

# Intercultural Education: Pedagogical Actions and Social Interaction of Children with Immigrant Biography in Cyprus

*The influx of refugees in recent years and the invasion of our country by the pandemic of COVID-19 identify and shape modern society, which is composed of groups with differentiated or diverse cultural elements. The structures of the educational system of our country (ministry - regions - directorates - school units) are reorganized because they are obliged to invent pedagogical actions and measures - coeducation of students-refugees in schools and beyond. The insurmountable need for intercultural education in schools emerges as an imperative, not as assimilation into the lifestyle of the dominant group, but as a continuous process of interaction. This article summarizes the above issues such as the concept of refugee and refugee children, intercultural education and education of refugee students in crisis, actions at the level of Cypriot Ministry education, actions and interactions at the level of schools and other learning environments of refugee children. In order to explore the above, we conducted a qualitative research involving graduate students and teachers from Cyprus. Through the findings of the research, we concluded that problems faced by students with migration biographies are different. For this very reason, the participants expressed their views on possible ways to deal with the issue.*

**Keywords:** *refugee children - students, education, intercultural education, actions in refugee education and schools.*

## The Concept of Refugees and Children-Students Refugees

The word refugee denotes a person who has left his country of origin at the risk of his life and cannot return there. "According to the official Greek translation, a refugee is a person who," because of events that occurred before January 1, 1951, and a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, social class or political opinion, is outside the country of which he is a citizen and has no citizenship. , does not wish to enjoy the protection of that country because of that fear, or if he has no nationality and is outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable to return there or does not wish to return there because of that fear.

The refugee contrasts with the economic migrant, who voluntarily leaves his country to find a better life, while continuing to enjoy the protection of his country" (IEP Guide, 2019). A refugee is generally a displaced person who has been forced to cross national borders and cannot safely return home. Such a person may be granted asylum until they are granted refugee status by the State Party or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) if they have made a formal application for asylum - one of the most important issues in our society today. It has entered a critical phase since the beginning of 2015, peaking in the winter of 2015 through the spring of 2016, with many

1 people seeking refuge in Europe due to conflict, terrorism and because they are  
 2 persecuted in their own countries. 2015 was marked by the biggest refugee  
 3 crisis mankind has experienced since the World War II (Mozzo, 2020).

4 According to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating on the status  
 5 of refugees, a refugee is: "A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being  
 6 persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular  
 7 social group or political opinion, has been expelled from the country of his  
 8 nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of  
 9 the protection of that country; or who, having no nationality and being outside  
 10 the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable  
 11 or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it " (United Nations High  
 12 Commissioner for Refugees, 2012). The main international organization that  
 13 coordinates refugee protection is the United Nations High Commissioner for  
 14 Refugees. Nearly half of all refugees are children and nearly one in three  
 15 children living outside their country of birth is a refugee. Globally, nearly 50  
 16 million children have migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced  
 17 (UNICEF, 2016).

18 Refugee children, especially those who are undocumented and those who  
 19 are alone in host countries, face a multitude of problems. Although many  
 20 communities around the world have welcomed them, displaced children and  
 21 their families often face discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion in their  
 22 countries of origin, transit, and destination (Bush , Kenneth , and Saltarelli ,  
 23 2000). Language barriers and legal obstacles in transit and destination  
 24 countries often deny refugee children and their families access to education,  
 25 health care, social protection, and other services. Many destination countries  
 26 also lack intercultural support and social integration measures ( Crock, 2006) .

27 Worldwide, there are at least 79.5 million people forced to flee their  
 28 homes. That number includes about 26 million refugees, half of whom are  
 29 children. It also includes millions of stateless people who have been denied  
 30 citizenship and access to basic rights such as education, health care,  
 31 employment and freedom of movement. In a world where 1% of the world's  
 32 population has been uprooted by conflict or persecution, our work at UNHCR  
 33 is more important than ever. Interesting refugee statistics in the EU inform us  
 34 that in 2018, 2.4 million third country migrants entered the EU-27, 21.8 million  
 35 people (4.9%) out of the 446.8 million people living in the EU-27 on 1 January  
 36 2019 were third country nationals and EU-27 Member States granted  
 37 citizenship to 672 thousand people in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020) . Greece has  
 38 indeed assumed the role of a European vanguard in dealing with the crisis,  
 39 under particular and adverse conditions. Refugees and migrants arrive on the  
 40 Greek islands through a narrow maritime border that is extremely difficult to  
 41 control operationally. At the same time, Greek society and the state are already  
 42 struggling themselves with a severe economic crisis that is testing their  
 43 resilience (Special Secretariat for Communication Planning, 2017).

44 From the above, it is clear that with the outbreak of the refugee crisis in  
 45 2015, many refugee children who had to attend schools in their home countries  
 46 were placed in third countries, where they face the issue of their basic

education, in addition to basic food and housing. Greece is one of the EU countries now hosting a significant number of refugees and consequently a significant number of refugee children who have been gradually admitted to all levels of the Greek education system.

### **Intercultural Education and Education of Refugee Students in Pandemic Crisis**

The issue of education and training of refugee students is crucial because refugee students, who are living through an unprecedented personal and social crisis and especially today in the midst of the COVID -19 pandemic, need communication and socialization tools to communicate, acquire knowledge, understand the culture and the culture in general of the country they are in and be able to build bridges between two worlds, that of the country of origin and that of the host country. Of the 7.1 million refugee children of school age, 3.7 million - more than half - are not in school, according to a report released today by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. ("Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis" [...] (unhcr.org/gr, 2019)). Education as a guaranteed human right is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 1949, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Dakar Education for All Framework, affirm the right of all children to a quality education that recognizes diversity and does not discriminate on the basis of gender, disability, nationality, origin or political beliefs of parents (Hatzikonstantinou, 2020).

In Greece, UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) is increasing its support to the authorities in the areas of improving water supply and sanitation, distributing basic personal hygiene items and creating and providing equipment for medical units and areas for medical examinations, isolation and quarantine. UNHCR also facilitates asylum seekers' access to valid information through helplines and interpretation services, as well as through the mobilization of refugee volunteers. UNHCR has appealed to the authorities to increase transport from overcrowded reception centers in the islands, where 35,000 asylum-seekers live in structures with a capacity of less than 6,000 people (unhcr.org/gr, 2020).

Education and training for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons is the process of teaching and imparting knowledge and skills to refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons so that they can participate fully in society. Access to education is a fundamental human right as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Education is the primary way in which displaced and marginalized migrants can rise out of poverty and participate in their societies. The opportunity to learn and revitalize through learning can enable refugee children and adults to lead satisfying lives and is the means to the full realization of other human rights. Refugee education can offer hope and long-term prospects for stability and sustainable peace for individuals, communities, countries and the global community. ("Enforcement of the right to refugee education: a policy perspective", UNESCO, 2019). In

our country, the Hellenic Refugee Council - ESP, as part of the holistic approach it takes, includes an effort to help our clients adjust in their new lives that begin in a new country.

The activities, the courses, but also the orientations for finding a job, which are aimed at recognized refugees, also at families, young people and children, are intended to help them take the important step towards an optimistic future. Thus, the Intercultural Center ESP, PYXIDA, addresses recognized refugees and carries out various cultural and educational activities, such as free Greek and English language courses, educational counseling and supportive classes, workshops for children and adults, etc. The Hellenic Council for Refugees (2004), defines that intercultural education includes three concepts as general pedagogical principles: intercultural interaction, intercultural communication and intercultural understanding.

In the literature the terms: intercultural education, intercultural education and intercultural pedagogy are used almost identically, although they refer to different and not similar things (Nikolaou, 2005). Intercultural education and pedagogy refer to the way or method of dealing with, addressing students with refugee backgrounds and this in turn refers to differentiated approaches according to the following well-known models: the assimilationist, the integrationist, the multicultural, the anti-racist and the intercultural (Mark, 1998b). On the other hand, in our case, the term intercultural education does not refer to a specific and generally accepted model of education for refugee children, but to a didactic process that recognizes the diversity and coexistence of these students and includes the conditions and principles of teaching and learning in a multicultural school and social environment. Education and training can influence not only the attitudes, aspirations and beliefs of refugee students, but also those of their guests.

Increasing diversity in classrooms brings both challenges and opportunities for learning from other cultures and experiences. Countries are called upon to fulfill their international commitment to respect the right to education for all, from meeting the needs of those who are marginalized in slums to nomads who are sojourners or awaiting refugee status (Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, endowed with reason and conscience, and must treat each other in a spirit of brotherhood). Greece has made it a priority and considers it a task and an obligation to ensure and facilitate access to education for all minors living in reception structures. The education program was developed by the Ministry of Immigration Policy in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and is implemented on a large scale and with massive support from local communities despite the exceptions. Main objectives of the program: to ensure the right to education, which is a basic human right of every child. Ensure psychological support and gradual integration of refugee children into the Greek education system or into the education system of another European country in case of their resettlement (Zarabuka, 2018).

In conclusion, the education and training of refugee students is an inalienable and guaranteed human right that Greece, as a member of the EU

and a host country for many refugees, cannot ignore. The Hellenic Refugee Council as part of its holistic approach, has included in its programs the effort to smoothly integrate refugee children in Greek schools according to the pedagogical principles of intercultural education.

### **Intercultural Education and Students with Immigration Curriculum Vitae in Cyprus**

At this point, it would be equally important to study and implement the policy with which the (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth (MECSY) Cyprus works on the education of the child h n with migration biography. The inclusion of refugee children bold enigmatic MECSY since 2001 and then after one of the main objectives of the education policy is the registration and conditions of participation of all regardless of children in public schools of the children are naturally included and child immigrants, regardless of legal or illegal immigration statu (Gerosimou, 2014) .

The above considerations led the MECSY during the school year 2003-2004 creates a pilot level "Zones Educational Priority" (ZEP). The main purpose of ZEP was combating school failure and illiteracy, school failure and the exclusion of students with immigration biography, i.e refugee minors (Giannaka et al., 2007). In 2008, the Council of Ministers in Cyprus approved the "Policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture for Intercultural Education" (Hajisoteriou, 2010).

The application of ZEPs was promoted on a pan-Cypriot basis in selected schools in 2010. These efforts aim to reduce the social marginalization of refugee students. Criteria for the establishment of ZEP schools were: their geographical location, the socio-economic background of families in the area, the presence of immigrant students and school dropout (Chatzisotiriou & Xenofontos, 2014).

The ZEP schools receive additional help from MECSY, such as extra hours to support the non-native students, in terms of interculturality and creating values between the immigrant and native students (Vrasidas, Themistokleous & Zembylas, 2009). With a view to strengthening the project of MECSY effectively include students with immigrant biography from 2001 the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute organizes trainings (Papamichael, 2008) for teachers. These actions focus on issues of intercultural education (Vrasidas, Themistokleous & Zembylas, 2009). The schools participating in the program ZEP were supported by the Ministry of Education with additional funds.

Of course, despite the positive results achieved in this program, it was observed that Greek Cypriot students were transferred from ZEP schools to other schools and expressed concerns about the quality of education in schools with a high percentage of migrants (Hadjisotiriou, 2011). Moreover, criticisms mainly focus on the view that the level of inclusion is slowed down due to the over-aggregated ordination character of the education system (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).

The operation of the ZEPs was discontinued in 2015. A descendant of ZEPs in the field of Cypriot education is the School and Social Integration Actions (SSIA) program. The implementation of SSIA started during the school years 2015 - 2016 (Sizopoulos, 2019) with the main objective of "mitigating the negative impact of the economic crisis on education and pupil g. Specific objectives were to ensure the well-being, support financially weaker groups of the population, strengthen social cohesion, limits the risk of social marginalization and exclusion, improve learning outcomes, reduce school failure, delinquency and dropout " (MECSY, 2019, in 1.1). The SSIA is funded 85 % by the European Social Fund and 15 % by national funds. Among other things, provides support to immigrant students, but also the family of n them in early learning topics of the Greek language and improve their social skills (MECSY, 2019).

In operation under SSIA provides companies in primary and secondary schools learning support inside and outside the classroom, through teacher assistants. In the classroom, the Assistant Teacher provides educational support during lessons in consultation with and in accordance with the instructions of the classroom teacher. Outside the classroom, groups of students with immigrant backgrounds or biographies are created to receive supportive instruction two to three times per week (important differentiation from the general class schedule and creation of a personalized schedule) to learn the Greek language. At the same time, parents of students with migrant biographies are offered the opportunity to learn the Greek language in the afternoon (MECSY, 2018).

## Methodology

Studying the above, we effortlessly find that the views of refugees and people with migration biographies in general need to be studied. So far, several studies have been conducted to investigate the views of current students and teachers regarding the provision of intercultural education. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to examine, through this research, the long-term outcomes of intercultural education among adults who have been trained in this context. This overall view of the outcomes of intercultural education has the potential to provide feedback and suggestions to the Ministry of Education and Science for the improvement of educational policies. The research questions that guided the conduct of the research were as follows:

- What problems do students with migration biography face while attending school in intercultural schools in Cyprus?
- What are the suggestions for improving the provision of intercultural education in Cyprus?

Taking into account the above considerations, we have come to the conclusion that the topic of the present study can be better investigated by applying the qualitative research methodology. On the basis of qualitative

method, data are collected in verbal and visual particular level than in numerical form as in quantitative method (Devetak, Glažar and Vogrinc, 2010). Yin (2011) identifies five main parameters concerning qualitative research. These are: a) the meaning of human life under normal circumstances, b) the views of the research participants, c) the circumstances in which the research participants live, d) the views that would likely help explain human behavior, and e) the various sources to prove something. The main research tool used in this research was semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The survey, which was conducted in the four provinces of free Cyprus (Limassol, Paphos, Larnaca, Nicosia), involved 86 graduates of public lyceums and Technical Schools with migration biographies, 12 active primary school teachers and 25 secondary school teachers with at least five years of experience in teaching students with migration biographies.

The research was conducted with the written consent of the participants in the research. The data were collected via Skype, which gave the researchers the opportunity to observe the facial expressions and body movements of the participants in connection with the expressed views. At the same time, it is worth noting that the researchers, with the consent of the participants, recorded the remote interviews. The reason for not held face-to-face interview is the aggravation of pandemic coronavirus acid and forced movement restriction and meeting.

At this point it is worth noting that the anonymity of the participants in the survey was respected, who had the right to withdraw their participation at any time. The collected data were transcribed, coded and analyzed by the method of thematic analysis, which gave us the opportunity to identify the recurring topics that emerge through the interview, in order to extract the main thematic units (Papanastasiou, 2005).

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## **Data Analysis**

Data collection began with a focus group involving individuals who had graduated from high school in the previous school year. The focus group focused on the experiences of the graduates as they related to the educational process of providing intercultural education. Significantly, the following points were made:

"When I think about where we started and where we ended up, I can say that I am very pleased with the school. We were in danger of drowning or being killed for some other reason when we set out to leave our home. We went in a boat that did not have an exact destination".

" Yes, what we went through was unbearable. The last thing we thought about was whether we would manage to read and write. And yet we made it here in Cyprus and got our diploma so we can find a job"

" Sure, but we have been through difficult times here too. Especially in the beginning when we first came. I remember the other kids did not want to play with us. And neither did their parents. They considered us different"

"We still have a hard time. And now that we have finished school, some people think we are inferior because we are not from here"

In analyzing the focus group data, we find that people with migration biographies encountered various difficulties both on arrival and during their stay in Cyprus. Among other things, they experienced intense marginalization in the field of education, but also in the wider society. We therefore need to focus on their views regarding the educational policies pursued in Cyprus for the education of students with a migration biography. Illustratively, some excerpts from the results of the interviews are given.

"The most difficult thing was that we did not know the language at all. We went to class with our children, but we could not play or interact with others because we could not communicate. That's why the other kids did not have us as classmates. They left us aside. That's what they have done for years"

"In the classroom we did not understand the language at all. I knew a little math and could write it without knowing the language. But in the others, nothing. After that, we started having some foreign mother tongue classes. That's how we started to learn the basics "

"I went to a school like those ZEPs you mentioned. I think we learned Greek better than the kids who were in other schools."

"We walked out of the classroom and they taught us Greek. That helped us, but we felt different from the others. No matter what and whether we knew the language well or not, to the kids who were born here, we were different and foreigners."

"I graduated from high school last year. In high school I was in a ZEP school. Then in lyceum I was one of the lucky ones because I continued to learn Greek better because in lyceum I was in a SSIA school. There were again several children from other countries there. The SSIA had philologists who gave us extra lessons twice a week"

"The good thing about the ZEPs and the SSIA is that we should not do the same teaching that we do in the classroom. They see how well you can do Greek and put us in groups where there are other kids at the same level. That way we all progress together " We are already connected and know each other better ".

"I was in ZEP elementary and high school, I took a class outside my class with other kids who did not know Greek as well as I did. But then when I went to high

1 school, I did not take those classes. That's why I had trouble with the classes. The  
 2 teachers understood that I did not understand what they were saying and did not  
 3 pay attention to me. Then I worked, so I could not read at home, not even a little  
 4 bit... Hmm... In short, I was the worst student "

6 If one closely examines the educational policy pursued in Cyprus with  
 7 regard to the education of pupils with migratory biographies, one finds that  
 8 there are both advantages and disadvantages. Among the disadvantages,  
 9 according to the participants, is that students with immigrant biographies who  
 10 come to our country do not know the Greek language at all, so they do not have  
 11 the opportunity to attend and assimilate even one subject, in addition to the  
 12 subjects where less verbal formulation and perception is necessary, such as  
 13 mathematics. Moreover, students with migration biographies are marginalized  
 14 by their difficulties in communicating with other students and teachers, as they  
 15 are not fluent in the Greek language and have low self-esteem, precisely  
 16 because they are marginalized and do not meet the requirements of the  
 17 subjects. In addition, public school graduates, point out that despite the fact  
 18 that both during their studies in elementary school, and while finishing them in  
 19 high school, take courses to learn Greek for foreign native language in most  
 20 high schools courses these are not present. Therefore, students cannot continue  
 21 their education to improve their knowledge, both in Greek and in other  
 22 subjects.

23 On the other hand, according to the participants, the educational policy  
 24 pursued by Cyprus has some advantages. In particular, the fact that the ZEP s  
 25 work in Cyprus, as well as the SSIA program, with the aim of providing  
 26 educational and emotional support to students with migration biographies, is  
 27 encouraging. Regarding the function of the above programs, the students feel  
 28 that it is good that they are grouped in departments to support the teaching  
 29 according to their level on the subject of learning Greek. Moreover, they  
 30 consider that the existence of these programs strengthens their level of  
 31 socialization, since it promotes social relations, including between students  
 32 with migration biography.

33 At this point, it would be important to examine the views of some of the  
 34 teachers with experience in teaching students with migration biographies.  
 35 These views emerge from conducting a focus group:

37 "I believe that in recent years there has been a considerable effort to help children  
 38 who come from other countries. They get grants, they have the right to education,  
 39 and in general we try to adjust our teaching to their level so that our teaching is as  
 40 understandable as possible"

41 "You are right, my dear fellow! Moreover, both the state's education policy and  
 42 every teacher help these children. We know they have had a hard time, and we  
 43 know the least we can do is help them learn our language so they can find a job  
 44 and survive"

46 "Yes...We are trying ... There are programs ... But the results are not so good.  
 47 Unfortunately ... Children who arrive in our country bring a lot of problems, in  
 48 addition to not knowing the language. Poverty, they may have lost their loved

ones, they are far from their country ... and much more. In general, everything has changed in their lives. Few share all these problems. Learning the Greek language is the last problem they want to solve"

"One of the biggest problems for children with migration biographies is exclusion. They are often forced to be only with children from the same country, or worse, not to be with any other child"

"Previously, teachers attended training sessions where they were taught how to teach these children. Now, unfortunately, SSIA teachers do not have sufficient training in such subjects and do not even have enough experience in teaching Greek to foreigners. Nevertheless, I think they will gain experience. They are teachers who have not yet been appointed. Of course, the SSIA program is very helpful. It gives many unemployed scholars a job"

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"The Covid-19 pandemic is also a big problem. Unfortunately, we can no longer form subgroups of foreign language students as we used to, which consisted of students from different departments. To be less afraid of the spread of Covid -19, foreign language students should now only associate with students from their department"

When analyzing the views of the participating teachers regarding the educational policy of Cyprus in relation to the provision of intercultural education, we conclude that a part of the teachers are positive towards this policy, as they point out that the state tries to integrate students with migration biographies. Specifically, in addition to the financial benefits and the right to education they are granted, a great effort is made by some teachers to learn the Greek language, but also to avoid their exclusion.

In addition to the advantages, both public school teachers and graduates have identified some disadvantages of the educational policies followed for teaching students with migratory biographies. Specifically, they claim that the daily life of these students is very difficult, not only because they do not know the Greek language, but also because they live in poverty, they may experience the loss of friends or relatives, as well as homesickness. Their exclusion can also be a common phenomenon. Unfortunately, it is difficult for educators to help these students because most of them are not trained in intercultural pedagogy. To make matters worse, the expansion of Covid 19 prevents the effective operation of remedial courses for students with migratory biographies.

In addition to identifying potential problems that students with migration biographies may face, both from teachers and students, it is extremely useful to

1 explore their suggestions for solving these problems. Specifically, participating  
2 public school graduates mentioned the following:

3  
4 "There must be special teachers who have studied or attended seminars on how  
5 children who come from another country learn a language better"

6  
7 "Children from other countries must first learn the language of the country in  
8 which they live and then go to regular classes with other children. If they go  
9 directly to the same class as the other children, I do not think they will be able to  
10 understand anything"

11  
12 " There must be special books to help children learn Greek. These books should  
13 be entertaining and beautiful for the students

14  
15 "It is often better for young children to learn a foreign language through movies  
16 and games"

17  
18 The views of public school graduates on how to improve the intercultural  
19 education offered focus on creating reception units for refugee students in  
20 which they are taught exclusively the Greek language so that, based on this  
21 knowledge, they are then prepared to attend the rest of the school curriculum.  
22 Of course, their suggestions do not stop here, as they continue to propose using  
23 more attractive teaching methods, but also textbooks that will increase the  
24 students' and teachers' efforts to acquire the Greek language. Finally, the  
25 graduates suggest that in-service training be provided for teachers with the aim  
26 of ensuring that they perform optimally in teaching the Greek language to  
27 foreign language students. Let us look at the views of teachers (focus group) in  
28 relation to ways of improving existing education systems.

29  
30 "Everything we hear every day about intercultural education and the inclusion of  
31 refugees is just a very nice theory. But in practice it looks different. So we need  
32 to put theory into practice. Only then will refugee children be able to enjoy all the  
33 goods of education."

34  
35 " I believe that the basic principles of intercultural education should be integrated  
36 into the curriculum we use. That is, the instructions we receive as teachers to  
37 teach must take into account the specificities of all children. Therefore, the  
38 curriculum must be created based on, among other things, the difficulties faced  
39 by children who come from other countries and do not know the language, such  
40 as refugees."

41 "As teachers, we must ensure that all children learn about each other's cultures. It  
42 is our responsibility to teach children to respect the differences that may exist in  
43 the language, history and religion of other children."

44  
45 "I propose that the establishment of the SSIA program be expanded to all  
46 elementary and secondary schools. There are schools that do not have the SSIA  
47 but have several children in foreign languages. Unfortunately, in these schools,  
48 they are isolated most of the time. On the contrary, in the schools that have SSIA,

the students have help in learning Greek both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, more SSIA instructors should be hired."

"We need more training before teachers graduate and after." Someone should guide us on how the kids can learn Greek better and be integrated easier."

"We need to help our students develop emotional intelligence so they can understand how they feel about their peers who come from another country"

Taking into account the teachers' views derived from the analysis of the focus group data, we conclude that among the proposals are the following: the existing analytical program is necessary to integrate the basic principles of intercultural education, but also the inclusive philosophy, so that all students have the same right to learn, regardless of the difficulties and peculiarities they have. In addition, teachers propose the expansion of the SSIA program. In all schools there are now students with migration biography in all. Of course, the above suggestions cannot work if teachers do not take care to "provide" all students with emotional intelligence so that they can relate to the experiences and feelings of their foreign classmates. Finally, in-service and professional development programs for intercultural education must be established.

## Conclusions

Internationally, educational data is changing rapidly. Therefore, the world of education must keep up with them and adapt to this new data. In recent years, we have seen intense population movements around the world due to wars and unemployment (Mozzo, 2020). The goal of immigrants is to find better living conditions. One of the parameters related to the best quality of life is the education sector. Undoubtedly, the educational policy of any state must adapt to the new data and implement the idea of providing equal educational opportunities to all students, including those with immigrant backgrounds. Therefore, intercultural education, but also inclusive education in relation to a variety of other philosophies must direct the educational policy in Cyprus (Gerosimou, 2014).

Of course, the process of accomplishing the above cannot be said to be easy. On the contrary, it is usually complicated by intense problems which, according to the participants of the research, act as obstacles on the way to the creation of intercultural schools. Such obstacles are usually the difficulties in linguistic understanding, which cause additional problems in understanding even the courses that are not directly related to the Greek language, the lack of intercultural education programs in high schools, daily difficulties, poverty, marginalization and homesickness.

Nonetheless, the effort to identify possible factors that could improve the inclusion and provision of intercultural education project is imperative (Hajisoteriou, 2010). For this reason, the participants have suggested the mobilization as possible, such as the most attractive methods and manuals for

1 teaching the Greek language, the undergraduate and on-duty training of  
 2 teachers, the expansion of existing educational programs related to the  
 3 provision of intercultural education (eg. SSIA) in all schools of Cyprus, the  
 4 promotion of intercultural education through existing analytical programs and  
 5 the contribution of teachers on the development of emotional intelligence of  
 6 students (Clark, 2017).

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