transformation of both individual and community. They call for learners' immersion in different cultures, interactive and project and/or problem-based approaches to the teaching-learning process (Boronat&Choueiry,2022; Branchetti et al.,2021; Bylund et al.,2022; Nalani et al.,2021; Sembiring,2021).

TP Strategies for relational and dialogical knowing and learning

Concerning edification of adult learners themselves and dialectical thinking (fundamentally important for exemplary learning and critical pedagogy), "anti-antagonistic and edifying conversations, as transformative" (Escenbacher&Fleming, 2020; Fleming,2022) are suggested as an alternative to "rational discourse" for the creation of a joining and dialectical transformative learning experience. In any case, core principles of TP for the prompting of critical consciousness and awareness are the existence of open and critical dialogue that is inter/intra-personal and discursive in nature (Botes&Barnett,2022). To this end, interactive workshops that stir up insightful discussion and collaborative dialogue, or even informal discussions, can develop transformation of learners' direction, identity and belief structures, and lead them to action (Fromm,2021; Reese,2021). E-TP through the implementation of students'-instructors' interactions, the creation of a sense of community, and the incorporation of self-care and caring

pedagogical practices, provided an empowerment space for transformation, a sense of how we come to "be," and how interactions re-shape each other's "dialogical selves" and "intersectional identities" (Sequeira & Dacey, 2020). Similarly, the embrace of as many learners' voices as possible (i.e. through the "immersive storytelling", by active listening, voicing and respecting—suspending judgment), or the creation of an environment that allows participants to consciously enter into self-facilitated, formal and/or informal dialogue, with open, free expression and fluidity of exchanges, enable the collaborative validation of discourse, allow for critical self-reflection and a process of freeing oneself from self-deception. Through the use of art/culture (setting up the conditions for disorienting experience and reflective discourse to take place), the use of literature, of case-studies, critical incidents, videos, and Socratic or situation-based class discussions, through peer learning, individual and collective meaning making, they develop and support the relational, emotional, dialogical and dialectical dimension of a powerful transformative experiential learning in on line-TP (Anderson,2021; Botes&Barnett,2022; Delikonstantinidou,2021; Fowler,2021; Mihailidis et al.,2021(a); Nalani et al.,2021; Skaidrīte, 2022; Spooner&John,2020; Zhu & Li,2019; Vikas&Mathur,2022).

"The educator is the key" in online TP
E-educators in TP are described as "key-actors", "role models" and "context-sensitive". They are to apply innovative, experiential, constructive and self-directed pedagogy, to take participants out of their comfort zones, by questioning, probing and challenging assumptions (i.e. regarding "change", "responsibility", "authority", "disequilibrium" etc) that lie behind their perspectives (Branchetti et al., 2021; Boronat&Choueiry, 2022; Duduzile; et al., 2022; Gerodimos,2021; Nalani et al., 2021). They are to guide, monitor, empower, motivate, and facilitate the co-oper-

ative (but equal and personalized) dialogical learning process by (Anderson, 2021; Bano et al., 2023; Boronat&Choueiry, 2022; Branchetti et al., 2021; Bylund et al., 2022; Corrie et al., 2021; Duduzile et al., 2022; Mihailidis et al., 2021(a); Morkel et al., 2021; Nalani et al., 2021; Taimur&Onuki,2022; Vikas&Mathur, 2022): creating a free atmosphere of learning, and environments that are safe, inclusive, open, engaging, interactive and relaxed (empathy and compassion, trusting and caring relationships with learners, extended support to empower them to experience paradigm shifts); by using digital teaching tools with the scope to support real-world learning; by promoting a sense of community and/or a community of practice (i.e. implementing group assignments and reflection, interactive documents/ presentations etc); by being open-minded and non-judgmental; by using emotional and coping strategies standing for tolerance of mistakes and acceptance of failure as a learning opportunity; by listening actively, practising kindness, contesting authenticity, and maintaining personal boundaries; by implementing self-governing techniques in order to stimulate operations on learners as whole persons, and ways of being and transformed; by enticing free teaching subjects to enhance learners' awareness and understanding of complexities; by being adapted to students' needs, goals and interests, giving immediate feed-back; by integrating more flexible approaches to online teaching, such us contemplative pedagogical practices; by meeting synchronously and conducting them frequently in order to develop an intellectual community; by focusing on engagement and not on the mastery of the content.

Equally important for the e-facilitators of TP is to form collaborative, interdisciplinary, real-time peer communities and become tolerant of their diversity, thoroughly introspective and critical reflective professionals. In these disciplinary or interdisciplinary communities, it is

required to leave one's comfort zone, to bring a range of different teaching styles and methods into a collaborative critical reflective process of one's pedagogical knowledge and teaching perspective, or even to plan and teach lessons as teams (Duduzile et al., 2022; Reese,2021).

The why (?) of TP: Looking forward

Obvious concluding remarks emerge from the aforementioned analysis of the "What-Where, and How" of e-TP regarding its intentionality and effectiveness, which can offer an initial response of the "Why" from this pedagogical and epistemological stance and practice. Online TP results in learners' cognitive (systemic, creative and critical thinking, self-reflection/inquiry/governing), emotional, relational, embodied, moral, personal, and social (citizenship), artistic and aesthetic learning. Learners develop more than just skills and competencies (i.e., higher level thinking, innovation, imagination, creativity etc.). They develop habits, awareness, critical consciousness and engagement, together with responsibility as members of communities. Thus, they become whole, autonomous, empowered individuals, and change agents. Critical thinking outside the box, flexibility, and experimentation in the teaching-learning context of online TP, and re-orientation of existing beliefs and values, emerge as paradigm shifts, new personal and cultural identities and roles for both adult educators/academics and students.

From a more critical viewpoint of the "why" of e-TP, we would highlight its holistic perspective in the sense that:

It brought ahead the importance, not only of the cognitive (critical reflection, discourse) but also, of the relational (transformative relationships), the emotional/affective, and imaginative ways of knowing, being and becoming, and into re-negotiation the concept of individu-ation, subjectivity and the "whole person" in the teaching-learning process (Morkel et al., 2021; Spooner&John, 2020; Ultsch et al., 2022). At the same time, it acknowledged and practised the dialectical, dialogical, and collective dimensions of a transformative experience as paramount to authentic learning, and highlighted an innovative and holistic approach to TL theory and critical digital pedagogy (Corrie et al., 2021; Eschenbacher&Fleming, 2022; Taimur & Onuki, 2022). From this point of view, TP came into re-negotiation and re-action with aspects and dimensions of different clusters of pedagogies (see Figure 1), and became occasionally or simultaneously: "anthropo", "catalytic", "synergic", "co-generative" and "spatio-temporal" pedagogy (Morkel et al.,2021).

Along with this innovative and holistic approach of TL, online TP cultivated for adult educators and academics a holistic approach and professional consciousness which is embodied in shaping disciplinary logic and humanism-oriented development for them and their students. This consciousness is considered as parallel, effective and appropriate to training adult learning practices, and informs not only the distance-adult learning pedagogy, but also the university pedagogy in the post-pandemic era (Mashiyi, 2023; Morkel et al., 2021).

Looking forward and based on the new insights regarding the what, where, how and why of online TP, an expanded and inclusive theoretical framework and context of transformative adult, distance, and university pedagogy/ies emerges by synthesizing the findings of the present research. Moving from Andragogy, as the basis of all kinds of "-gogies" (see Figure 1) for adult learning, TP first incorporates dimensions of Heutagogy: educators enable learners to become proactive and self-directed, to learn how to learn, to interact with their and others experience, to be creative and connected to the real world (Sembiring,2021). Maxiagogy, as a subsequent and innovative online

TP, calls for fully autonomous learning, for the communities and connectivism/communalism as learning recourses, for flexibility, and for enhancement of learners' self-esteem and fulfilment, while the role of the educator is totally transformed (Sembiring,2021). This scale of "-gogies", empowers and highlights the "Metamorphic", humanist and transformational approach to teaching, in the sense that educators act as "intellectual coaches" who facilitate transformative learning experiences adaptable to fluctuating conditions and disruptions, through interrelationships, dialogical interactions and collaboration. (Morkel et al., 2021).

Concluding, online TP, by transcending and encompassing inter-dependent dimensions of Andragogy, Heutagogy, and Maxiagogy (depending on the learning context, the teaching tools available, and the whole persons' teaching and learning style, intention and commitment in the teaching-learning process), became "Metamorphic Pedagogy" for the adult educators, the academics, and their learners.

Adult educators and academics in distance or face-to-face contexts, look forward, now to the post-pandemic era, aiming at a more integral understanding of practice of TL and TP (Kokkos, 2022) They also re-orient their teaching practices towards a more dialogical, dialectical, collaborative, and "whole person" –authentic, effective and holistic/synthetic teaching-learning approach. If this is the case, then they could probably be helped and aspired to map their pedagogical knowledge and teaching practice, by choosing their own path among the rich landscape of transformative pedagogy/ies, as this study attempted to re-frame it.
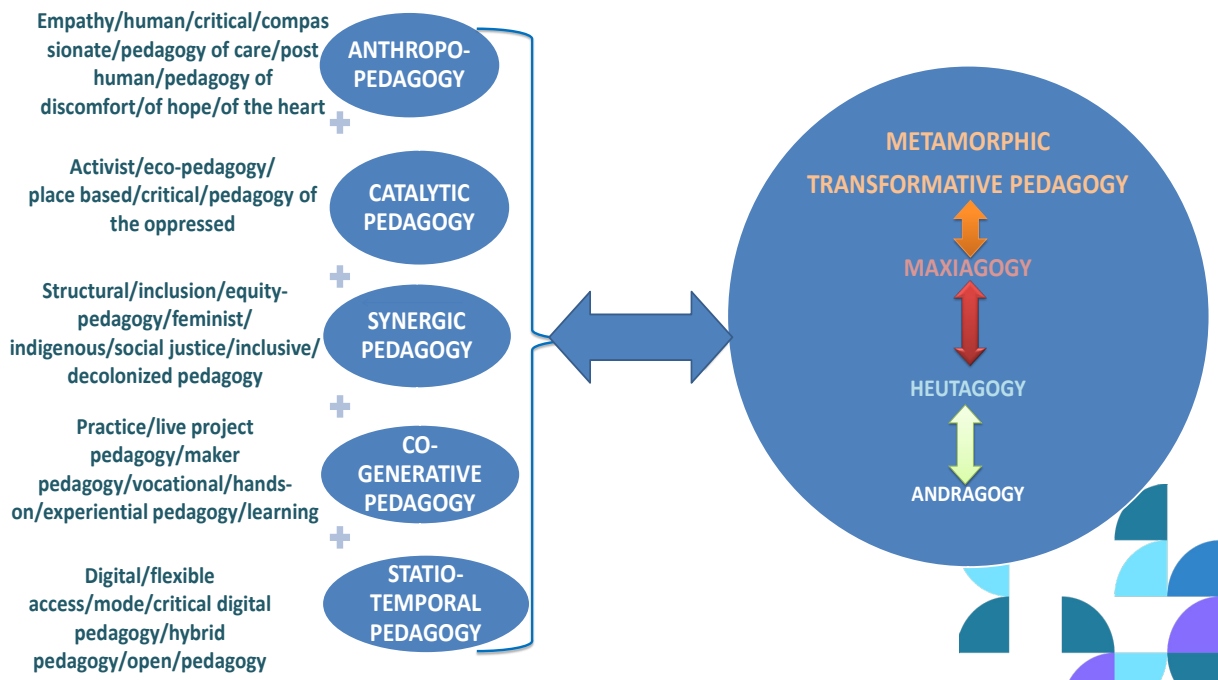

Figure 1: Looking Forward to an Inclusive and Expanding Theoretical Framework and Context of TP in the Post-pandemic era

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Students Reimagining Themselves in Relation to Studies and Lifelong Learning

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SUMMARY

This paper presents research within the Swedish Folk high school. The Folk high school is a multi-faceted school form with a number of educational functions, of which one is its function as a second chance school. Herein is presented an ongoing study of life stories of people who have had negative experiences of education but have now re-entered education. The aim of the research is to come closer to an understanding of how attitudes towards education change when undergoing studies at a Swedish Folk high school. By exploring life stories of people and assessing the obstacles as well as possibilities they encounter, we may be able to better understand not just how to design adult education for this group of students, but also to rectify aspects of the education system that may have been part in generating the antagonistic attitude in the first place.

Key words: Adult Education, Folk High School, Second Chance Schools, Life Story Research, Subjectification.

Students reimagining themselves in relation to studies and lifelong learning

We live in a society where we are continuously expected to learn and learn again. Because of this, we need to understand how people relate to educational opportunities and why some people refrain from education. It is known that not all adults participate in education, but to include all people in lifelong learning is necessary, as this provides competences for working life as well as for active citizenship. For educators, it may well be useful to explore how education can be more focused on providing the necessary keys to cope with society's demands on participation in lifelong learning.

This paper presents research within the Swedish Folk high school, which historically has always been concerned with offering education to those who have lacked the opportunity to acquire it. From the farmers' sons during the 19th century to women at the beginning of the 20th century to today, where the Folk high school is a tool for reapportionment, offering adult education to anyone from immigrants to college drop-outs to people in need of raising their grades to continue in higher education. For many in Sweden, the folk-high schools of today work as a second chance for people who, for different reasons, have been unsuccessful in or unwilling to attain necessary qualification to continue in higher education. The participants in the Folk high school are therefore

partly composed of people that are, or have been sceptical, suspicious or even hostile towards education, people with a history of viewing education as an enforcement rather than a possibility (Andersson et al. 2020). The general course offers a second chance to higher education. However, folk-high schools all over Sweden offer a range of education and training. From courses in journalism to nursing assistance training, this paper presents research on participants on the Folk high school's general course.

The Folk high school is often described as an adaptable institution, in that it is, and has been, ready to cater to societal demands (Andersén, 2011). Tensions may be found in the contrasting ideas of what a Folk high school should be and to what societal demands it should cater. The Folk high school has been described as the "super nanny" of the Swedish educational system, in that it has a compensatory role (Andersson et al. 2020). Yet, being rooted in *Bildung*-ideals it is not always evident that the Folk high school should work solely as a second-chance school or as a back-up plan for the people that struggle in ordinary school (mainly high school/upper secondary school). It has been argued that there might be tensions between the idea of the Folk high school as a place for patching people together and sending them on to further studies, and the notion that the Folk high school offers education in its own right, education for life, rather than for people to obtain qualifications for further studies (Berndtsson, 2000).

The Folk high school can also be seen in the light of *lifelong learning,* in that it is not just aiming to correct or supplement degrees – it is also a springboard for further education and for attaining a sustainable relationship to education and learning. It can be said to have motivational purposes, as has been described by Bernhard et al.:

Folk high schools – which by tradition are considered to be open to all learners, based on their needs, their previous knowledge and experience – have changed considerably in the last two decades, and have especially widened their target group (Larsson, 2013; Nylander et al., 2015) This could be seen as a result of various adult educational reforms aiming to provide opportunities for finishing and supplementing school degrees as well as increasing the learners' motivation. In other words, the empowerment objective seems to have shifted towards a stronger focus on those not succeeding in comprehensive education, and therefore it focuses to a greater extent on social inclusion. (Bernhard et al. 2017, p. 90)

Consequently, the Folk high school houses a multitude of mentalities towards learning, within their group of students, yet; the reasons for studying at a Folk high school are to a large extent to get one's qualifications in order. This ties into the notion that obtaining a low-skilled job in Sweden is getting increasingly difficult without a diploma from upper secondary school. The students at the Folk high school are in many cases not particularly interested in education – education is a necessary evil – a means to a diploma, an entry ticket to the labour market. Sweden is indeed not an island – adult education and its institutions, as well as its research, are faced with similar concerns elsewhere. Zeuner (2019) points out that:

The developments in Germany are similar to those Wildemeersch and Olesen describe on an international level. They state that beginning in the 1980s, and increasingly in the 1990s and later, the research has

been aimed primarily at questions of how to improve the learning processes of adults in order to increase their chances in the labour market. Employability, combined with topics such as qualifications and competences, became paramount. (Zeuner, 2019, p. 49)

If research on adult education tends to concern itself with rendering employability, there lies a risk in that it might do so at the expense of other values and aspects of education, such as how to promote active citizenship and maintain democracy.

In an interview (within the ongoing research project) with a former student at a Folk high school, I was told that "I only went to get my grades at the Folk high school as to be able to say *fuck you* to those who had looked down upon me for not having completed comprehensive school." Qualifications for higher education were acquired but not in order to de facto enter into higher education. The participant had, in effect, no plans on applying for higher education but had, after graduating from Folk high school, re-entered a position in unskilled employment.

Another participant said that, although he had managed to study at the Folk high school and had in his own understanding excelled at it, he was probably not fit for higher education as it would be too similar to upper secondary school: "It would be the same as upper secondary school, you know, listening for hours upon end to a lecture and then taking a test." The statement touches upon the pedagogy of the Folk high school and how it differs from a comprehensive school. Without defining the distinctiveness of the pedagogy of the Folk high school, it is worth noting that, although there are significant differences from one Folk high school to the next, the school form takes pride

in contributing an alternative way of learning – a pedagogy where relationships and relational learning are core values (Colliander et al. 2020). The *distinctiveness*, however, has come under scrutiny and concerns have also been voiced in regard to that the Folk high school in recent years may have taken a turn towards "upper-secondary schoolification" in part as a result of Folk high school recruiting its employees from other schools. (Colliander et al. 2020)

It raises questions about what type of adult learner the Folk high school constructs and if the constructions are compatible with higher education. Data puts forward that the number of people continuing in higher education after having completed the Folk high school's general course is steadily growing. Around 50% entered other forms of education within one year after graduating from Folk high school, of which circa 30% were found within higher education (SCB, 2023).

My examples above, shed light on the fact that the idea of the Folk high school as a facilitator for higher education is possibly only partly true, and the attitude towards education in general may not have been dramatically altered after having completed studies at a Folk high school. The antagonistic stance towards education seems only relatively reformed. If the purpose of the Folk high school is to send people on to higher education, it is perhaps so that the experienced gap between Folk high school and higher education could be narrowed by certain restructurings.

This ongoing study of life stories of people who have had negative experiences of education but are in a process where they for different reasons once again turn to education aim to come closer to an understanding of how attitudes towards education may change during the course of undergoing studies at a Swedish Folk high school. By exploring life stories of people once again turning to education, and assessing the obstacles as well as possibilities

they encounter, we may be able to better understand not just how to design adult education for this group of students, but also to rectify aspects of the education system that may have been part in generating the antagonistic attitude in the first place.

What factors then produce a sceptical attitude towards education? It is evident that we cannot disregard socioeconomics when forming an answer to that question (Barra, 2022). Parents' involvement in a young person's years at school have also been shown to play a major part. Add to the list issues related to mental health, disabilities, cognitive disorders etc. As mentioned earlier, the Folk high school has been likened with an educational super nanny assigned with the task of straightening people out that for various reasons have failed comprehensive school. Yet let us not forget that the students who attend the Folk high school's general course are adult learners and that the Folk high school certainly is no naughty step. Students at the Folk high school must apply and once they are in, they are there voluntarily, free to walk out of the door whenever they please.

Thus, in a sense, with students at the Folk high school, the game has changed. They were perhaps used to getting substituted in their previous schools but, if my sports metaphor is accepted, they have now reached a stage in life where they are ready to perhaps question those aforementioned substitutions – they are willing to take a chance and (re)enter the pitch. For many, it may therefore be a case of disregarding or at least questioning ideas about themselves as hopeless students. Some have of course, forgive me, been coerced by new coaches and trainers, and some have found the bravery within themselves. The reasons are plentiful, but when they have set out on that journey – the journey of reimagining themselves in education – they are in the hands of a school ready to build the necessary scaffolds, yes, but the endeavour is doomed if the journey does not also

take place within the student him or herself. The engine has got to start running – the Folk high school can provide fuel and tires, but the ignition must be turned on by the student. The question becomes one of "subjectification", in Biesta's (2022) words an existential dimension of education. Correspondingly, my research is also interested in formation of person and therefore also the tensions that may take place in the space between the Folk high school and the student when the student is in a process of forming herself and possibly being formed by the school. Drawing on Rancière, Biesta has accentuated this dynamic between the emancipator and the emancipated, highlighting the need to move away from the idea of master and apprentice, where the emancipation is a one-way transaction (Biesta, 2014). An aspect of my research and a possible outcome may be if processes of emancipation can be traced in the Folk high school student's stories. What is the nature of emancipation in a Folk high school, and is the Folk high school pedagogy a catalyst for emancipation? Moreover, what does emancipation mean to the Folk high school student and what role does it play in students' life stories?

By life story interviews focusing on educational trajectories of a selected number of students who have graduated or are on the verge of graduating from a Swedish Folk high school's general course, this study aims to cumulate narratives that can shed light on the process and transformation it is or might be to acquire a modus operando for navigating education/studies. The in-depth interviews take into account the life of the interviewee and the multitude of factors that come into play when forming, or reimagining, one's attitude and self in relation to education. With the life story research as a methodology, an aim is, not just to learn more about the individual, but that the accumulated stories may shed light on manifestations of certain mentalities or cultures

among the Folk high school students. The way people tell their stories are reverberations also of our social times. Or as Chris Mann (1998) puts it, "[e]ducational life histories show us how young people invest their sense of self in their educational choices. Such in-depth understanding may help inform policy initiatives that seek to help all young people to meet their potential."

It has been proposed that our age is an age of structural and cultural change (Giddens, 1991). To grasp how societal changes shape and affect preconditions for people's lives, life stories offer insight into how people may reimagine themselves in new and changed circumstances. Through stories we can get closer to how changes are interpreted and understood by people. Ultimately, it also traces how identity is formed. In what is often referred to as a postmodern or post-traditional world it has become increasingly difficult to craft identity (Giddens, 1991), yet: new questions are perhaps only waiting for new answers. Students on the general course on the Folk high school are in many cases individuals who for one reason or another have had to reflect on, what can be viewed at least from the outside, a form of nonconformity and on their relationship to education and society. This, in my understanding, makes them excellent targets of study and possibly good sources for getting answers to the before mentioned quandary.

In analysing the interviews, my hope is to find further clues and notions that can address the question of what constitutes viable ways forward for lifelong learning, for all, but especially for those who have struggled with education in the past. As Fejes (2006) has argued for, we live in a society where we are continuously expected to be ready to learn and learn again. If that is the case, it is of all the more importance for people to be given educational opportunities to obtain the means and strategies necessary to construct a sustainable way

of conducting oneself in education. What if education could be more focused on providing the necessary keys to cope with the demands of lifelong learning?

In analysing the interviews, my hope is to find clues and notions that can address the question of what constitutes viable ways forward for lifelong learning, for all, but especially for those who have struggled with education in the past. My research adheres to the notion of the narrative creation of self, inspired by Bruner's (2003) theoretical framework. Hence, my paper is rooted in the conception that the stories we tell about ourselves steer and regulate our actions. Drawing on biographical methods in social research outlined by Merrill & West (2009), my research employs in-depth interviews, taking its departure in an open-ended question on the interviewee's educational life history. My hope is that these narratives will be able to provide valuable insight into the process it is when adult learners reimagine themselves and (re)construct themselves in education.

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Radicalization and Violent Extremism Prevention: an Approach Based on Freire's Theories

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, we analyze how some principles of Freirean theories can be applied to radicalization and violent extremism prevention. Complex times, defined by rapid socio-political change, call for a coherently articulated critical pedagogy that approaches issues concerning social difference, social justice and social transformation (Ledwith, 2001). Applying Freirean principles to a pedagogical program leads to talk of emancipation, respective transformation, and strengthening the development of critical and reflective thinking to promote social inclusion (Dal Magro et al., 2020). Since preventing radicalization and violent extremism requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the social, political, and economic factors that contribute to extremist ideologies, Freire's ideas are particularly interesting to this field. It would be important to build a bridge among community, policy, and research partners that build community resilience and pluralistic dialogue to combat discrimination (Nelson & Venkatesh, 2023).

Key words: Radicalization, Violent Extremism, Prevention, Freire, Critical Pedagogy.

Introduction

This study aims to bring together two different fields: radicalization studies and Paolo Freire's educational theories. The main aim is to analyze how Freire's ideas can be useful for radicalization and violent extremism prevention. It is one of the various studies which take origin from the Project Forward, developed between 2019 and 2023. It was financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research and focused on training, research, and development of community-based strategies to facilitate and support practices in multi-ethnic contexts. One of the main outputs of the project is the book "Understanding Radicalization in everyday life", edited by L. Fabbri and C. Melacarne (2023).

Although radicalization has increasingly been subjected to scientific studies, a universally accepted definition of the concept is still to be developed. Schmid (2013) affirms that radicalization is related to advocating any kind of sweeping change in society, since the status quo seems to be unacceptable, but the means advocated to bring system-transforming radical solution may be non-violent and democratic or violent and non-democratic. In the first part of this study, a reflection about definitions will be brought up, since it is an important part of the discussion in scientific literature.

Addressing some of the underlying factors that can lead to radicalization and violent extremism and the role that education might take in helping to repel or mitigate the attractiveness of violent extremist ideology and actions is a central issue and a key concern for governments and agencies around the world (Upton & Grossman, 2019). Education is considered as one of the main paths to prevent radicalization from occurring or developing further, since it is known that it can play a key role in the behaviour and beliefs of individuals (Sas et al., 2020).

After a brief description of one possible classification of preventative activities, space will be dedicated to Paulo Freire and to the possibility of applying his principles to radicalization and violent extremism prevention. Freire developed a model of liberatory education in which learners are encouraged to "read the world" around them, understanding their own oppression in an historical and present context (Gadotti, 1991). This process, which he termed 'conscientização', refers to helping learners to become aware of the nature of social inequalities and, in turn, to act to change them. It is based on dialogues within communities of learners and teachers, rather than through the transmission of knowledge from teacher to learners, which Freire derided as a "banking model" of education (Gadotti, 1991;

Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). Instead of influencing students by using the authority of experts or experienced specialists, the instructors create a dialogue in which all parties are considered providers of both questions and answers. In this kind of setting, the relational dimension of knowledge is outlined (Dal Magro et al., 2020).

Radicalization and violent extremism

The word radicalization derives from the Latin term *radicalis* and refers to "root". It has been used therefore in the past as a botanical metaphor, in order to name a process that takes towards the roots and causes of a concept or a thing. During the last decades, the word has been used in many ways and frequently also as a synonym of violent extremism or terrorism.

As a political expression, "radical" was used for the first time in 1797 in Great Britain, when Charles James Fox made a speech about the need to proceed with "radical reforms", meaning to go straight forward to the root causes of social problems and act to develop a profound change (Antonelli, 2021). During the following decades, and due to the consequences of the French Revolution and of the establishment of industrial society, "radical" has been used in the political world, but since the beginning the use of violence was questioned. In other words, many used to wonder if it was possible to achieve huge social changes in a peaceful way or not. As Schmid (2013) highlights, in the 19th century, many of the radicals, like the suffragettes in the late 19th and early 20th century, were mostly non-violent activists. Their demonstrative public direct actions in support of women being allowed to vote were often illegal, but not illegitimate. In fact, some of the 19th century radical demands have become mainstream entitlements today.

At that time, 'radical' referred primarily to liberal, anti-clerical, pro-democratic, progressive political positions. As Sedwick (2010) points out, who or what is defined as "radical" necessarily depends on itself problematic notion of what is "normal," "moderate," or "mainstream" as a point of reference and has changed considerably over time.

In contrast to the term's earlier use in research on political violence and social movements, which had emphasized relational dynamics in processes of escalation at the collective level, "radicalization" came to be understood predominantly as the gradual adoption of extremist ideas that promote and eventually lead to acts of terrorism, thus focusing attention on processes of cognitive and ideological transformation, mainly at the individual level (Malthaner, 2017).

It is not always easy to distinguish "radicalization" from "violent extremism", since frequently researchers and practitioners use them as synonyms. Schmid (2013) tries to distinguish these terms focusing on pluralism – in historical terms, if we think about Fascism or Communism, the author explains that extremists can be characterized as political actors who tend to disregard the rule of law and reject pluralism in society. The author states that extremists want to make society conformist by suppressing all opposition and subjugating minorities, and that this would distinguish them from mere radicals who accept diversity and believe in the power of reason rather than dogma.

An additional difference brought by Gaspar and colleagues (2020) would be that extremism describes a condition and not a process, like radicalization. Furthermore, they argue that in the academic discourse, extremism is understood to constitute the rejection of the democratic constitutional state and fundamental values, while radicalization, irrespective of political systems, can be conceived as the willingness of actors to increasingly challenge the existing political order.

There are multiple challenges associated with researching and modelling the processes of radicalization, including conceptual clarity, the nature of the research phenomenon, and the nature of the process. In policy documents, radicalization is frequently portrayed as a linear process through which individuals follow a defined pathway, transforming from "ordinary" citizens to cognitively radicalized individuals, increasingly interacting with other extremists and thereby becoming further radicalized into a state where the individual might undertake a violent act. Jämte and Ellefsen (2020) highlight however that research has shown that the relationship between extreme and radical attitudes and behaviour is far from linear and that cognitive change does not necessarily lead to behavioural change. McCauley and Moskalenko (2012) differentiate among 'opinion radicalization', which involves the cognitive commitment to radical ideas, and 'action radicalization', which denotes acting on these radical ideas. This differentiation has also been referred to as 'cognitive radicalization' and 'violent radicalization'. Similarly, Malthaner and Lindekilde (2017) define radicalization as a composite process, made of cognitive radicalization, changes in activist practices, and relational mechanisms that interact in complex ways.

Another critical aspect about the definition of the term is brought by Schmid (2013): it is not just a socio-psychological scientific concept but also a political construct, introduced into the public and academic debate mainly by national security establishments faced with political Islam in general and Salafist Jihadism in particular. The concept has been used therefore to highlight a relatively narrow, micro-level set of problems related to the causes of terrorism that Western governments face in their efforts to counter predominantly 'home-

grown' terrorism from second and third generation members of Muslim diasporas. Ahmed (2020) states that the 'war on terror' discourse may marginalize certain groups by creating a dichotomy of acceptable beliefs, perceptions, and expressions of ideology and identity and even accentuate the dualism of 'western nations' versus 'Islam and Islamic nations'.

Antonelli (2021) brings up two main definitions made during a panel of 21 European experts organized within the project "Horizon 2020 Trivalent". First of all, radicalization could be considered as a socialization process, through which a person adopts a paranoic vision of the world and of politics. This process occurs after the interiorization of an extremist ideology that legitimizes the violent or terrorist action. In this sense, there are some similarities that could be drawn to becoming part of a sect, such as the gradual distancing of previous social bonds and the establishment of totalitarian connections with people who share the same vision. In addition to this, the experts pointed out that radicalization can also be seen as a recruiting process and as political participation. In this sense, radicalization is a process through which people build bonds and belonging to an organized universe. Radicalization in this sense would be a way of non-conventional political participation in which violence has an expressive and instrumental role.

It has been estimated that more books were published on the subject of radicalization leading to terrorism in the five years following the September 11, 2001, attacks than in the 50 previous years combined (Silke, 2008), and that the use of the term 'radicalization' in English-language press more than doubled between 2005 and 2006 (Sedgwick, 2010). On the one hand, this growth in the number of studies is understandable, but on the other hand, it has increased the risk of producing research based on cognitive and methodological biases. It has also stimulated in numerous

instances of metastereotypes (Komen, Can der Pligt, 2016). The concept of radicalization has led to the construction of Muslim populations as 'suspect communities', and sometimes has also led to civil rights abuses (Kundnani, 2012). The greatest increase in frequency of use of "radicalization" in the press was between 2005 and 2007, timing that strongly suggests that the term's current popularity derives from the emergence of "home-grown" terrorism in Western Europe, notably the London bombings in July 2005 (Sedwick, 2010).

Many literature reviews have pointed out these critical issues. For example, Desmarais and colleagues (2017) have analyzed a sample of 250 scientific articles published between 1990 and 2015 and have noticed that only 20% produced new data based on empirical research, while the other 80% were based on secondary sources. Neumann & Kleinmann (2013) indicate the type of funding as one of the causes of these biased studies. Radicalization research is funded to a much greater degree than other fields of study not by research councils, foundations, and other more traditional sources of finance for academic research, but by governments and government agencies. This means that frequently the academic peer-review mechanisms and processes of academic scrutiny were missing.

The initial trend of radicalization studies has anyway gradually shifted. For example, Schuurman (2020) found that the use of primary data has risen considerably during the last years, and there has also been a significant rise in the range of data-collection strategies and techniques used by the scholarly community. Recent meta-analyses and systematic reviews of the discipline have also revealed the current knowledge in this scholarly field and provided a good account of the knowledge applied to the risk factors and protection of radicalization. Moyano and colleagues (2022) affirm that even though there are positive data on the growth in

the quality and quantity of studies in this field, research into the processes of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism faces difficulties and challenges that have not yet been resolved. Among them, the authors cite the diversity of the existing theoretical models, the difficulties in conceptually delimiting certain constructs, cultural biases, the difficulty of obtaining empirical data and accessing information from police sources and the difficulty of replicating studies.

Radicalization prevention

If the very concept of radicalization itself is problematic, the same must – by extension – also be true for radicalization prevention programs. Even if the evaluation literature has been growing rapidly in the last two years of the large body of studies related to violent radicalization and extremism, very few are empirical outcome evaluations of prevention programs put in place by governments, institutions, or organizations. Knowledge regarding best practices for prevention remains disparate, and the effectiveness of current practices is not clearly established (Brouillette-Alarie et al., 2022).

One possible way to classify radicalization prevention activities comes from the public health interventions, proposed in 1957 by the Commission on Chronic Illness. Rather than proposing a one-size-fits-all solution, the public health system of classification aims to identify combinations of solutions that work for different groups in different contexts. As authors like Bhui and colleagues (2012) point out, public health interventions are population-based, emphasize collective responsibility for health, disease prevention, and recognize underlying socioeconomic and wider determinants of health and disease. The approach emphasizes partnerships with all those who contribute to the health of the population, and it has already been applied to violence prevention, so

reducing the mean levels of any particular risk factor in the population. The classification system consists of three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention seeks to decrease the number of new cases of a disorder or illness, secondary intervention seeks to lower the rate of established cases of the disorder or illness in the population, while tertiary intervention seeks to decrease the amount of disability associated with an existing disorder or illness (Harris-Hogan et al., 2016).

The World Health Organization has suggested that a public health approach is needed to understand the local determinants of all forms of violence – including violent extremism – and to design programs that are adapted to specific socio-ecological environments and sensitive to major ethical challenges (Rousseau, Aggarwal & Kirmayer, 2021).

Similarly, in this field it is important to distinguish primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention focuses on the population as a whole and its goal is to proactively target the causes or factors (individual, interpersonal, community, or societal) that may be at the root of the dynamics of radicalization leading to violence of any type. They can include initiatives ranging from openness towards other programs disseminated in schools and universities to counter-narratives displayed on radio or television. Programs are designed to educate individuals about violent extremism and to prevent the emergence of conditions, behaviours, and attitudes which may be conducive to the radicalization of individuals. Prevention activities may also include educating and upskilling existing community services and personnel such as psychologists, social workers, healthcare professionals, or teachers to understand and deal with the issue of radicalization in their communities independent of government or police (Harris-Hogan et al., 2015).

Secondary prevention targets individuals who are at risk of becoming radicalized and are directed towards populations that are identified as somehow vulnerable to violent radicalization and extremism. This assumption can be rooted in valid and reliable assessment procedures or in information suggesting that such populations are at risk. These programs mostly aim to prevent violent behaviour or attachment to extremist ideologies among individuals identified as vulnerable but not yet violent. Programs that fall under the secondary classification facilitate interventions for those displaying 'symptoms' of radicalization. Individuals targeted by such interventions may either be engaged within a social network which contains extremist influences or expressing ideological support for a violent extremist ideology (or potentially both). By specifically targeting those on the periphery of extremist groups, or those who may have recently joined but not yet be fully committed, secondary level projects aim to conduct interventions on individuals deemed most 'at risk' of becoming significant members of extremist groups in the future. Such interventions may be voluntary, or designed without the advanced knowledge of the participant, and may also include programs providing the necessary specialist training and education required to identify and assist such individuals. (Harris-Hogan et al., 2015; Broulliette-Allarie et al., 2022).

Tertiary prevention is aimed at helping individuals disengage from violence and extremism and adopt a critical distance from extremist views or beliefs. Tertiary prevention programs, or intervention/disengagement/ deradicalization programs, target individuals who already are on a path towards radicalization, have committed acts of political violence, or have joined a violent extremist group. They focus on reintegrating the individual into society and making them give up violence (Broulliette-Allarie et al., 2022).

As it will be explained in the following section, Freire's ideas can be quite useful, particularly in the field of primary prevention, in educational activities done for the whole population.

An approach based on Paolo Freire's theories

It is interesting to highlight some aspects of Paulo Freire's life before reflecting about his theories. Born in 1921 in the Northeast of Brazil, Freire was an educator who has left an indelible mark on the field of education, not only in Brazil but in the world. His ideas and theories have been influential in areas such as adult education, literacy, and education for social transformation.

Even though he studied to become a lawyer, he was interested in education from an early age and soon decided to dedicate his time to adult literacy. In 1963, the famous literacy experience took place in Angicos, in the interior of his state Rio Grande do Norte, where three hundred workers were literate in 45 days (Dullo, 2014). Shortly thereafter, Freire was invited by the President of Brazil, João Goulart, to organize adult literacy throughout the Country. There was a plan to create 20 thousand "Culture Circles" to literate 2 million people. According to Gadotti (1996), considered by many to be his main biographer, in order to understand Freire's thought and his theory of knowledge, it is necessary to examine the context in which they arose, namely the Brazilian Northeast of the 1960s, when half of the thirty million inhabitants lived in the "culture of silence." It was therefore necessary to give them a voice and the opportunity to vote and participate in the construction of a Brazil that could overcome the dynamics of colonialism.

The project was interrupted by the military coup that took place in 1964. Considered

a subversive, Freire was imprisoned for a few months and then was sent away for years of exile. His first destination was Bolivia, from where he was forced to leave one more time after a military coup also occurred there only a month later. He then spent four and a half years in Chile, where he finished writing his most famous book, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", which was published in 1968. In this book, Freire articulated his vision of a new kind of education that could empower the oppressed and challenge the existing power structures. After a year in the United States, where he taught at Harvard University, Freire moved to Geneva, where he became a consultant to the Ecumenical Council of Churches and promoted literacy activities in several developing countries, such as Nicaragua, Guiné-Bissau, Cape Verde and Tanzania (Kohan, 2019). During this time, he continued to develop his ideas about education and wrote several other influential books, including "Education for Critical Consciousness" (1973) and "Pedagogy in Process" (1978).

In his nearly two decades of exile during the military dictatorship, Freire expanded his knowledge and readings and came into contact with revolutionary thinkers, whose influences helped him fortify the foundations of his theories (Kohan, 2019). He continued developing his educational approach and writing books during all those years, and in 1979 he went back to Brazil, where he worked both as a university lecturer and as secretary of Education in São Paulo. In Brazil, he continued to work as an educator and social activist. He played an important role in the country's transition to democracy and was instrumental in the creation of the Workers' Party, which would go on to become one of the most important political parties in Brazil (Freire, 2018).

Freire believed that education was a tool for social transformation and that it could be used to empower the poor and oppressed. He argued that conventional education was often used to reinforce existing power structures, and that a new kind of education was needed, one that puts students at the centre of the learning process and encouraged them to be active participants rather than passive recipients of information. He died in 1997, but his legacy continues to live on. He is considered one of the most important thinkers in the field of education, and his ideas continue to inspire educators and activists around the world (Freire, 2018).

Freire has always argued for an educational practice that links theory and action, social thought and social change – what he called "praxis" the value of difference, and the process of helping difference to be articulated safely through dialogue (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). To the Brazilian pedagogist, community empowerment starts when people listen to each other, engage in participatory/liberatory dialogue, identify their commonalities, and construct new strategies for change (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988).

Freire's approach to education was based on a few fundamental principles. As it was already mentioned, he believed that education should be based on dialogue between teachers and students, rather than simply being a one-way transfer of information. He also argued that education should be centred on the experiences and needs of the learners, rather than being imposed from above by teachers or educational institutions. Moreover, he saw education as a way to develop critical consciousness and to challenge the existing power structures. Applying Freirean principles to a pedagogical program leads to talk of emancipation, respective transformation, and strengthening the development of critical and reflective thinking to promote social inclusion (Dal Magro et al., 2020). It would be important to build a bridge among community, policy and research partners that build community resilience and

pluralistic dialogue to combat discrimination (Nelson & Venkatesh, 2023).

In his books, Freire did not deal with radicalization as it is nowadays conceived. He defines 'radicalization' as positive because of the critical approach it brings with it. For him, a radical person does not deny others the right to choose and does not try to impose his/her ideas but discusses them. He opposes it to 'sectarism', which he defines as an emotional and a-critical position, characterized by an arrogant, anti-dialogical and anti-communicative behaviour, that does not respect others' opinions and leads to action without reflection (Freire, 2015, p. 49). It is possible anyway to build bridges between his ideas on sectarism, radicalization and education.

Since preventing radicalization and violent extremism requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the social, political, and economic factors that contribute to extremist ideologies, Freire's ideas are particularly interesting to this field. One of the main ways that education can help prevent these phenomena is by promoting a sense of citizenship and collective responsibility. Education can teach individuals about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as the importance of community engagement and active participation in democracy (Piasecka, 2019). By fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose, education can help prevent individuals from feeling alienated or excluded from society, which can be a key factor in radicalization. Furthermore, education can also help by promoting critical thinking and analytical skills. Extremist ideologies often rely on simplistic and reductionist reasoning, which can be easily refuted through critical inquiry. By teaching individuals to question and analyze information critically, education can help prevent them from being influenced by extremist propaganda or rhetoric.

Education can also help prevent violent extremism by building bridges between communities. Schools and universities can serve as spaces for intercultural dialogue, where different perspectives and cultures can be explored and celebrated. By creating opportunities for positive interactions between people from different backgrounds, education can help break down racial, ethnic, and religious barriers and promote tolerance and understanding. Freire's critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of challenging these structures and promoting social justice (Blackburn, 2000).

Conclusion

Freire believed that authentic education is peculiarly characterized by its freeing potential and its capacity to make the recipient of such a practice an autonomous, conscious subject, capable of acting in history and changing social reality, as part of a process of building a more just society. Therefore, Freire's pedagogical proposal is not only topical, but is even more useful in our time than the one in which it was formulated. Freire's legacy can currently be traced, for example, in the experiences of immigrants' integration, in paths of education for active citizenship, in initiatives of collective discussion and critical analysis of the problems of territories and the world, in approaches of community education or popular education that animate disadvantaged territorial contexts and in paths of intercultural education and for social justice (Catarci, 2022). As it was demonstrated in the present article, his ideas are also particularly relevant when we deal with radicalization and violent extremism prevention.

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Dialogue, Embodiment & Community: Opportunities for Transformation in Dialogic Spaces

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ABSTRACT

A community-based participatory research (CBPR) examines how dialogue inspires self-inquiry, learning from others, and the environments in which we live and work. Embodied interactions between different populations support agencies for meaning-making and transformation. To view the body as the seed for transformation and evidence of transformation is often overlooked and not regarded as equal to rational thoughts. In this community project, we shift our awareness to body and movement sensations and how they change when we respond to others' movements, with which we create living and breathing *dialogic spaces* focusing on movement expressions of personal themes generated through individual interviews. Transformative learning is understood as lifelong learning in the context of a shared environment, not only through our mind but as an embodied understanding of our mind. Considering our bodies as a source of intrinsic knowledge can empower a sense of *belonging* to the communities we engage with.

Key words: Dialogue, Embodied Interactions, Lifelong Learning, Community Building, Transformative Learning.

Guiding Inquiry

As communities around the world face numerous challenges—key among them political, racial, ethnic, economic, and cultural divides in their populations—scholars and practitioners in the fields of arts, development, governance, leadership, and social change are engaged in a constant search for ways to catalyze dialogue to address those concerns and secure positive social change.

(Kirakosyan & Stephenson Jr., 2019, p. 375)

This community-based participatory action research (CBPR) project was birthed in a required course, "Praxis Project," in my doctoral studies in dance education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. The steering principles of this study are based on a lifelong learning perspective with a transformative lens in which dialogue is a core agent. It is designed to find applications of my research focus on *dialogic spaces* and dialogic research

methodologies in the communities where I live and work. Wegerif, a professor of education at the University of Cambridge, defines dialogic spaces as a multiplicity of voices, "the potential for unbounded contextual meaning" (2017, September 5). I am interested in bringing together individuals who usually do not engage with each other and guiding them into dialogic embodied interactions. The coming together of different populations might show "how individuals interpret the range of their experiences, as this will influence their ability to positively exploit the opportunities created by and offered to them" (Bannon & Sanderson, 2000, p. 22).

The reflective nature of this research on the meaning-making of dance and movement in each participant's life relates to Mezirow's affirmation that "transformative learning involves a particular function of reflection." (1991, p. 18). Could this particularity involve an embodied component of reflection? Lakoff & Johnson (1999) explain that there is evidence in the field of cognitive science that no "fully autonomous faculty of reason" is "separate[d] from and independent of bodily capacities such as perception and movement." (p. 26). Exploring the meaning-making of dance is grounded within a body/mind connection.

Dancers, including myself, engage in *coded* ways with each other, which might seem unfamiliar to non-dancer populations. Being used to express feelings, emotions, and life experiences through and with the body, can be considered for many a rare occasion, possibly at a wedding or some function, or on holiday, or in a culture in which dance is more part of daily living, if not one own. Often, a wide gap opens between professional and non-professional dancers, creating discomfort in shared spaces. Bridging this division, an intentional *dialogic space* is implanted to highlight the united aspects of each participant: the joy of moving regardless of proficiency level, status, or po-

sitionality. Antilla (2007) describes a *dialogic space* as filled with *curiosity* and *security.* Curiosity, she describes as the "interest in other's experience," and security as "an atmosphere of trust" for "facilitating individual expression and ideas" (p. 47). The instruments of interviews, structured movement improvisation alone and with others, and textual reflections were used to observe and measure this type of openness and transformative components with the participants.

Positionality

By deepening my reflections on the implicit and explicit definitions of a teacher or researcher, I extract my continuous need for *dialogic spaces.* I argue that in those spaces, Mezirow's (1991) "meaning schemes" and "perspectives" can shift when we engage in an embodied dialogue with ourselves and others and become aware of the power dynamics in the spaces in which we teach and work (p. 4).

This stance does not deny expertise and knowledge but is inspired by Dewey's understanding of life as *growth* (Garrison, 2019, p. 14). In the deeper meaning of a dialogic approach in education and research lies the realization that a student's (participant's) potential is not a prefixed phenomenon, but the pursuit of the proper means and conditions — dialogic spaces—to awaken one's potential.

Experiencing a short-lived ballet dance career due to a knee injury in my early twenties, I relied on individuals who encouraged my ongoing desire to continue my passionate dance pursuits. My then orthopaedist explained that I would need to consider a new career. Early on, I realized that believing in my potential and surrounding myself with individuals who had a genuine interest in this potential shaped my identity as a dancer, dance educator, choreographer, researcher, and facilitator in this project. Professional dance careers are often short-lived; therefore, personal meaning-making of

dance from a life-long learning perspective can support any dance professional with new perspectives and any non-professional dancer with a different appreciation for dance as an inclusive and shared experience.

Coming from a primary teacher-centred and often authoritarian ballet and modern dance background educated in Germany and the US, I often had to fill an empty vessel in becoming a dance educator and researcher with values I could defend from my core being. My best role model is my mother in many regards. Being a teacher, she imbued me with a sense that each of us, each student, is unique, and there is no one-fits-all teaching or research model that might make life easier but disregards the wholeness of the learner and participant. So, this core value from my mother is my starting point for any research philosophy to emerge. It is also her love for the arts and her understanding that only through "artistic" expression can humanness be revealed with our fully embodied beings.

Theoretical Framework

Educator hooks' (1994) vision of dialogue was the overcoming of "barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences" (p. 130). The premise of this study is that work "created" by the community and not in any formal dance setting is full of transformative opportunities. Community building is the acknowledgment of these barriers and the effort to find a commonality with which each community member can feel welcome and included. The moving towards spaces where

"cognitive, affective, somatic, and spiritual components" of embodied interactions and reflections "may lead to profound shifts in one's awareness or consciousness of being in the world" encompasses research for transformation or for transformation. (Dirkx, 2006, p.19).

Shifting between textual and embodied reflections unites the sensory perceptions of the body with the mind. Words, an abstraction of one's lifeworld,[1] cannot always express the full scope of meaning-making that a participant experiences. Schlattner (2022) accentuates the body/mind connection in her study using "metaphors" with which to articulate an embodied experience and points to an *embodied knowing* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, as cited in Schlattner, 2022, p. 834). Metaphors can build bridges between rational and sensory perceptions. Schlattner's description of Mezirow's (1991) phases of transformation aligns with her experiences in a self-defence workshop called *Model Mugging*:

> I had been through a disorienting crisis; went through a process of self-examination accompanied by intense feelings; questioned many of my previously unconscious assumptions; recognized that others had been through similar processes; explored new roles; planned new action; acquired skills and knowledge to implement these plans; tried the new roles; built self-confidence in my new self-concept; and reconciled my life with my new perspective. (Schlattner, 2022, p. 832)

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1   The sum total of physical surroundings and everyday experiences that make up an individual's world. (Merriam Webster)

However, Schlattner felt the same unease as me: Mezirow never alluded to any embodied transformation components and felt dissatisfied. Mezirow's (2003) sole emphasis on transformation as a reasoning and cognitive function overlooks the "experienced" bodily sensations and activities that can transform individuals. Ponty (1962) affirms the embodied thought within an embodied understanding of transformation, which is missing in adult education.

Dirkx (2001) included a spiritual component of transformation that suggests a "wholeness" in one's experiences and aligns with John Dewey's co-constructional learning theories, highlighting the oneness of the individual and her environment, also found in Buddhist epistemology. Sodhi (2011) defines *embodied knowing* as "a contextual experience that occurs through interactions with the environment" and "to facilitate embodied knowing as a way of learning" (p. 3). Taken as a whole, these human activities are dialogic in nature and embedded "in the changing relations with the natural/cultural/social world and the natural/cultural/social world is inextricably realized through us" (Dewey, Boydston, and Lavine, 1989, as cited in Akinleye, 2022, p. 391). We can ask if movement and dance are universal languages in different cultural contexts. Community building requires opportunities for "wholeness" and a full presence of each member for meaningful exchanges, a sharing and receiving in which an inner transformation can occur.

Somatics in Dance Education
In the field of somatic and dance education, my study is situated between the works of somatic practitioners Thomas Hanna and Martha Eddy and dance educator Eeva Antilla. Hanna (1988) defined movements as being the first to use the term somatic as perceived from "the inside out, where one is aware of feelings, movements,

and intentions, rather than looking objectively from the outside in" (p. 20). He acknowledges the subjective experience with which to align an openness of perception towards oneself, others, and the environment. Eddy (2016) links somatic education with community building "that some experience as spirituality, "connectedness," or sharing the sacredness of the body of life, as well as to deeper relaxation and improved cognition and empathy" (p. 293). (Dialogic) spaces, built on inclusiveness and with non-competitive paradigms, are essential to creating this type of "connectedness" to something larger than one's experience, a communal experience. Antilla (2007) examines in dialogic dance pedagogy the role of the teacher (researcher) in relationship to the student (participant) and how mindfulness about power dynamics in spaces of work and teaching can lead to "inner authority, autonomy, and responsibility" and "greater appreciation of play and imagination" (p.46). I determined to be a facilitator in my study based on these considerations.

The fields of transformative learning, somatic, and dance education have several overlaps by recognizing that the "process of meaning-making […] is essentially imaginative and extrarational, rather than merely reflective and rational," including bodily sensations (Dirkx, 2001, p.64).

Methodology and Design

Preparations

"CBPR develops projects from the ground up, with those whose lives are most impacted by the problem at hand, to create needed change. Methodologically, these are problem-centered or problem-driven approaches

to research that require flexibility." (Leavy, 2017, p. 224)

The transformative paradigms in this community-based participatory research design are dialogic, self-reflective, power-reflexive, action and change-oriented. It is qualitative and arts-based, expressing through dance and movement the impact dance has on each participant's life. Progressive educators John Dewey (1859-1952) and Paul Freire (1921-1997) substantially impacted the development of CBPR with their democratic teaching models. The methodology and design are rooted in the creation of non-judgmental (dialogic) space for opportunities for embodied communications between groups that usually do not interconnect by safeguarding the visibility of each participant, regardless of their roles.

This study started with a conscious recognition of what populations to include. Who is included in the community? Who is excluded in the community? And why? The participatory aspect of professional dance artists with laypeople, not in a class or workshop situation, can be considered democratic knowledge distribution. "CBPR is a relational approach to research, and therefore relationship building is essential" (Boyd, 2014, as cited in Leavy, 2017, p. 241).

I started by looking in the places close to my home on the outskirts of Berlin, where an artist's residency has thrived for the past ten years. I contacted the director of the residency in which artists from around the world experimenting with the many facets of dance, including filmmaking, theatre, and research. The dance students were recruited from the professional dance institute DanceWorks, Berlin, where I teach for several years. Finding community members in my neighbourhood became a more significant challenge. For many, the term rehearsal, informal showing, or even dance was intimidating, even when I explained

that they would have to do nothing which they felt uncomfortable. I continued my search and wanted to consider anyone if they had an interest in this project. I even asked some shop owners along the main street of my living area. Finally, three community members joined this project.

Participants
The final sample of my participants included: a) personal or professional relationships to dance, b) age range from 20–67 years, c) birthplaces in the US, Japan, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine, d) fluidity in 6 languages, e) the professions of a dance artist, filmmaker, forester, musician, dance student, nurse, and f) the gender of six women of whom two identified as non-binary, and one man. Each participant lived during the study in Berlin as a temporary visitor or resident. For some, the subject of community building had personal and artistic significance.
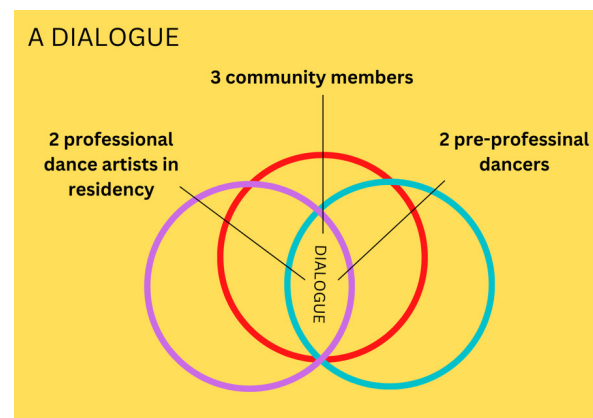

Table 1: Communities in Dialogue

Research Design: Parts (1-3) of the project:

(1) **Individual Interviews** (5 in person, 2 on Zoom) with everyone (n=7) gathering common themes:

1-hour dialogues (interviews) with each participant preceded the rehearsal and informal performance setting. Interview questions included demographic information about

dance, first dance experience (witnessed or physically experienced), and future vision about dance in society. The participants coded these interviews (transcripts were sent) for salient parts that generated themes for the *somatic dance narratives,* non-performative dance solos (SDN).

(2) A **3-hour rehearsal** in which individual SDNs are created by everyone (n=7):

A warm-up with everyone's favourite movement started the in-studio rehearsal. Based on the chosen themes from the interviews, participants created personal SDNs. They cumulated into a structured group improvisation in which each SDN was *dialoguing* with another. The four-distinct action prompts William Isaac (1999) developed in dialogue were used: 1. Move, 2. Follow, 3. Oppose, 4. Bystand.

(3) An **informal showing** right after the rehearsal:

Community members, friends & Lake Studios residents were invited to watch the informal showing. It was followed up by a discussion on the meaning of *community building* through dance and dance-making viewed from the different perspectives of the participants and audience members.

The methodology and data (interview transcripts, rehearsal videos, and photos & feedback videos & text) analysis was participatory throughout. The interviews were sent to participants to highlight salient parts and the group "choreography" for textual feedback. The focus in the analysis phase was on the meaning-making of this experience and the shift of meaning perspectives by the participants. My sole role as the facilitator was to create a non-judgmental, inclusive space in research that can be verified by the participants' feedback.

Findings

The multi-modality of the data encourages a complex look at human experience. The data synthesis confirmed a need for dance to express feelings and the subconscious emergence of internalized power dynamics. All participants acknowledged embodied communication as a helpful tool to move beyond language barriers, cultural differences, and hierarchic perceptions of dance inclusions. An embodied knowing which often precedes the abstraction of the spoken and written word, was acknowledged in the non-judgmental dialogic space.

The findings can be categorized into three parts: a. *dialogue with oneself* as a self-reflective encounter and meaning generator, b. the *dialogic spaces with others*, acknowledgment of other's narratives, influencing one's own, and c. the emergence of a sense of *belonging to a larger community*. The onset of different roles and identities, new learning processes, and the fostering of an embodied understanding of communication suggest some transformational components for the participants.

These themes emerged from the interviews which each participant chose as inspiration for the *somatic dance narratives*: (1) caring for others, (2) melting with the music, (3) feeling rooted, (4) the earth is the body, (5) letting go, (6) new possibilities, (7) to open, (8) always moving, (9) memories, and (10) heavy/light. The participants' feedback is categorized as follows:

Dialogue with Oneself:

> *At the beginning of the creation process, I found myself unsure as to how my inner dialogue would go. It was a challenge and a great opportunity to disconnect from trying to impress in dance with pirouettes, tricks, and technique and instead to be authenti-*

cally myself, to move as if I were alone in the room talking to myself. One thing I appreciate is the safe space you (facilitator) have created in the studio to be ourselves and to be vulnerable. That helped me to connect with myself and allow that connection to extend to others. (Dance Student from Russia)

I am amazed that everything looks so harmonious in the video. Although the dance backgrounds of the participants are so different, a relatively uniform movement image has formed in just a few hours. Of course, as a layperson, I had some fears, especially before watching the video, but also afterward. After the workshop, I got a more unrestrained, free body feeling and expanded my radius of action and sense of space. (Community Member from Berlin, Germany, Musician)

It was a very special experience that you (facilitator) made possible for us! And in any case, a lasting, good feeling. Now, after watching the video, I would want to try more, for example, take more space, go into the deeper level, etc. (Community Member from Berlin, Germany, Nurse)

My very head-driven state subsided in these hours here. I know to dance relaxed by yourself... [in the discotheque], but I needed to get used to this form of dance, but I could eventually identify with it. (Community Member from Brandenburg, Germany (close to Berlin), Forester)

Dialogic Spaces with Others:

In reflection, what's most apparent to me is how the room felt. The air felt so charged with energy and focus. We were connected in a way that I don't often feel. We all came into this space willing to be vulnerable, equally open, to be seen and interact with. That made it a very safe space to be and move. This was a room full of strangers, people whose lives I didn't know, would never know, but I understood them on a more fundamental level. An unspoken feeling of vulnerability, understanding, support, and community was present that night. And I don't think something like that is easy to achieve. (Filmmaker from the US)

It was a unique experience to come together with a new group of people to explore and create movements individually and collectively. I sensed the group opening up to one another throughout the research, rehearsal, and performance process. This openness towards sharing space, time, and movement with one another continues to resonate afterward. (Dance Artist from the US)

The perception of the smooth movements of the professional dancers, but also the protected atmosphere at the workshop, allowed me, as a newcomer, to experience very nice physical experiences. I wasn't aware of the three dance levels before, the change from the floor and to the floor was challenging for me, but also new in terms of observation and movement. Even now, looking back, I keep thinking about this change of perspective.

The professionals were very open and welcoming towards me. (Participant 3, Community Member from Berlin, Germany, Musician)

The connection created between dancers by copying and adapting someone else's movements is very strong. I liked small moments of stillness, and an occasional emotion. Connection is still very clear and strong when playing with different levels and distances. (Dance Student from Russia)

The project itself was a great opportunity to look at dance from a new perspective. Communication with unknown people through movements, beyond words and any prejudices made me feel joyful and inspired. I definitely have to admit the energy shift of a group feeling from the moment we saw each other until the final performance. I felt that all participants trusted the process and committed to it, so all together we had a wonderful time. (Dance Student from Ukraine)

Belonging to a larger community:

The ending was a nice closure, with the whole group uniting in movement quality and tempo, as if becoming One. During improvisation on the day and now re-watching the video, you cannot tell on the 'levels' of dancers. It just confirms that one doesn't need to be a professional dancer to create dialogue — all you need is people who are open to share and connect. (Dance Student from Russia)

We've all gone back to our lives, separately, for the most part. And with me being in the U.S., the physical space between me and the rest of the dancers is significant. We will never cross paths again, I will never see them again. But there will always be that moment of overlap between us all, and there's something meaningful about that. Especially for me, someone who doesn't dance very often, the people in that room saw me in a way that most people in my life don't. They recognized me under different circumstances, and vice versa. It makes me feel like there's a possibility for that kind of connection elsewhere, with different strangers. That aforementioned feeling can be recreated again and again, if only people are willing to try. (Filmmaker from the US)

Discussion and Implication

This study affirmed that embodied dialogue and communication between groups that usually do not interact provides a bridge towards deeper understanding of oneself and others. The embodied component broadens the perspective on learning of one's identity, role, and expectation in spaces with others and insights on how to perceive others with "new" eyes. An embodied communication fosters an intuitive, pre-linguistic cognition for transformational component in learning and align with Dirkx's (2001), "wholeness" in one's experiences and Dewey's co-constructional learning theories. Dance environments can be divided by expertise level or a *universal* language to connect with, if intentionally non-judgmental (dialogic) spaces foster openness, "trust" and "curiosity" towards oneself and others.

The study found that all participants experienced a level of adjustment towards comfort and wellbeing after an initial discomfort, which relates to Mezirow's "disorientating dilemma" which usually precedes any transformative learning. The "dancers" had to find more authentic movements without a professional or artistic expectations by others, and the "non-dancers" needed to feel included in an unfamiliar space which did not reflect their daily activities.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet two of my dance student participants. Both are in their final year of their education and asked them about any further reflections on our community more than 6 months ago. Both openly smiled and recalled some of their emotions that day. Mostly they resonated with warm and comforting feelings. Their bodies have "stored" this experience and with it a trust towards unfamiliar situation. Any involvement in any similar project in the future could already feel more integrated and inspire them towards community building.

Drawing on Dirkx' (2001) imaginal approach which can be fostered not only through "journal writing, literature, poetry, art, movies, story-telling", but also through "dance", the dialogic space of this community calls for the metaphor, that "I can only see myself fully in others' reflections" (p. 70). This empirical, collaborative study confirms that our body can express images from within, and we can also become an image through our bodies for others, which can change the way we feel, see and define ourselves in the communities, in which we live or visit.

This CBPR adds to the significance of embodiment and embodied knowing in adult education and agency building for meaning-making and transformation. The awareness that embodied dialogic interactions can support a fuller and more "whole" experience in our communities and move beyond the immediacy of this encounter to a shift of perspectives in any future encounters.

This study wants to position embodiment horizontally to rational and critical reflection in transformative learning and adding the acknowledgment of an embodied understanding of our world. It also aligns with Dirkx (2001) "self-searching for wholeness through relationship" (p. 70). In conclusion, this participatory action research in a community setting contributes to not only a unification of the body with the mind, but also to the unification of people finding a common ground (through movements) to communicate.

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The Role of the Adult Educator and the Ethical Dimension according to the Transformative Theory of Mezirow and Aristotle's Theory
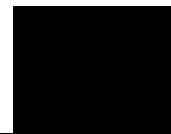
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ABSTRACT

The subject of this particular thesis aims to dive into the ethical part of the role of the adult educator and simultaneously highlight aspects related to Aristotle's theory on the issue of ethics. This study is methodologically based on the bibliographic review of the relevant subject and aims to highlight the aspects of the Transformative theory that relate to the subject of the adult educator, emphasizing the importance of ethics. Mezirow and Aristotle agree on the subject of emancipatory learning, in that they both believe that learning is achieved through the process of critical reflection and rational dialogue. In this way, this person becomes better by changing, where necessary, even consolidating elements of his personality. The discussion of the topic ends on the necessity of the role of the adult trainer to support his trainees without manipulating their thoughts, wants, and perceptions in an unethical way.

Key words: Transformative Learning, Ethics, Adult Educator.

Introduction

The subject of this paper aims to deepen the specific approach and its presentation, consequently focusing on the ethical part of the role of adult educator and simultaneously highlighting elements related to Mezirow's and Aristotle's theory on the issue of ethics. Both Jack Mezirow and Aristotle have addressed ethical considerations related to adult education, albeit from different perspectives. According to a wide definition, an adult educator is considered to be a person who is engaged in any instructive, advisory, administrative/ organizational activity and/or in a program development concerning adult education (Jarvis et al., Wilson, 1999:10, 272; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982:16-17; Knox, 1985:183). This paper aims to map the areas where the theory of Transformative Learning were expressed by the modern thinker of Adult Education, Jack Mezirow, and the Aristotelian theory. Relying on literature, the paper argues that the two theories share considerable similarities.

Adult education and Greek philosophy

Adult education and Greek philosophy are two distinct but interconnected topics that have

played significant roles in the development of human thought and society. Adult education refers to providing learning opportunities and educational experiences to adults beyond their initial formal education. Greek philosophy refers to the intellectual tradition of philosophical thought that emerged in Ancient Greece.

Ethics in Adult Education

According to Freire, "Education should raise the awareness of the students so that they become subjects, rather than objects, of the world. This is done by teaching students to think democratically and to continually question and make meaning from everything they learn" (Fortaliza, 2007, p 3). Ethics in Adult Education is a crucial aspect that governs the field's behaviour, relationships, and principles. Ethical considerations are essential to create a safe, respectful, and effective learning environment for adult learners. In Adult Education, there is a great divergence between the standard roles and the functions performed by the educators (Gioti, 2010).

Jack Mezirow- Transformative Learning

Jack Mezirow is a principal thinker in adult education who developed his categorization of Transformative Learning (TL) in the late 70s and early 80s (Kapur, 2006). The theory has later evolved into a detailed explanation about understanding, validating, and reforming the meaning of what they experience (Cranton, 1994, p. 22). A contemporary theorist of adult education, who embraced Mezirow's theory, is Stephen Brookfield, who considers that the Transformative learning involves questioning fundamental change and reframing the way of thinking and acting of the adult learner (Brookfield, 2007).

TL is the way that people change their manners, they interpret their experiences and their interactions with the world. If an individual holds opposing viewpoints about something in the outside world, he becomes aware of it; if an individual determines alternatives available and brings changes in his perspectives of observing things, that means that he has brought transformation in some area of the surroundings, environment, or the world.

According to the theory of Transformative Learning", an adult learner reflects and reflects critically on already accepted concepts, re-evaluates the previous assumptions on which beliefs are based, and takes action based on the insightful thinking that results from the transformed view as a consequence of his reevaluations (Mezirow, 1990). TL is the way that people change their manners, they interpret their experiences and their interactions with the world. If an individual holds opposing viewpoints about something in the outside world, he becomes aware of it; if an individual determines alternatives available and brings changes in his perspectives of observing things, that means that he has brought transformation in some area of the surroundings, environment, or the world. This theory owes Jack Mezirow characteristics such as "conception, name, basic concepts, basic formulation, and its development until the phase of maturity" (Lintzeris, 2010: 96), while St. Brookfield extended it by clarifying Mezirow's often abstruse reasoning (Kokkos, 2010).

Ethical principles according to Mezirow

Ethical principles of adult educators according to Mezirow are the following:Respect for

Learners: Adult educators should respect the autonomy and dignity of learners. They should create a safe and inclusive learning environment that encourages open dialogue, critical reflection, and exploration of diverse viewpoints.

Empowerment and Empathy: Adult educators should strive to empower learners by facilitating their growth and development. They should be empathetic, understanding the learners' unique backgrounds and experiences, and supporting them in their transformative journey.

Ethical Responsibility: Adult educators are responsible for promoting ethical reasoning and social justice. They should encourage learners to critically examine their values, assumptions, and biases, fostering an ethical and socially conscious mindset.

This independent thinking process: "helps adults to have autonomous thinking skills, which is essential and crucial to take place and live in a democratic civil society and for making morally sound decisions" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 7). Another contribution of transformative learning theory for Mezirow is the fact that it can serve us to produce and develop adults who are more autonomous and can think critically (1997). Being adults or citizens who can think or reflect autonomously is also a fundamental and inevitable element for having citizens who can act democratically (Mezirow, 2006)

Mezirow claims that it is not ethical the adult educators to:

- Facilitate a transformation of thinking when its consequences may involve risky actions.
- Deliberately accelerate transformative learning without making sure that the learner fully under-

stands that such transformation can occur.
- Decide which of the learner's beliefs should be questioned or challenged.
- Present his own theory, which may have too much influence on the trainee.
- Refuse to help a trainee take action because his personal beliefs conflict with those of the trainee.
- Make educational interventions when mental distortions seem to hinder the trainee's progress, if the adult educator is not trained as a psychotherapist (Mezirow, 1991).

Who was Aristotle?

Aristotle was an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist born in Stagira, Chalkidiki, Macedonia, Greece. At the age of 17, he entered Plato's academy in Athens, where he remained until he was 37. Philosopher, a leading educator, and undoubtedly the most systematic and methodical mind of antiquity (Newsbeast 2013). He was destined to pass on his bright spirit to his pupil, Alexander the Great. He would establish his own school, the famous Aristotelian Lyceum of Athens, where he would pass into immortality both for his teaching work and — above all — for the incredibly compositional ability of his mind.

Aristotele's theory

The philosopher found that virtue is optional and freely chosen by man. The task of the Aristotelian orator is the individual who does not act morally and fails to understand and interpret the principles of the practices that govern social life. Any action that does not contribute

positively to the social whole, ceases to exist. Therefore, the role of adult educator becomes important in guiding the community as a whole. Only with their help will the community's well-being go as a whole. The person must learn what is appropriate to the free man and what does not stand in the way of acquiring virtue. In this, the role of education and lifelong learning is decisive, which liberates the fields of practice and makes wisdom a constituent of primary importance.

Aristotle and ethics theory

Aristotle was the first to deal systematically with the ethical problem, he founded ethics as a philosophical science. Aristotle examines the ethical problem in Ethical Nicomacheia. Aristotle's ethics is rationalist ethics. The source of ethics is rational reason. He discovers and determines the ethics appropriate. There is no place for emotion, conscience, or divine law in the assessment of morality.

The ethical theory of Aristotle

Aristotle conceives ethical theory as a field distinct from the theoretical sciences. We study ethics to improve our lives, and therefore its principal concern is the nature of human well-being. Aristotle follows Socrates and Plato in taking the virtues to be central to a well-lived life. Aristotle classifies human virtues into two categories: the intellectual virtues — which are connected with the rational part of the soul – and the moral virtues — are connected with the third part of the soul that participates in both the rational and the moral part of the soul and the reasoning part.

Aristotle's virtue ethics applied to adult educators

Aristotle's virtue ethics can also inform adult educator ethics. While Aristotle did not specifically address adult education, his ethical framework offers valuable insights:

Moral Character: Adult educators should strive to cultivate virtuous qualities in themselves and their learners. By exemplifying virtues like patience, fairness, and integrity, educators can provide moral guidance and be role models for their students.

Practical Wisdom: Adult educators should exercise practical wisdom (phronesis) in their teaching practices. This involves making sound ethical judgments and decisions, adapting teaching methods to meet learners' needs, and facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

Eudaemonia-Personal Development: Adult educators should recognize that education is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about personal growth and flourishing. They should support learners in their pursuit of eudaemonia, promoting self-reflection and the development of moral character. Aristotle's Rhetoric offers over time a diversity of forms of practical discourse, from which it springs the character of the orator (Triantari, 2015). The success of practical speech depends on the virtuous character of the orator, who will be distinguished for his good knowledge of humans. Therefore, the ability to persuade depends directly on the moral virtue of the orator. An important role is played by the character of the orator so that he can convince his audience. In the advisory speech of the orator, he guides in the acquisition of the happiness of the city, and of the citizens as individuals and citizens (Triantari, 2015).

Parallel examination of the two thinkers

A parallel examination of the two thinkers, who belong to separate periods and different milieus, is related to their shared proposition concerning the dialogue with our own self (Mantzanaris, 2018).

Reflective Dialogue

Dialogue is common for both thinkers. Mezirow proposes a reflective course toward the truth, we transform our previous convictions. The impact of Freire on the development of Mezirow's set of thoughts has to do with encouraging critical consciousness by analysing questions and assuming social action based on dialogue and critical consciousness (Freire, 1973; Taylor, 1998; Harris et al. 2008). In these terms, as was the Aristotelian proposition, dialogue is included as a channel of prolific reassessment of our convictions. However, Aristotle does not mention in his moral treatises any kind of dialogue in ethical and mental procedures configuring the Person (Pirgeris, 2016).

Critical reflection is common for the two thinkers and constitutes a crucial process in the problem-solving procedure, as long as it reframes initial reasoning and assumptions and encourages the adoption of a critical viewing of our previous distorted beliefs (Fisher, 2003). Mezirow claims that critical reflection and reflective dialogue are carried out by adult trainees, while Aristotle says that wisdom, like all virtues, is praised by the social whole, the city. There is one difference between the two thinkers. The dissatisfaction, the problem, results from our dysfunctions and our difficulty in adapting to the new conditions we discovered while forming our new perceptions.

Mezirow and Aristotle agree on the subject of emancipatory learning in that they both believe that learning is achieved through the process of critical reflection and that learning is achieved through free and rational dialogue and has as its purpose and prerequisite the performance of such acts, which are the result of the individual's free will. In this way, this person becomes better by changing, where necessary, even consolidating elements of his personality (Koulauzidis, 2008).

Disorientating dilemma (Mezirow)-Aporia (Aristotle)-Were the same?

According to Aristotle (Mantzanaris, Aristotle, et al., : I, 8-9, 17b, 8-11), dialectic constitutes a crucial condition of arguments, which create the interrogative determinants of aporia in order to pose the suitable aporia each time according to the searching proposition that is put forward. Aristotle notes that "a dialectical proposition is a question which accords with the opinion held by everyone or by the majority or by the wise" (Mantzanaris, 2007). The disorientating dilemma, according to Mezirow (the Aristotelian aporia, in other words), can be the result of an enlightening conversation or of a work of art while contacting a different culture of thought and attitude.

In this way, because of a crisis experienced during our life (Mezirow, 1978), those conditions are formed with our initial assumptions and reshape our opinions towards a totally different and unprecedented direction of our life (Laros, 2017). The intellectual models that can ram are those in which we can find "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (Senge, 1990, p. 8).

According to Aristotle, "deliberation and choice" implies free action, as the case with the

'dilemma' defined by Mezirow that leads us to the solution of problems through the transformative process. This statement is considered a common place for the two thinkers.

Eudaemonia- Personal development is also common for the two thinkers. Moreover, both thinkers underline the importance of experience**,** which distinguishes adults from non-adults. Experience is the subjective process of internalizing reality and is the frame of reference for interpreting the world that surrounds us (Koulaouzidis, 2010). Mezirow stresses that transformative learning should encourage adults to become independent learners who can think independently (Sahin 2018).

Both thinkers emphasize the rectum of reason: Mezirow names it "critical contemplation" and "critical self-reflection" while Aristotle identifies it as the intellectual virtue of «phronesis».

Adult Educator's or Orator's Character

Ethical responsibility and respect for learners are two important points that both thinkers state. The importance of the adult educator character as Mezirow says and the orator character as Aristotle says is of huge importance because the advisory speech of both is leading people or adult learners in the acquisition of the happiness of the city as Aristotle claims or in deep knowledge of their own self as both thinkers state. According to Aristotle, the orator can cultivate in his audience a way of thinking and a method of moral self-improvement. According to Mezirow the adult educator can lead his adult learners in transformation through critical consciousness. The orator's ethos is the greatest evidence to convince listeners (Iliou, 1984). Citizens must benefit from education (as a collective good), so that personal and, by extension, public life can be improved, creating

the conditions to conquer consciousness and lead each citizen to spiritual and social fulfilment according to qualifications. Of great importance is the formation of people's identity through complex paths, often unpredictable (Barnes, 1995).

Conclusions

Jack Mezirow and Aristotle have contributed to ethical matters in their respective fields. While Mezirow is known for his work in transformative learning theory, Aristotle is renowned for his contributions to virtue ethics.

Mezirow's transformative learning theory emphasizes the ethical responsibilities of adult educators, such as respecting learners, empowering them, and fostering ethical reasoning.

Aristotle's virtue ethics highlights the importance of moral character, practical wisdom, and personal development in the role of adult educators.

Hence, the examination of the two thinkers leads to the production of new questions within the academic dialogue and during the investigation of our course as human beings. "The educator is an expert, a transmitter of knowledge who directs the learning process, while the learner's role is to cultivate intellect, to constantly seek knowledge resulting from cultural tradition" (Gioti, 2010).

It is not possible to claim that Mezirow follows Aristotle or that Aristotle poses interrogative propositions of a psychological nature. "The comparative examination of the two thinkers was not random, as it constituted a crucial question regarding the discovery of truth during the examination of reflection in the field of adult education" (Mantzanatis, 2018). Although these two great thinkers, Mezirow and Aristotle, are separated in time by about 2500 years, through their very import-

ant theories, they converse with the needs of humanity and marked the way for happiness. Combining these perspectives can guide adult educators in creating transformative and ethically grounded learning experiences.

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Refining Adult Learners' Discursive Capacities: A Response to the Current Epistemological Crisis through the Lens of Transformation Theory

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ABSTRACT

The following article begins with the observation that both public discourse, as well as dialogue between adult learners within certain educational contexts, is frequently confined to competitive and strongly assertive claims, a characteristic which significantly diminishes the epistemological potential of the dialogical act. Drawing on the above restrictive understanding of the dialogical act among particular groups of adult learners, the article attempts to explore strategies through which this understanding can be enriched and transformed into a more complex and multidimensional process. The central orientation of such a transition is elaborated through the lens of Jack Mezirow's Transformation Theory, thus growing out of an examination, as well as an effort to transform, the epistemological 'habits of mind' which characterize the learners' distorted perception of the dialogical act.

Key words: Epistemological Crisis, Dialogue and Adult Education, Transformation Theory, Epoché, Complexity.

Introduction

The widespread lack of consensus about what constitutes valid knowledge, as well as about the ways that are considered appropriate to acquire such knowledge, has been highlighted by Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert (2021), as the dominant epistemological 'crisis' of our times. As the writers note, there is a significant segment of citizens who discuss key issues of global importance, based only on *what* or *who* they believe, while disregarding the crucial aspect of examining and evaluating the methods and processes through which they end up having these beliefs (2021, p. 9). This particular imbalance becomes more apparent in relation to two striking examples: the emergence of the anti-vaccine movement, as well as the binary, 'dualistic' view regarding climate change (2021, p. 9-10). It is characteristic that, in relation to the latter, a choice to either 'believe or not believe' in human-induced global climate change, seems to be based – according to the writers – 'on one's political or religious identity', or because one '*believes* in science' (2021, p.10).

What is impressive here is that discussions about the validity of a certain factual claim (i.e. what is factually true about climate change) appear to be heavily obstructed by

the influence of specific normative and evaluative orientations (i.e. one 'should adhere to science', or one 'should prioritize the sayings of religion'). Surely, the relationship between the factual and the evaluative, plays a significant role in the emergence of the crisis designated above, however in this paper I would like to focus mostly on the evaluative dimension of this crisis, given that discussions about value, are themselves frequently characterized by a 'dualistic' and polemical form of competing statements, that is, statements that preclude any deeper conversations about the ways in which normative convictions are formed. As an adult educator, I have often observed that some learners tend to underestimate, or fail to realize, the importance of collaborative dialogue, as a highly useful means for shaping a mutually agreed upon acknowledgement of the value conflicts and value priorities, which are at stake in any given discussion about social policy or decision-making.

In what follows, I will attempt to substantiate the above observation, by presenting my experience with a range of adult learners within a particular educational context. Drawing on this experience, I will attempt to demonstrate my effort to analyse and transform the learners' distorted understanding of the dialogical act, by utilizing specific practices and concepts from the field of Adult Education. The methodological axis of this effort will be based on Jack's Mezirow's Transformation Theory (1991, 2000), which constitutes the most comprehensive theoretical attempt to systematize aspects of the field. At the same time, I will also draw on insights from the field of psychology (Kitchener1983, 1990, in Mezirow, 1991 Rogers, 2012), as well as philosophy (Kant 1970 /1987 in Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert, 2021 Rachels, 2003), in order to illuminate the logic of certain analytical and practical aspects of the project.

Presentation and Analysis of the Problem

For the past three years, I have been teaching a module on 'Critical Thinking', in the General Education Program, at a private college in Athens. The course is obligatory for all students – who are mostly aged between 18 and 24 – and a significant part of our work consists of discussions revolving around issues of moral and socio-political interest. These discussions usually require an in-depth examination of the value assumptions of the participants (see examples below); however, this examination is seriously hampered, due to the fact that students frequently just end up having debates, taking "for" or "against" sides, in relation to a given issue under consideration. This binary, polarized form of dialogue seems to reproduce in the classroom, the restrictive understanding of public discourse designated above, since opposing statements of evaluative preferences appear to take precedence over any alternative understanding of the dialogical act.

Considering the students' particular stance towards the dialogical act, I tried to analyse their attitude by referring to the concepts of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. More specifically, I tried to make use of the analytical distinction between (dysfunctional) 'points of view' and 'habits of mind', which this theory introduces (Mezirow, 2000, 2007, pp. 43-47), in order to make sense of the problem. According to Mezirow, there would be a possibility to transform both the students' wider mental predispositions (their 'habits of mind'), as well as the individual expressions of these predispositions (the students' 'points of view'), as long as these were identified, critically reassessed and reframed, through alternative modes of action and understanding.

The simplistic understanding of dialogue as a form of debate between two opposing and conclusive positions, seemed to constitute a

dysfunctional point of view that underestimated the *exploratory* and, therefore, *reflective* possibilities offered by a more comprehensive understanding of the dialogical interaction. This dysfunctional point of view appeared to constitute a particular form of cognitive behaviour, which confined the process of exploring knowledge, to an exclusive form of competing viewpoints. This kind of cognitive behaviour could be further attributed to an epistemological 'habit of mind', concerning the way knowledge is formed, as well as the way the process of learning is understood: the students failed to realize that a more comprehensive understanding of the dialogical act, could actually *enrich* the ways through which they could learn how to think about a given issue. And, this epistemological habit of mind, could also be related to another one, of the same kind, which limited the students' understanding of 'learning' to its traditional forms: a number of students were often absent during the hours scheduled for discussion, reappearing only for my lectures, a fact which indicated that they considered the process of learning to spring mainly from the vertical transmission of knowledge from educator to learner, and not from their own research and intersubjective interaction.

Both of the above epistemological habits of mind recalled significant aspects of what psychologist K.S. Kitchener refers to as 'epistemic premise distortions' (1983, 1990 and in Mezirow, 1991, pp. 123-128), namely, the difficulties learners may have with coming to grips with the process of 'rational inquiry', as

a presupposition for cultivating their reflective judgment (1983, 1990 and in Mezirow, 1991, pp. 123-128). My students, either in the form of assuming that they already possess a correct 'for or against' answer to a particular question, or in the form of referring to an authority (their teacher), as the bearer of a correct answer, seemed to resist and recoil from the complexity of the process of rational inquiry. As I understood it, this resistance could be attributed to the fact that, when it came to the question of what was 'true' about a certain issue under consideration, the students were frequently clinging to their own direct subjective understanding, or that of an authority, because of their need to hold on to some kind of cognitive *certainty*. However, for a learner to realize that uncertainty is an integral part of the process of inquiry, and that this process is itself fallible (although still useful), constitutes an important epistemological step.[1] In order to help my students take this step, the challenge which I decided to confront, was to try to familiarize them with elements of uncertainty, which their own collaborative inquiry could entail. At the same time, I would have to set up the conditions for a kind of dialogical interaction that would be truly collaborative, so as to mitigate the students' need to cling to the certainty of their own position, a need which usually led to the binary understanding of an issue mentioned above.

In this way, the objective of the activities that follow is two-fold: first, to establish a more cooperative framework for the dialogical act,

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1   See also Kitchener on the seven stages of development of reflective judgment (1983,1990). Moreover, see Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco CA: Jossey -Bass, for Mezirow's consideration of Kitchener's approach. Although Kitchener does not distinguish between reflection within different domains of learning (i.e. 'instrumental' and 'communicative' learning, in Mezirow 2000), and Mezirow points to this divergence from his own understanding, he considers the issues which Kitchener tackles in her analysis above (namely, questions of public policy), as comparable to the problems that pertain to his conceptualization of the domain of 'communicative' learning.

and second, to allow this framework to become a catalyst for the students' coming to terms with certain difficulties of the process of rational inquiry.

Building a Relevant Framework of Activities

The book recommended by the private college at which I am employed for teaching Critical Thinking is Diestler's *Becoming a Critical Thinker: A User Friendly Manual* (2012), and the 9th chapter of the particular book, which is entitled *"Fair-mindedness"*, includes an active listening exercise, created by psychotherapist Carl Rogers (2012, p. 419 onwards). The participants are divided into pairs, with one member of each pair expressing their opinion about an issue, and the other expressing their own, after first having reformulated *in their own words*, the opinion expressed by the former. Once both members have agreed on the way in which they understand the issue at hand, the discussion between the participants moves forward, through continuous mutual efforts of rephrasing, so that each student's viewpoint, as well as the issue under consideration, becomes clearer to the other. What emerges through this exercise is a meticulous process of 'paraphrasing', for the purpose of forming a common ground of communication. As I explained to the students, each paraphrase could also be expressed in the form of a question.

The exercise took place in cases where opposing views were expressed during a discussion (with the discussion naturally being interrupted and postponed, in order for the exercise to be conducted), or the pairs were asked from the beginning to find a topic on which their views differed and discuss it.

An example of an issue that was raised, and successfully developed, can be presented here indicatively. The issue was based on the students' personal experiences with the high-school subject of ancient Greek, and the question was whether the subject was a "useful" or "useless" academic course. The paraphrasing exercises led to a gradual mitigation of the binary evaluative positions around the issue, through the students' repeated efforts to refine the general statements regarding the usefulness of the particular subject: what exactly do we mean by "useful" and "useless"? Is "useful" knowledge to be understood through a mostly instrumentalist perspective (understood, for instance, as professionally 'exploitable' later in life), or could it also refer to a wider linguistic development, and the cultivation of cultural sensitivity? Moreover, could these two concepts of 'usefulness' be, in fact, linked to one another, and how?

All of the questions above, formed a collective basis of problematization, on which the students started to build a deeper comprehension of each other's perspectives. Building on such a basis, constitutes a prerequisite for the achievement of *mutual understanding*, a principle which constitutes a key aspect of what Mezirow calls rational 'discourse', in the context of his Transformation Theory (2000, 2007, pp. 50-55). The aim of mutual understanding also represents a key aspect of Jurgen Habermas' conceptualization of 'discourse' (1984), a conceptualization Mezirow draws upon, in order to elaborate his own approach. It should be noted that one of the conditions posited by Habermas (1984), as necessary for the achievement of mutual understanding, refers specifically to the condition of the *comprehensibility* of the expressed viewpoints in the context of the dialogical act, and this condition was able to be actualized through the paraphrasing exercises analysed above. The effort for more careful, precise and thorough articulations, emerged as an important presupposition of the effective function of discourse.

By cultivating the intention of comprehensibility, the students were also confronted with one more important epistemic challenge, namely, that of adopting a critical stance towards the certainty of their own views. More specifically, the paraphrasing exercises allowed the students to practice what Mezirow calls 'epoché' (2000, 2007, p. 52), a term which the scholar borrows from the ancient Greek Sceptics, referring to a temporary *suspension of judgment*, affected in the context of discourse, in order to achieve a clearer understanding of the issue at hand. Characteristically, the above interrogation of the different meanings of the concept of 'usefulness', allowed the students to practise 'epoché', by refraining from rushing to a judgment about the issue, and instead entering a process of analysing and elucidating the ambiguity of the concepts in play. By being confronted with an *interpretive ambiguity*, the students began to realize their own active role in formulating the meaning of a subject under consideration, while becoming more aware of the fact that elements of uncertainty and complexity actually play a significant part in the process of dialogical interaction, as well as in the process of learning and understanding.[2]

Once the aforementioned exercise had taken place, the students were called to present the viewpoints of their partners, first to a group of their fellow students, and then before the entire class (snowballing strategy). As I had emphasized at the start of the exercise, the purpose of this effort would be to elucidate and document the various perspectives, and *not* reach final conclusions.

As noted above, the broader purpose of the dialogical exercises outlined here, would be to mitigate the binary and conclusive treatment of an issue, in favour of familiarizing students with the breadth and depth of the process of reflective inquiry. In line with this purpose, the students were then asked to conduct group projects with the specific aim of *mapping out the complexity of an issue*, in a more systematic way. Separated into groups of 5-6, the students were first asked to apply the process just analysed, in relation to a topic of interest. This time, however, the groups were also provided with particular conceptual tools that could assist them in delineating and framing the process more methodically.

The conceptual tools I provided them with, were drawn from:

a. *Mezirow's Theory of Transformation, where the three dimensions of the concept of critical reflection are analysed – that is, the content of a point of view, the criteria, and process used for formulating the particular point of view, and, finally, the generalized assumptions, on which a given point of view is based (see premise reflection and habits of mind in Mezirow, 2000, 2007, p.59).*

b. *Certain texts in the course's curriculum that connect the content of specific criteria, to the schools of moral and political philosophy that produced them (Rachels, 2003). Indicatively, we discussed criteria drawn from Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics (judging a practice according to certain principles), Utilitarianism (judging a practice*

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2   It should be noted here parenthetically that it is under this light that one could return to the vagueness of the expressions of a 'belief in science' or a 'priority of religion', mentioned at the beginning of this paper, in order to try to specify and explain these expressions.

by referring to its consequences and utility) and also Aristotle's philosophy of the virtues (judging a character, rather than an isolated action).

Both the concept of a 'criterion' and that of an 'assumption' proved to serve as productive analytical tools.

In relation to the function of 'assumption', an example that was examined was the idea of the "sanctity" of human life, as the basis for certain opinions expressed against the practices of abortion and euthanasia. It is worth noting here, that in this case, the students referred back to the process of 'epoché' which they had utilized before, trying to determine whether one could trace an interpretive ambiguity in our understanding of what makes life 'sacred': does the idea spring from an unconditional protection of life in its biological sense, or could it also spring from an unconditional respect for the inherent value and dignity of a human being? And, if the latter is the case, could there be a possibility for the idea to be also used in favour of the right to abortion or euthanasia, since an essential aspect of human dignity refers to the right to self-determination?

By interrogating these issues, the students became more critical towards the polemical construal of the pro-life / pro-choice debate around abortion and euthanasia, realizing the need to further clarify and justify the assumptions of each position. Once more, the indeterminacy of a concept ('sanctity'), worked as an incentive which allowed learners to deepen their capacity for reasonable inquiry.

A methodologically similar approach was adopted in relation to the function of 'criterion'. The first example discussed, referred us back to the idea of 'usefulness', examined in relation to an academic subject such as ancient Greek above. The students attempted this time to understand the idea under the light of the phil-

osophical criterion of 'utility', as this has been elaborated by the philosophical school of Utilitarianism, referring to the consequences of a particular practice. Again, the interpretation of 'utility' did not seem to be straightforward to the students: they wondered how 'utility' can actually be measured, given that not everyone agrees on what is best for everyone.

Disagreements around different types of utility were then recorded and attributed to different contexts of consideration. What the students seemed to observe was the necessity to simultaneously open up the discussion around these disagreements *and* try to work through them. I deemed this observation to be crucial, since it showed that the students were starting to integrate both an awareness of uncertainty and a need for intersubjective negotiation, in their understanding of how dialogue works.

Conclusion

The purpose of highlighting the examples above, was not to establish a relativistic approach to the truth, but to undermine competitive dogmatism, by allowing students to realize that neither the truth nor the meaning of a topic under consideration, is pre-given and immediately available. As Mezirow notes (2000, 2007, pp. 51-52), the elaboration of judgement is probationary and tentative, and if we are not able to understand the meaning of our own way of thinking and experience, we can easily cling to external sources of knowledge, such as authority or tradition, and thus remain unreflective. By realizing this fact and acting upon this realization, the students activated their ability to handle more intricate and multidimensional discursive processes, thus beginning to transform the restrictive stance towards the dialogical act, which they had manifested at the beginning. The gradual transformation of the

students' stance towards the dialogical act, affected through the exercises above, seemed to significantly strengthen the students' epistemic agency by allowing them a. to identify the consequences of the criteria and assumptions that guide their evaluations, b. to raise productive critical questions, and c. to not shy away from the inevitable interpretive difficulties of the discursive process.

These competencies helped students formulate a common basis of mutual understanding, while cultivating some important presuppositions for the formation of a conscious reflective judgement.

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The Proceedings of the first Conference of the ESREA Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education Network, which took place in July 2023 at the Hellenic Open University in Patras, showcases a wide-ranging and vibrant collection of current research. The conference examines the profound and liberating aspects of adult education, with a particular emphasis on topics such as art and ecology, transitions in employment and training, and the effects of Covid-19 on adult learners. The proceedings also examine the many aspects of adult education, including the career paths of homeless individuals, treatments to improve reading skills in adults with poor literacy levels, the use of neighbourhood businesses as informal learning environments, and the role of critical thinking in instructors' use of gamification. The discussions emphasise the potential of adult education to bring about significant positive change, particularly through self-directed learning facilitated by the rapid expansion of the internet, the promotion of perspective transformation through adaptive teaching methods, and the use of transformational learning theory in talent development procedures. The proceedings also explore the potential of education to promote conversation, the significance of embodiment in education and liberation, and the possibilities for change in settings that encourage discourse.