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**Pre-service Physical Education Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions about
Empathy in an Intercultural Education Course**

By

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Declaration by author

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this master thesis and that I have not used any sources other than those listed in the bibliography and identified as references. I further declare that I have not submitted this thesis at any other institution in order to obtain a degree.

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The author of this thesis had help from Dr. Eleftheria Papageorgiou and Prof. Athanasios Papaioannou

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Abstract

The present study aims to understand if an Intercultural education (IE) through Physical Education (PE) course based on the European EDU-PACT project, had an impact on empathy, particularly on the knowledge and perception of it, and its behavioral translation, from the participants towards multicultural classes of pupils. The analysis also focused on how the participants' perception and knowledge of empathy would affect their behavior in multicultural PE settings. Finally, the evolution of their knowledge through the online platform teaching modality was taken into account. Participants were 7 pre-service PE teachers with ages ranging from 20 to 39 years. Interviews were taken pre and post-course, and the qualitative approach of reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyze the transcriptions. Results showed that the IE course focusing on PE and sports had a positive impact on the participants. Particularly, it broadened their knowledge on intercultural related topics and it modified the perception they had on their behavior in multicultural classes. Moreover, it amplified and enhanced their knowledge and perception of empathy and empathetic behaviors in the same settings, making them more prone and ready to use them in their future activities as educators.

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Quotation

“A farmer had some puppies he needed to sell. [...] As he was driving the last nail into the post, he felt a tug on his overalls. He looked down into the eyes of a little boy.

"Mister," he said, "I want to buy one of your puppies."

[...]“Sure,” said the farmer. And with that he let out a whistle. “Here, Dolly!” he called.

Out from the doghouse and down the ramp ran Dolly followed by four little balls of fur. The little boy pressed his face against the chain link fence. His eyes danced with delight. As the dogs made their way to the fence, the little boy noticed something else stirring inside the doghouse. Slowly another little ball appeared, this one noticeably smaller. Down the ramp it slid. Then in a somewhat awkward manner, the little pup began hobbling toward the others, doing its best to catch up...

"I want that one," the little boy said, pointing to the runt. The farmer knelt down at the boy's side and said, "Son, you don't want that puppy. He will never be able to run and play with you like these other dogs would."

With that the little boy stepped back from the fence, reached down, and began rolling up one leg of his trousers. In doing so he revealed a steel brace running down both sides of his leg attaching itself to a specially made shoe. Looking back up at the farmer, he said, "You see sir, I don't run too well myself, and he will need someone who understands."

(Akramulla,2017)

Chapter 1

Introduction

Edu-pact project

The content of this study is a small contribution to a large scale project Co-founded by the Erasmus+program of the European Union, called “Intercultural Education Through Physical Activity, Coaching and Training” (EDU-PACT). This project was commissioned by the stakeholders of the sector of teacher training and coaches degrees (BA/MA) (<https://edupact.eu>).

Various Universities and organizations are involved in this project: University of Vienna, the German Sport University of Cologne, University of Thessaly, University of Southern Denmark, University of Rome (Foro Italico), International Council for Coaching Excellence (UK) and 2 international NGOs: Right to Play and the Vienna Institute of International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC). Also cooperating: the International Council for Coaching Excellence and the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Culture and Sport, European network of Sport Education (<https://edupact.eu>).

The ultimate goal of this project is to provide the possibility for pre-service and in-service Physical Education (PE) teachers and coaches, to receive a proper education on how to teach in multicultural classes or settings. To do this, new methods on how to promote intercultural pedagogy in coaching and PE were created, tested and subsequently implemented in schools and clubs, so that they can help understanding how to face the challenge of teaching in multicultural environments. Sport and PE will have the role of the means through which all this information will be transferred to these teacher’s present and future students. A piloting training of 15-20 of experts coming from all the associates of the project will be undertaken. Afterwards, the members of the project's partner staff will share their knowledge with PE teachers and coaches who will put into practice their competence in promoting equality through sport with both hosting country and immigrant students. Lastly, everybody will be able to provide feedback about the experience in order to see if the developed material is applicable, and follows the project’s purpose. At the end, a handbook containing guidelines for

teachers on how to successfully work in multicultural sport and PE settings will be developed (<https://edupact.eu>).

The project kicked off with a mapping of the needs that people who work in the sector could have regarding the topic. This was done through focus groups and online questionnaires. After analyzing the results and many meetings with the project's partners, study units and modules were developed. These Guidelines represent the vehicle through which PE teachers, trainers and coaches can meet the recommendations of the EDU-PACT project and are meant to give a clear direction on which skills are needed and how to develop them (<https://edupact.eu>).

The learning outcomes of EDU-PACT project will respectively mainly focus on:

- Understanding yourself: Being able to thoroughly understand oneself identity and others cultural backgrounds. Recognize how it could shape a person's life by taking into consideration the biases that might be developed by improving communication skills
- Understanding others: Develop skills to respectfully and empathically connect and lead people with different cultural backgrounds.
- Planning and delivering Intercultural Education sessions: Developing, planning and problem solving skills related to the development of the classes.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Learning how to monitor oneself, learning techniques on how to evaluate others.

(<https://edupact.eu>)

As mentioned above, University of Thessaly and part of its staff have been giving their contribution to this project. In February 2020, their experts who have gone through the training process, started in turn, to teach Intercultural education classes to pre-service teachers, and aspiring coaches and trainers, who are currently doing a Bachelor degree in sport science, in the University of Thessaly (Trikala).

The course had the aim of teaching these future coaches and teachers, how to behave and share their knowledge within a multicultural environment, which in their case will probably be a classroom or a field.

Promoting equality, integration and certain types of values like cooperation, empathy, tolerance, respect, will be the key abilities that pre-service teachers will have to be able to portray (<https://edupact.eu>). During the attendance of the course, they would have had to put into practice what they learned by teaching Physical Education (PE) classes to elementary school children, a couple of times each. These classes have the characteristic of being composed of native children (Greeks), and children of culturally diverse backgrounds. With the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, this last practical part of the course had to be taken out of the program and as a consequence of the lockdown, more than half the IE classes were conducted through an online platform.

The present study will mostly focus on the second educational outcome of the project, “Understanding others”, which is based in guiding pre-service teachers in the development of skills that would help to respectfully and empathically connect and lead pupils with different cultural backgrounds. Specifically it was designed to explore perceptions and behaviors, in the pre-service teachers who have participated in the Intercultural education (IE) course. Pre and post course interviews were implemented.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Rationale of the present study

The following three paragraphs represent examples of testimonies that explain why a handbook to guide teachers through how to teach in multicultural classes is needed, and why it is worth analyzing and paying more attention to the role that empathy has in this field.

One of the inspirations for developing this project was a position paper written by Sue et. al (1982) that tackles the topic of cross-cultural counselling in the United States. This article contains justified criticism to Western monocultural and traditional counseling style, that does not serve the proper advisory purpose when getting in contact with people within multicultural backgrounds. The authors designed an educational program to learn how to cope in these kinds of settings as counselors. Attitudes, knowledge and skills, specifically developed to promote equality and properly serve minorities based on their needs, are the base of this curriculum. A very similar one is used as a base of action in the Edu-pact program.

Moving back to the continent where this project and research are going to be pursued, Sani, (2014), wrote an article where she explained that the latest decades flow of immigration, requires an avant-garde way of educating pupils of all levels. She stated that inclusive pedagogy eases the process of becoming part of a society. In her research she specifically concentrated on France, UK and Germany's situation, when it came to present the evolution of Intercultural education. All three of these countries saw a moment in time, which corresponds to the years that preceded the 1970's, in which integration in educational settings was not promoted. Instead of seeing immigrant students as people who could add something to the natives' cultures and experiences, in this period of time, students with multicultural backgrounds were generally considered as a burden, a problematized group that had to be "fixed". As a consequence, the educational approach that was applied only to them, was of a compensatory nature, meaning that it was based on the belief that immigrant pupils

had poor performance in school because of a deficiency, transmitted to them from their cultural background. After the 70's, this method was of course found to be very scarce when it came to trying to decrease the intellectual gap between native and immigrant pupils. From these years on, a lot of progress has been made in adapting curricula based on integration, to immigrant pupils' needs. The author of the article suggests that an inclusive pedagogy policy should be common in all Europe and that there should always be an "intercultural perspective" that will never stop being investigated and going deeper in acknowledging similar and different cultures (Sani, 2014). This concept expressed by Sani (2014), embodies what Edu-Pact project sponsors, creators and members are trying to do, by involving many countries and discovering from each one of them their needs through continuous research and testing.

The present thesis poses its attention particularly on the empathy of the participants, on what their perceptions and knowledge about it are, and its expression through actions. Zembylas & Papamichael, (2017) designed a study that examines the role of discomfort and empathy (acting together or separately) in pre-service teachers experience within anti-racist and multicultural Education, inside Greek Cypriot schools. The authors supported that the discomfort (as in having to face the behavioral consequences that the children they work with had, because of the different realities they have lived), has been widely scientifically investigated. They proposed that as an answer to being kicked out of their comfort zones, teachers who work with multicultural classes would consider the use of their empathic abilities and skills. Finally they stated that literature has not explored pedagogy from this point of view yet and they suggested that emotions in pedagogy should be more thoroughly inspected, which is exactly what this research is going to try to portray.

Literature review

In order for this elaborate to be fully understandable by everybody who will read it, below, some definitions will be given of words and notions that will be presented throughout. The following are concepts whose meaning is fundamental to appreciate and correctly interpret what is being read.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (2006) defines the word "multicultural" as "the culturally diverse nature of human society" (UNESCO, 2006), informally speaking, this represents a description of the variety of cultures that humankind has divided itself into. Culture's roots are made of: religion, ethnicities, languages and socio-economic diversity.

Interculturality instead refers to the relations that these culturally diverse groups have between them, and the evolution that this kind of contact between them can go through (UNESCO, 2006).

Immigrants-refugees-asylum seekers

The first assembly that met and agreed on the definition of refugee status, gathered in 1951, right after the Second World War, because millions of Europeans were forced to run away from their home countries or cities. This legal agreement was categorically made for the people who were personally conditioned by the Second World War. Nobody would have ever imagined that this type of phenomenon would ever reappear (McBrien, 2017).

This was soon revealed as a big misconception. In fact, when the Vietnam War started, another set of arrangements were made to the 1951 protocol. So, in 1967 all the restrictions regarding the where and the when of the eventual exodus, were deleted (McBrien, 2017).

The designation of migrant, contains also the meanings of the words, refugees and asylum seekers, because the term is used to describe a person who moves from one country to another or in different parts of the same country. The causes for this phenomenon can be various: from following a job offer, to political motives. From reuniting with the family to cultural purposes. Most people who migrate are not asylum seekers or refugees. The word “migrant” has a double reference. It concerns Immigrants: People who enter a country, and emigrants: which describes people who leave a country (McBrien, 2017).

Refugees

As stated by the convention, a person can be given the refugee appellation if she or he can not go to their country of origin because they are powerless or unwilling to do so. The reason should be a factual concern, regarding themselves or their families, of being persecuted for motives of: Race, religion, nationality, being part of a particular social group, or for political beliefs (UN High Commissioner of Refugees, 1951/1967). Initially, refugees flee into another country's refugee camp, where they get their official refugee status. Subsequently, their safeguarding is guaranteed from the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) which has the power to decide

- Repatriation: That occurs when the home country of the refugee(s) becomes safe enough in order to guarantee a secure living.
- Local integration: Which takes place when the refugees can start building their future in the first country of arrival.
- Resettlement: It takes place in the third nation in which the refugees arrive to proceed with their life path.

(McBrien, 2017)

Asylum seekers

People get designated the name of asylum seekers when they leave their country of origin for the same causes that characterize the refugee's path. The difference stands in the fact that asylum seekers ask the United Nations (UN) to be recognized as refugees, only after they arrive in the new country. While waiting for the answer to their request by the authorities, they are detained. Subsequently their status passes on to being resettled refugees. If the government chooses to turn down their request, they can be sent back to the country where they came from. (McBrien, 2017)

Acculturation-Assimilation-Integration

To thoroughly understand the values that reside in Edu-Pact's aim and in the soul of this elaborate, it is crucial to focus on the meaning of "integration", "assimilation" and "acculturation". As promoters of equality, it is key that every member of this project moves all their steps towards the former. The phenomenon of integration, referred to multiculturalism, appears when a person of an ethnic background, different from the predominant one in the country where this person lives, nourishes and sustains his/her original culture (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009). In order for integration to be entirely fulfilled, this person should also work for/be assisted to blend with the host country's culture, rules and beliefs. Assimilation instead refers to the act of not nourishing or giving interest to the primary cultural background and concomitantly trying to learn from and live by the host society's culture (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009).

Before assimilation and integration became an actual circumstance, another one took place: Acculturation, which occurs when people who have diverse cultural backgrounds come together and start influencing the natives' costumes. Acculturation goes way back in time. One of the first evidence of its existence appeared in 2370 B.C. when the Mesopotamian inhabitants: the Sumerians, created laws in order to protect their cultural inheritance from the impact of foreign presence, brought by their foreign commercial trades. We can find another example from the Egyptian empire that converted towards assimilation into the Sub Saharan society of the Nubians, who were previously discriminated against (Rudmin, 2003).

Also assimilation has deep roots in history. The assimilation process was firstly observed in the soon to become United States of America. Starting from the 1800's the mixture of Native American, European, African and Caribbean groups, resulted in the first theorizations that in some way Americans would have become one united single family. The actual expression of assimilation, was utilized for the first time to illustrate the influence of other foreign languages on the Native American one. And at the end of the century it can be found a definition of the word that's more closely related to the contemporary one, namely: a system that enables notions and expedients to be transmitted (Rudmin, 2003).

Integration is one of the sub categories of acculturation and is a more recent concept. For some countries it is a new phenomenon to tackle, other societies instead are used to facing immigration and have been trying to apply the integration processes for decades. Integration has always been a process characterized by steps. Verdier and colleagues (2012) described in their book, through an economic analysis, the behavioral tier that usually occurs during the process of integration. The cultural acceptance starts by sharing the same language with the native speakers while perhaps continuing cultivating the immigrants' language. Subsequently an identity formation starts developing. The immigrant gets to this stage by gradually identifying with and introjected values and beliefs of the natives. The integration process continues by gaining the characteristic of being dynamic through generations, meaning that the children of the immigrants who went through this process, can decide if assimilating with the local culture or not. Cultural transmission is the next step and it's considered by the authors to be the consequence of the interaction between active/thoughtful or automatic decisions of socialization. The latter can be exemplified with the actions of listening, mimicking and/or simply learning. Whether cultural characteristics persist or not through the generations, depends on what type of socialization the family influences their children to carry out, because the consequence of this will

impact their future. Socio-economic opportunities represent another important step that comprises the journey of integration, as the authors explain, the local culture can be a comfort dispenser from an economic point of view. Next step towards integration is represented by “complementarities and substitute abilities in human capital and socialization process” (Verdier et al.,2012). Complementarities correspond to integration when the minority is linked to high economic expenditure and to exclusion when the investment is on a subordinate level. Substitute Abilities instead bring immigrants and natives to have a negative relationship regarding the economic value of a worker's experience and competences. Externalities and expectations represent a step that affects integration in all its process and it stands for all the influences that can contribute to the minorities' choices and consequently provide the pace of their integration process (Verdier et al.,2012).

Intercultural Education

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, EDU-PACT project is based on an educational and research based process that aims to prepare teachers on how to effectively project and transfer their knowledge to classes made of pupils with various cultural backgrounds (<https://edupact.eu/>).

Intercultural education will be the base of the classes that the participants will follow. But what is intercultural education? It started as an education based on multiculturalism, this was originally a necessity born to cope with pupils who were part of minorities (Zilliacus & Holm, 2009). It concentrated mostly on giving information about other cultures (McBrien, 2017; Zilliacus & Holm, 2009) in order to amplify the knowledge about how these differences between cultures can be relatable (tolerance), and how they could cohabit with any of each other (acceptance). In modern times and particularly in the West, the need to work with interculturality through education started in the 1980's under the direction of the council of Europe's policy, as a means against racism and xenophobia. The goal focused more about the interaction and the process, in the sense that the learning process would be dedicated directly to the steps and to the skills in order to achieve a peaceful coexistence in society (UNESCO, 2006; Zilliacus & Holm, 2009). Intercultural Education can be sectioned in: (a) inclusion and participation which is centered on the belief of equality, (b) learning to live together, which is founded on a sense of fitting in the society, respect and credence in communication (Zilliacus & Holm, 2009).

As maintained by Zilliacus & Holm (2009) intercultural education should not be a separate subject, instead, it should be concatenated with all fields of a learning environment (for example, in all the subjects in school). Only this way, the learners will have a more extensive understanding of the matter. There is not a unique Intercultural Education model worldwide, many approaches exist. The more conventional are based on the promotion of inclusion and peaceful coexistence, the more critical ones are strongly based on fairness, democracy and vigorously work against racism (Zilliacus & Holm, 2009).

How can sport and PE be an effective mean to promote inclusion

The reason why EDU-PACT project and subsequently, University of Thessaly, decided to portray Intercultural Education specifically through sport and PE, is that it can help teach pupils that taking part in sports with people who are “different” whether it’s physically or morally, can be a good learning experience. In physical education, social relationships can be created more easily and faster compared to other subjects. During sport and PE, diverse forms of perception, expression and representation of oneself come out, and they can be felt and experienced also by others, plus, a person can get to know better, or simply have a taste of another’s culture just by experiencing his/her body language, this can happen as the ones body reflects the customs of the society it is used to be in contact with (Burden et al., 2004). This is one of the ways in which sport and PE can help relate to and discover similarities and dissimilarities of others (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009; Gieß-Stüber & Blecking, 2008).

Sport and Physical Education therefore are a great means to promote equality and foster integration, but in order to guarantee such a successful process, the environment in which these activities play out should have certain characteristics. Kouli & Papaioannou, (2009), found out some interesting qualities that a learning multicultural context should have when it is connected to PE. The authors started by explaining the meaning of ethnic identity, identity salience and cultural identity salience. Ethnic identity can be defined as the acknowledgment, the orientation and the emotions linked to the sense of belonging to a culture or ethnic group. Identity salience is the value that one can give to his/her ethnicity. Cultural identity salience is defined as the value that a person gives to his/her culture. The authors continue the preface of their study by defining two types of goals that can characterize student's cognition in sport and Physical activity settings, task and ego orientation goals.

The former focuses on one's competence improvement and achieving one's potential through hard work. Task oriented children believe in joint effort and partnership when trying to accomplish something (Duda et. al, 1992). When this type of goal is achieved it is a sign that it was reached through intrinsic motivation, found within the persons' inner drive, and not led by extrinsic benefits like money or success (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009). Ego orientation or performance goal instead focuses on comparing one's performance with others, it is characterized by the belief of the existence of supremacy and inferiority (ability wise), and that accomplishments are influenced by normatively defined ability (Duda et. al, 1992). Kouli and Papaioannou (2009) research was conducted in northern Greece and the participants were PE classes' students, its aim was to investigate which between ego and task oriented goals is better to apply when teaching in a multicultural PE class in order to promote a healthy relationship among all the pupils. The results show that ego oriented goals do not help foster good relational connections among the students, plus, it is deleterious for cooperation. The authors also found out that this type of goal does not help the development of processes of reciprocal understanding nor acculturation. In fact, in the classes where the pupils were more ego oriented or where the general mentality was of a performance oriented nature, this matched with a low impulse to approach pupils with multicultural backgrounds and with sentiments of not fitting into one's ethnic identity (feeling that is shared by all the students in the class). These results illustrate how ego oriented goals can be deleterious for the development of ethnic identity. The results of this study also showed that ethnic belonging, task oriented goals and settings that are more designed for learning, are all positively related. This happens because, when students find themselves in a task goal oriented environment they tend to want to learn more about the culture of their peers. In conclusion, in PE classes molded towards learning, the presence of task oriented goals and of teachers who want to promote all these values, foster a better intercultural education through sport and PE (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009).

Immigration in Greece

In Europe, the continuous stream of migration of the last 20 years has modified the traditional student composition of the classrooms (Sakka, 2010; Zilliacus & Holm, 2009; Gieß-Stüber & Blecking, 2008). Consequently, due to the fact that mainstream contemporary classrooms are becoming more and more multicultural, every educator during their career will inevitably be in contact with students who have different cultural backgrounds (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009; Gieß-Stüber & Blecking 2008).

This phenomena also characterizes Greek classrooms (Sakka, 2010). Migration streams and settlement histories are different depending on the country from where the immigrants come or came from, and what is the arrival country. Taking a closer look into Greek immigration history, during the past decades, Greece has seen entering the country a flow of immigrants from non-European Union countries (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009; Triandafyllidou, & Mantanika, 2014). In the 1970's Greek workforce who had previously migrated towards West Europe countries, started repatriating. At the end of the 1980's, because of the collapse of the governmental administration of the ex Soviet Union and the other communist countries, immigrants and former Greek expats started entering Greece for economic reasons. Albania, was one of these countries, and its same inhabitants, in 2011 composed the most numerous immigrant group in Greece (Triandafyllidou, & Mantanika, 2014). The war in the Balkans in the 1990s also caused migration towards various European countries as well as in Greece (Sakka, 2010). In 2014 the most numerous group of migrants devoid of legal residence documents were Syrians followed by Albanians, Afghans, Pakistanis and Somalis. Civil conflicts, the arab spring and the general instability of the Middle East, has brought at the Greek borders 23.000 Syrian asylum seekers in the first semester of 2014, compared to the 3.000 counted in the whole year of 2013 (Triandafyllidou, & Mantanika, 2014). Tens of thousands of immigrants were settled in Greece after 2014.

The geographical location of the Greek state made it always be multiculturally various since hundreds of years (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009). Before that, Greek inhabitants were the ones that used to migrate from their country. In the early 2000s, students who had previously migrated to Greece, constituted 8.9% of the whole Greek pupils' population (Sakka, 2010). This number has increased substantially after immigrants' flow in 2015 and in the years after.

Teacher's Intercultural preparation in Greece

Teachers' Intercultural preparation is an important topic, especially nowadays, due to the fact that in Greece and in many other European countries (Giess-Stueber, Blecking, 2008), teacher and coach pre-service education tends to neglect intercultural formation. As a consequence, it becomes more and more tough to meet cultural, linguistic and generally educational needs of all the pupils (Sakka., 2010). However, Sakka (2010) found out through her research that primary and secondary school Greek teachers, recognize the fact that multicultural approach teaching is useful, they also are conscious that they are missing the skills to transfer this kind of knowledge to their students.

Looking more deeply into the Greek situation, it is important to underline that in 1996, Greek government imposed a law (2413/96), that aimed for every student in Greece to have equal educational opportunities. On the other hand, there are not as many teacher training programs as needed, that can teach these educators how to effectively communicate and ally with multicultural students. As a consequence, this important issue gets “swept under the rug” (Sakka, 2010). The responsibility for this non-functional approach towards intercultural education, is to be seen also into the history of Greek educational system, which has been mainly focusing on its own culture (Sakka, 2010, Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017). As Sakka (2010) and Zembylas & Papamichael, (2017) stated in their research, Greece’s academic curricula has been primarily monocultural. Plus, rather than introduce new cultures to others as a means through which adults and children could learn something new, it tries to homogenize migrant’s cultures with the Greek one. Even though pilot training and intervention initiatives have been made to investigate teachers’ intercultural education preparation, no official decision was made to enforce a long term education on the topic of training. Other impediments of the Greek intercultural educational system concern the fact that, an intercultural teacher education training is implemented only when the educator has to work in classes with high concentration of foreign pupils. Teachers who work in differently composed classes do not receive this type of education. Furthermore, Greek teachers are trained in Intercultural Education only in the primary school grades (Sakka, 2010).

Possible consequences if teachers don't receive a proper pre-service Intercultural education

As previously mentioned, migratory fluxes influence learning environments. In order to achieve a generally stable Intercultural education plan, Intercultural Education must be mandatory in teacher training and, assimilating it with one's teaching techniques should be a rule. Most importantly all this should be seen as an opportunity and as a means to evolve (Gieß-Stüber & Blecking, 2008).

Generally, teachers do not feel they have enough information about the pupils- culture they are teaching to, or they are too afraid or resistant to a public and self-confrontation with multicultural education needs (Sakka, 2010, Gay & Howard, 2000), so how can our expertise role models effectively do their job if they do not even have the feeling of being capable of teaching in a multicultural class? Metaphorically this could be explained with the experience of a parachuting

instructor who is not sure about what is the weight limit that the parachute can take in order to ensure a safe landing, but he/she has heard every other colleague saying that it can handle any type of human weight. He/she continues basing his/her knowledge on that particular topic on an information that was not personally proven to be true. Similarly, teachers who do not have any expertise on their pupils' cultural background have no idea what kind of impact their way of teaching could have on them.

The United States are a great example of multiculturalism, and even though their immigration and migration history is different from the Greek one, it is interesting to observe what their approach to teachers' Intercultural education preparation is. Gay and Howard (2000), in their research have described the large difference there is between the worst academic performance of African American, Latino and Native American students compared to the worst academic performance of European American students (the latter in average is of a higher level). This fact puts under the reflector how different scholastic experiences can be based on race and ethnicity. This is one of the reasons why teachers need to be prepared on how to communicate and transfer their knowledge in a way that explicitly dishonors racism and functionally analyzes the value of diversity.

In this case, the parachute will eventually open, the students will eventually finish school, but will they ever be conscious about what they could have learned if their teachers have had another type of approach?

At the base of this dangerous racial and ethnic stratification, there is the fact that, not only in the United States, but also in every other country, there are ethnic and racial minorities who are at risk of social exclusion. These people's culture are rarely represented in high institutional job positions, like teaching. An example is found in the study from Burden and colleagues (2004), premising that, in the United States, most teachers are white Americans while 35% of enrolled students are black. And unless these students start feeling equal to their teachers and the other students, being treated the same way, and consequently, have the same possibility of success, future African American PE teachers will continue declining or not having a proper curriculum for a job in this field. The former example can not be representative of minorities of other countries because of USA's unique African American numerosity, but it still represents an example of a vicious circle that can appear if teachers do not receive a proper formation about teaching in multicultural environments.

If teachers do not receive a proper education on how to deal with multicultural classes, and it happens that for example students ask if “All Muslims are terrorists” like happened to McBrien (2017), a teacher without this kind of training possibly would not know that he/she could use the reports and the stories of people who flee from their country to better contextualize their situation, and consequently go against the normalization of this kind of stereotyping.

Burden and colleagues (2004), in their research explain that nowadays, in the United States, teachers are missing the skills to cope with multicultural classes because they have never been in close contact with non-native pupils. If this happens, teachers may unintentionally act in biased ways with them. Teachers themselves admit they do not know how to cope with multicultural classes. If pre-service teachers do not receive a suitable intercultural education, the risk is that they do not realize how intolerance and prejudice can affect learning environments and that they influence other teachers in doing so (Burden et al., 2004).

Empathy

The present research will focus on the investigation of empathy and participants’ relationship with it when it comes to teaching PE in multicultural settings. It is useful and due to examine this cognitive characteristic of human beings in order to better understand the next chapters of this thesis. Empathy composes people's emotional intelligence, and this topic was tackled with such scrutiny because of its importance when it comes to being in contact with pupils with multicultural backgrounds during PE and sport activities (Zembylas & Papamichael 2017).

The roots of any type of relationship consists of tuning in with the other person through emotions, in other words, with the ability to be empathetic. This ability, that enables us to know how another person is feeling, can appear in many situations like at work or at home (Goleman, 1996). In PE with multicultural classes for example, it is important that the teacher can be aware about what the pupils could feel if he/she acts in a certain way (Zembylas & Papamichael 2017) and this is one of the reasons why IE teacher training should be delivered. Some of the benefits of being empathetic is, a bigger emotional adequacy, sympathy, extroversion and a stronger sensibility. Empathy is rarely expressed through words, in fact it is usually communicated through signs. The key to understanding somebody else's feelings is in the skill to read the messages that travel through non-verbal canals, like the tone of the voice, gestures, face expressions and others (Goleman, 1996).

Empathy can be traced since early infancy, one of the precursors of empathy is considered to be the fact that newborns cry when they hear other newborns cry, too. Empathy can also be seen as “tuning in” with another person and in certain relationships (e.g. parents and children), this does not appear. The consequences of this are of profound perturbation for the child, because when a parent for a long amount of time, does not show signs of empathy for certain emotions of the child, like happiness, crying, or the need of being lulled, the child starts to avoid experimenting with them (Goleman, 1996).

From a neurological point of view, as it usually happens with many cognitive components of human beings, their discovery is linked to bizarre and interesting cases. For example cases of patients who were injured on the right frontal lobe who were incapable of understanding emotional messages from voice tones but were completely able to understand the meaning of the words. Historically, other patients were seen to have lesions on other regions of the right hemisphere, these people were not capable of expressing their emotions with different voice tones or gestures, they knew what they felt but were not able to communicate it. These events represented the beginning of a series of studies that brought researchers to understand that the neurological residence of empathy is not in one specific part of the brain, but is made of a circuit that goes through the cortex and the amygdala (Goleman, 1996). Empathy has two different facets, cognitive empathy, that consists in mentally looking from the point of view of another person, understanding what he/she is feeling. Emotional empathy instead is like taking part in that particular emotion and consequently knowing how to react to it (Smith, 2006).

The opposite of empathy is antipathy, this trait is present in people who commit crimes like rapes, child molesters and people who vent their anger on members of their family. The fact that these people are not sensible at all, brings them to lie to themselves about the fact that what they are doing is the best thing to do. Sociopaths are people who are characterized by a complete lack of empathy or compassion of any kind. Sociopaths, are the people who commit the most terrible crimes, an example can be the serial killers and torturers. (Goleman, 1996)

Empathy in intercultural education has a very important role because it helps finding the point of view of another person, to get to know somebody else better. Empathy corresponds to emotional and cognitive openmindedness, and endurance for uncertainty which brings seeing the unfamiliar as a learning possibility. All this serves and enables us to understand that no matter where somebody comes from, they have the same rights (Zembylas & Papamichael 2017). This suggests that empathy

can make the job of a coach or PE teacher who faces the challenge of teaching in a multicultural class, more meaningful, easy and able to foster a healthy educator-pupil relationship. Since this research aims to understand if the IE course could provide or enhance pre-service teachers' capability of emotionally tuning in with pupils within multicultural classes, through PE and sports, it is useful also to look into literature like Lorimers' (2013). In his research he talks about the importance of coaches' receptivity towards their athletes and merges the term "accuracy" to the definition of empathy. He states in fact that empathy can also be delineated as empathetic accuracy, which is the faculty to accurately perceive the inner experience of another. This way, the reason behind the behavior can be understood more clearly. The author explains that it is not enough for the coaches to just try and understand their athletes' emotions, one must be as correct as he/she can be in the interpretation. Once the accurate empathy is assimilated by the coaches, the relationship with the athletes will be characterized by a deeper emotional connection and more competent answer to their needs (Lorimer, 2013), something that in the participants' case should be able to reach through the IE course.

Online learning

In March 2020, the whole state of Greece had to go on a lockdown/quarantine, because of the outburst of the COVID-19 virus. As a consequence, all schools (except for primary schools that opened up for pupils in May) remained closed for the whole second semester. The IE classes that were designed were fourteen, six were being held at the University and eight of them were conducted through an online platform. Of course this unexpected event influenced the course of the present study, for this reason it is considered to be an important topic and something to take very much into consideration throughout all the research.

Online learning has been renamed as Education 4.0 and it was implemented as a method all over the virus affected countries, to protect the health of the students who or else had to get in contact with each other and consequently put in danger their safety and the people around them. Education 4.0 is a revolutionary way of teaching and learning that enables us to keep up with the speed of growth of technology. Like everything Education 4.0 has its advantages and disadvantages (Verawardina et al., 2020; Ayu, 2020). Regarding its' positive aspects, it is very convenient because it can be done wherever and whenever as long as there is an internet connection, the fact that the

students who follow the classes do not need to move towards a school, reduces transportation and schools maintenance costs (Verawardina et al., 2020). It represents a relatively new point of viewing the material to study (for students and teachers), this material can be retrieved as many times as one wants and at every hour of the day without much effort (Ayu, 2020). Another positive aspect about Education 4.0 is that teachers get to use their creativity to develop classes that best suit the subject and the students' needs. Education 4.0 has arrived with some drawbacks, some examples can be the fact that students need to have access to an internet connection and to a device like a computer or a smartphone, which usually due to the family economic situation, not everybody has. When students learn online, they usually learn alone, so there has to be a special effort from the teacher to promote techniques that can facilitate this type of independent learning. Finally, students must have some sort of technological skill to be able to access and use these platforms (Verawardina et al., 2020).

Research question

The present study aims to understand if the Intercultural education (IE) through PE course had an impact on the perception of the pre- service students who attended it. The focus will be on empathy, particularly on the knowledge and perception of it, and its behavioral translation, from the pre-service students (who from now on will be called participants or interviewees) towards multicultural classes of pupils. The analysis will focus on how participants' perception and knowledge of empathy would affect their behavior in multicultural PE settings. Initially, the second and last part of the research (post-interview) aimed to clarify if there was any difference between the first and second interviews, when it came to the aforementioned aspects and the students' actual empathetic behavior during the practical part of the course.

The COVID-19 sanitary emergency hit during the months in which the participants had to implement their gained knowledge by teaching PE classes to pupils. This activity had to obviously be postponed. Finally it was never to be accomplished due to the lack of time. The live frontal classes with the professor, instead, were replaced by an online platform modality, through which all the participants could participate in the classes safely from their homes. For this reason the focus of the post interviews finally included other than the empathy and its perception within the participants' practical experience with the pupils, another type of experience, the evolution of their knowledge through the online platform teaching modality.

The pre-interviews had the aim to investigate

- How do the participants perceive empathy and its role in multicultural classes?
- What is the participants' general knowledge about empathy and its role within multicultural classes?
- Which are the participants' perception of their empathetic behavior towards pupils within multicultural classes?
- What do the participants know about the impact that their behavior can have on pupils of a multicultural class?

The post- interviews had the aim to investigate

- What knowledge did the participants gain particularly about empathy and empathetic behaviors within multicultural classes, during the course?
- Did the participants' perception about their behavior/ empathetic behavior change after the course?
- How did the online platform influence the participants' learning process?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Data collection

Participants

The participants who took part in this study were 8 pre-service students (3 men and 5 women) in the third year of their studies. Their ages varied from 20 to 39 years old. The participants voluntarily attended the optional course of “Intercultural education through physical education and sport”. They were selected to participate in the study, based on their English proficiency. This was helpful to keep the selection randomized. Only 1 voluntary participant did not meet the English proficiency requirement, and thus she was assisted by a translator. All of them attended such courses for the first time. They did not have any prior experience in this field.

Procedures

All the interviews were conducted at the university, where students had already a familiarity with the space. As Creswell (2007) describes, the setting where qualitative research is conducted, has to be as natural as possible, meaning that it should correspond to the place where the participants come in contact with the phenomena under analysis. Instead of locating the interviews in the same classroom of the course, it was decided to ask the interviewees where they preferred talking, as long as it was in the same academic structure. The inspiration for this decision was taken from the guidelines that Herzog (2005) used in her qualitative investigation involving Palestinian female citizens of Israel. The reason why this topic was so delicately approached is also because of the language barrier between participants and researchers (their native language is respectively Greek and Italian, while the interview was conducted in English). The language obstacle is often a source of

incomprehension and discomfort in qualitative research (Welch, Piekkari, 2006), so by asking the interviewees to influence the decision of the setting, it could facilitate the creation of a more equal and complacent atmosphere. In her research, Herzog (2005) prefaces that the participants' perspective has to be taken into consideration when the location of the interview is decided. The consequence of this action would be elevating the quality of the interaction between researcher and interviewee. The procedural and strategic decision of the interview's location is essential, but by taking into consideration also the desires of the participants, the choice of the setting becomes a partnership agreement. This can help to promote decisional equity between the "taker" (researcher) and the "giver" (participant).

The investigation is based on understanding if the full semester course of intercultural education through PE, had an impact on the students' empathy, from a knowledge, and behavioral point of view.

The interviews lasted from 19 to 44 minutes and one of them had the assistance of an interpreter who met all the requirements to guarantee a realistic and unbiased translation and exchange of information.

The course lasted 14 weeks, the participants attended all the classes, 6 of which were conducted live in class. The remaining 8 were arranged and completed online, to ensure the safety of the participants during the COVID-19 emergency.

The researcher participated in the IE course, so informal contact with the participants was initially made at the end of the first class of the semester.

All the participants were informed about the purpose of the present study and they were kindly asked if they wanted to participate. Once they agreed, emails were exchanged. The consent form was sent to them with the suggestion to look at it before the day of the interview. To protect the interviewees' anonymity, from now on, they will be all associated with numbers from 1 to 8.

Interview design

The interview guide covered 4 topics.

- Perception of empathy, meaning, how much do the participants think they know about the role of empathy.

What skills do you think that the pupils you will work with, are expecting you to have?

- knowledge, about the meaning of the word “empathy” and of the topics that would subsequently be taught in the course

What does empathy mean (in your opinion)? Do you think PE could be a facilitator/barrier to reduce intercultural tension, and promote inclusion for all cultures? under what conditions this can happen in your opinion?

- Perceived skills in managing a multicultural class.

Do you think you already possess any skills that will help you interact/handle a multicultural class? Which ones?

- Perception of future behaviors and attitudes, as in how the participants think they would act within a multicultural class.

You are teaching PE to a group of pupils and during the first month of your practice, you notice an attitude of rejection towards native children, from some children who have a multicultural background. After a while the native pupils start feeling this distance and react in the same way. The result is a class made of culturally different groups that don't cooperate during the PE classes and are always in competition between them. What would you do in this situation?

The interview guide, which is illustrated on the Appendix, consists of semi structured questions and sub questions. The latter could help the researcher go more in depth with the information when the interviewees' answer did not seem complete, it also helped ensure that the content of the answer was made of personal unbiased opinions as much as possible. The interview guide was designed with the ultimate goal to reach the possibility to capture the participants' perceptions and experience. As previously mentioned, it covered the areas of perception of empathy, knowledge, skills behaviors from

the points of view of the participants, towards the IE course and the multicultural setting they would work in. The interviews were conducted in English while the interviewees' first language is Greek, and the researchers' native language is Italian. The interviews were settled to be conducted in the English language because it will be the official language of this research.

Other than trying to put the interviewees more at ease by letting them influence the decision of the setting, the researcher did all the talking at a slow pace to smoothen the exchange of information (Welch, Piekkari, 2006). Paraphrasing was another tool used by the researcher. Because of the language barrier of the participants, sometimes it was useful to reword in proper English language the answer in order to have the conversation represented more clearly (Welch, Piekkari, 2006).

Data trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, is the means through which researchers certify the accuracy of their work. Lincoln and Guba (1986) developed and investigated four guidelines that can help qualitative studies reach trustworthiness. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. All these requirements were welcomed and carried out all through the research and analysis process.

Credibility, namely, how close are the results of the study with reality, (Shenton 2004) was ensured with attentive reading of other sport psychology qualitative researches and interview guides, together with scientific literature. As previously mentioned, the participants were randomly selected using, except for 1 participant, English Proficiency as a selection criteria to lower the chances of any biases. To help the discourses be of a more honest nature, It was added that there is no right or wrong answer to the questions, and that no risk of pain or discomfort were involved. Finally it was explained to them that if at any time they felt the need to withdraw from the project, needed to make questions or add something, they could feel free to do so. The interview guide was developed by repeatedly debriefing and peer reviewing with two supervisors who helped shape the questions in a more accurate way. The researcher was present throughout the live and online IE classes to ensure there was one more approach (observation), other than the interviews that would allow the researcher to get closer to the participants' experience (LeCompte & Goetz 1982). Shenton (2004) calls this way of ensuring credibility, triangulation. During the transcription of the interviews and the coding of the information the researcher wrote comments about what was noticed throughout the reading operation.

A careful explanation of the vocabulary and of the original source of this research were provided in order to prepare and facilitate the readers' comprehension of the elaborate and demonstrate the usefulness of the used methods. (Shenton, 2004). The researcher made sure to inform the participants about the anonymity and the confidentiality every personal information would be treated with.

They have also been informed about the conduct of both pre and post-interview would have been done and that they both would have been recorded. During the whole journey the researchers' supervisors were available to discuss and facilitate the reflection process (Shenton, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Transferability is another guideline to follow to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. It refers to the possibility to apply the result to a broader population (Shenton, 2004). To guarantee this, the present research contains detailed information about the locations of the research to allow readers to try and repeat the process (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Moreover this guideline can be followed by ensuring that the reader is aware of all the limitations of the research. This last process is also contained in the guideline of dependability which in fact refers to being able to reach the same results if the research is replicated (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability is the last of this ensemble of guidelines and it aims to guarantee that the research's results derive from what the participants have genuinely communicated and not from the researchers' expectations (Shenton, 2004). Again triangulation is an important contribution to lower the probability of the presence of the main researchers' biases (Shenton, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Data analysis

Thematic Analysis that was initially developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke in 2006 was chosen as the method to analyze the data for this study. The specific thematic analysis approach that was used in this study, is what Braun and Clarke (2019) called, "reflexive thematic analysis", which is a more specific and articulated version of the first one. This qualitative method serves to help

create themes. These themes are made of the explanation and the interpretation of patterns and of concepts that were common and got repeated from the interviewees, linked to the research question (Braun et al., 2012).

A total of 79 pages of interview transcripts was created by the researcher. Subsequently, the analysis process followed these steps. (a) The constant reading of transcripts to gain familiarity with the content, (b) Color coding of topics, aspects and concepts that were noticed to be commonly expressed and repeated by the participants (c) Development of sub-themes from the coded data to help clearly see, organize and initially analyze the information (d) Generation of themes based on the interpretation of the informations' meaning, derived from the coding and sub-theming process (Braun, Clarke, 2012).

Chapter 4

Results

Because of the complexity and variety of the content of the transcriptions, it was decided to firstly analyze the coding patterns. New groupings that will precede the actual themes, were created and called sub-themes. The sub-themes basically represent the themes within a theme, and they are used to illustrate more clearly a really elaborate one (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Below, the titles of the sub-themes.

- Perceptions (of the participants' future experiences, abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge regarding multicultural classes)
- Participants' intercultural values and beliefs and the deriving motivation that is at the base for certain actions, in multicultural settings.
- Participants stereotypical comments
- Perceptions on knowledge of empathy and its behavioral expression
- Perceived skills to implement and develop activities in multicultural classes, expectations for their attitudes, knowledge and skills in teaching multicultural classes in the future
- General knowledge about intercultural education and the definition of empathy

Sub themes derived from coding

Perception of future experiences, present abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge in multicultural classes

Many questions of the interview guide required participants' answers to be based on a future projection of themselves and their experience in the course. For example the one that involved the participants thinking about the kind of knowledge they think they should have when teaching in a multicultural class. At the time of the interview the IE course had just started so the participants

couldn't have a realistic vision of it in that present moment. For this reason the participants' answers to the questions focused on what the course could give them, were entirely based on their perception, on their past personal experiences and their expectations from the course.

The interviews revealed participants' perception regarding the possible positive contribution of the IE course to their knowledge and future behaviors in multicultural settings, which is also the main reason why they decided to follow the course in the first place. As student 1 says.

I think that they are necessary (IE classes) for us because a lot of children or students in my age, they don't know how to react with children from other countries and they have to build a personality that will be respectful for others and, so I think that this program, these lessons are important to be..to.. to exist...

Moreover the vast majority of the participants showed that they perceive the IE class as being "different" from other classes that they take as a part of their sport science degree. As student 2 states: "[...] It's the only module that is directed to this, to interculturalism. The other ones, they don't put it as a key point". Student 8 also supported that.

[...] The other classes are like study, and biology and biomechanics, it's like learning strict subjects and classes, it isn't like, you talk and you become..no... like here (the IE class) it's more relaxed, and you see other people's opinion, it's an open class like, there is not a right and wrong answer[...]

Another big category of perceptions gathered from the participants, is the one regarding diversity in PE. Over all, the interviewees perceive an interaction between PE, diversity and the tensions that could derive from this. With diversity intended as distinct culture, ethnicity, race from the native population. All the participants perceived this interaction to be very important, due especially to the fact that PE is the school subject that may eliminate acts of discrimination the most and the fastest and as student 6 intones.

[...](in) team sports, you have to be with the others so, anything you want to do, like not talk to them, you have to do because you are a team. You have to pass the ball, you have to give the ball, you have to speak with them because you need to take his hand. Whether you want or not you will communicate with the others so the things will be different I think then, because in maths for example you don't have to speak to the others [...]

Student 8 also agrees by saying

[...] PE is a very like ehm... important tool for me because there is the interaction, there is physical activity, there is the touching, the hugging, that the people do during PE [...], so I think it's the best module we can work with (the IE course) [...] and through some good activities like playing with the team that you mix [...] you can form some groups, some teams, that have a lot of people that are coming from different countries together, and make them think that they are one group.

Moreover, some of the participants mentioned that pupils with different cultural backgrounds, race and ethnicities perceive information and activities in a different way than native pupils, and as a consequence, teachers have to adapt to a way of delivering instructions that has a subjective reception. Student 3 says that “We have to change our teaching method. All cultures and ethnicities have their own beliefs and restrictions, so a different kind of teaching is needed. Teachers have to adapt the education, and not apply one type of education to everybody”

Another popular group of the interviewee's perceptions, is the one that they have of their capabilities to act and behave in an “appropriate” way in multicultural settings. Generally, the answers to these questions followed the trend of: believing to be able to adapt to the situation and being conscious that, to do a proper job, the students firstly need to go through all the course or need “more knowledge” as student 4 stated. Student 3 also confirmed.

Yeah, not really, I' m not really comfortable with this [...] Because i need to learn how to do this, I don't know how these children have grown up, what their nation thinks about sports, what sport they know, and what type of games they are interested in. I don't think I would be good at it, but I would try really hard.

Participants' intercultural values and beliefs and the deriving motivation that is at the base for certain actions, in multicultural settings.

By reading and re reading the transcriptions of the interviews, there was enough information to infer the values that the participants have when it comes to their intercultural learning experience. Values are ideas and notions that are subjectively considered important for the individual, they pander the innate need of human beings to ease themselves into the environment. They have the

characteristic of possibly changing over time and as Lee and Trail (2011) stated in their exploratory study, values follow a hierarchy. More specifically: core values are the one that resist over time and peripheral values are the ones that change. In that case, further analysis would be needed for the assessment of participants' values through hierarchy.

But still, being able to group the general tendency of values of the participants can help contribute to the prediction of sport cognitive involvement (Lee, Trail, 2011).

Every one of the participants share similar values when it comes to intercultural education. Generally they believe that promoting equality through PE is something that can improve the quality of life of children in multicultural classes. As student 4 expressed

First of all, it has a big impact on me because I am very sensitive about racism [...] through PE I wanted to find a way for it to work in the education field and change the norms and the ideas that we already have about racism. This could happen without changing the way that the kids are thinking, like changing their mind in a bad way, but through giving good examples by teaching them how they are supposed to react to racism.

All the interviewees shared the principle of being opposed to racism. And even if this wasn't explicitly said, it was captivated by the way of expressing themselves, the emphasis they put on certain words or phrases, and the tone of their voice when they expressed their opinions.

The great majority of them firmly believed that their actions as a consequence of the IE course will make a significant change in multicultural environments. Below, an example from student 1.

I think that we have a common interest (referring to the classmates of the IE course) about how to teach and how to connect the children from other countries, and I think that all the students in the classroom, [...] we feel the same emotions about the situation. [...] (referring to other classes the participant takes at university). Probably there would be some students whose way of thinking is different from ours, and maybe this is the reason why they didn't select the lesson. [...] I think that there are many students who are racists.

Student 7 likely presumed

I think it's a very valuable lesson (referring to the IE course) because we have to find a way to understand that multiculturalism is necessary, and for the people who aren't open minded and for the people who came from other countries. [...] It will show me the way to make this thing work.

Participants' stereotypical comments

Stereotypes represent the beliefs that we have about a certain group of people. As Van den Bos & Stapel (2009) stated in the first part of their study, there are two main reasons why we tend to judge and categorize people: to enhance the self and the level of self-esteem, and to comprehend others and their behavior. As a result of four studies on the topic, the authors found out that if the stereotyping actually brings to a better understanding of one-self (self-enhancement) or of the others' behavior (comprehension goal), the stereotyping and the reason behind it face a reduction. The type of stereotyping that was observed during the analysis of the transcriptions is mild, and it can be put in the category of the comprehension based stereotyping. It can be seen in the following example, that student 8 talks about the fact that she believes that there are some races and some nations that don't put enough importance in youth PE.

Yeah I think it's different (referring to the learning process in PE, depending on race/ethnicity/culture) because for example here in Greece you have some students that [...] come from another culture where physical activity [...] it's not the first thing they would think about when they are doing something outside their house so ehm.. also in general they don't think PE is something that really matters so I think that the characteristics of these races, of these nationalities, can play a significant role on how physical activity will be in the schools.

Almost all the interviewees had the trend of referring to immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees without caution when it came to differentiating the way they call "them" depending on their personal background. They mostly tended to refer to these people as "them" compared to what they called "us", which instead represented the native people/the host country components. These ways the participants were custom referring to people, are stereotypical because the criteria of inclusion in both groups: "them" and "us" are based on observations that do not have any proper background of investigation. (Van den Bos, Stapel,2009). An example can be observed in students' 8 opinion extract,

[...] I think that I speak well English, and this is an important thing because some of them can not speak Greek, and I think that I'm an energetic person so I will lead them through my physical movements and my body language and at the same time, I can use music[...]

One of the first questions of the interview can be an interesting source to analyze

stereotyping for the participants. The question asks for their opinion regarding the existence of characteristics that could make people more or less prone to have a better performance in PE. Subsequently, it was asked for them to say if they thought the learning process in PE could be different based on races/ ethnicity and cultures.

What the participants responded, allowed to have an understanding about if the interviewees follow the trend of judging general behaviors that pupils have towards sport and PE, based on stereotypes concerning race ethnicity or culture. Alternatively, it is allowed to notice if they have a tendency to neutrally judge the pupils, (for example looking at their physical attributes) and not be biased by their cultural background.

Every interviewee answered to the first part of the aforementioned interpellations, in a way that showed a non-biased attitude towards the cultural background of people (when it came to evaluate what are the characteristics of a person who performs well in PE). Almost all of the participants did not see the provenance or the culture of a pupil being the fundamental aspect that could influence performance in a PE setting. Instead they found “genes and physical attributes” (student 4), “character” (student 1) and parental routines (student 8) to be more effective for this kind of evaluation. Student 5 explains.

[...] especially the students who have a good body type, they're better than others (in PE) because they have a better body type, if they have already worked on their body or they have inherited it from their parents, from their family...

As it is known, stereotypes can drive in discrimination and prejudice and to avoid this, Van den Bos & Stapel (2009) suggestion is to focus on not stereotyping the social groups that are already subjected to stereotypes (like minorities for example). Participants' approaches will be compared also with the ones after the IE course.

Perceptions on knowledge of empathy and it's expression

Empathy is the main focus of the investigation, and it was decided to analyze it less explicitly as possible, in other words, almost all this pre-interview guide is based on looking into the

participants' perception of their empathy towards the pupils they would eventually work with, but only one question has the word "empathy" in it. This approach ensures that the participants do not know what the specific aim of the interview is and consequently, they are not biased by it. Hence they would feel free to answer, taking whatever direction they feel like. An explanation about the reason why it's important to develop an interview guide this way can be outlined with an analogy: When a person goes to a psychologist, the therapist will never directly ask to the patient why is he/she feeling the way he/she feels, instead, the psychologist will first of all try to understand the context of the patient's life in order to better interpret what is happening (Brinkman, Kvale, 2015).

By listening and reading through the interviews, it was noticed in the first place that the participants could all perceive an apprehension of wanting to help, in response to children with different cultural backgrounds. They showed a high level of awareness and confidence when it came to answering to a hypothetical cry for help or more generally, to a feeling of discomfort. Zembylas and Papamichael (2017), in their research tried to show how discomfort and empathy can be related when it comes to multicultural teacher education. Their research was conducted in Cyprus so it can be very relatable to the setting this elaborate will be in. They postulate that discomfort and empathy are connected to people's reactions, and if their joined work is successful, then there could be the creation of a safe space that is not devoid of discomfort, but that responds to it with reaction that promotes thoughtful, analytic and most of all, empathetic behaviors. An example can be seen below, where student 5, tries to imagine the discomfort that foreign students could feel when they are not so acquainted with the host country yet. In response to this, they imagine putting forward an empathetic reaction.

I believe (PE) can (stop intercultural tensions) because as I said earlier, in PE you need cooperation so it helps them to interact, the children, the locals and the intercultural [...] To... I mean to...let me help them to be more acceptable, [...] and to help the locals understand that maybe it's hard for them to come here and leave the past behind

Student 6 agreeably said

[...] I know that I help those children to be happy because nobody wants to be refused, I feel bad despite if they don't tell others, if someone doesn't want to be your friend, you will think..."why?"... and it will make you feel sad or confused or anything, so if you know that you're accepted by the locals and by the others,

you have nothing do despair about, I will be happy to help them

Another coding facet of empathy that was encountered in the participants' answers was the awareness of if the students actual skills, (soon to be developed through the IE course) are or are not enough to be a proper PE teacher in multicultural settings. This type of consciousness shows the level of the participants' awareness about the fact that this practice could help both Greek and immigrant pupils to reach a higher level of well-being. To do this of course the participants have to project themselves in the specific situation (for example a PE class) and put themselves in the shoes of the pupils.

All of the interviewees, during their answers, made an effort to immerse themselves into the situation which represents a positive act of caring and trying, towards people they thought need help. Of course because of their lack of knowledge, and because being empathetic does not necessarily mean doing the right action (Jacobson, 2009). Some of the participants described how they would utilize the skills they have, but it's not always the best way.

Positive/realistic use of current skills (student 1)

I think that, as many languages you know, it's better for you, I think that as many strategies and ways you know and activities to teach pupils, it's better for teaching and how to react with children and bring together the ones that live here with the ones from other countries.

“negative”/ not yet developed use of current skills

Below there is an example of how some students would use their skills, in a way that maybe is not the most suited. For example student 4 sounds very eager to do, to act and to change situations, she seems almost sure that there will be something that will need her help and that this will constitute a radical positive change for the pupils. Sometimes though, these kinds of situations need a lot of observation before taking action. And as she said, “sometimes, knowledge and patience are not skills that constitute the whole package to be a good PE teacher in multicultural settings”. Actually every encountered situation will need a different set of skills that's why, their use can't be premeditated. Student 4 added

I do have some skills. I am very eager to change things, and I am also very intrinsically motivated because I find discrimination so wrong and I will use whatever I have in order to help childrens' inclusion. [...] (like) Patience ehm... I am hoping I will get the knowledge also, and with this, I will have the whole package to do it.

Another big coding category of empathy, are the direct speeches that the students imagine and “perform” during the interviews. Participants tried very often to feel what is like being somebody else by diving into the pupils’ feelings, routines and behaviors and by directly interpreting what they would say. This kind of reaction to the questions, could look like a representation of empathy (Elliott et al., 2011). Here is an example from student 6.

I know how to treat them, how to make them laugh because in every, not in every but a lot of problems (like if a pupil complained) “Miss! Yannakis told me I’m fat”, I know how to say “Yannakis, what did you say to Nikos? [...]

Perceived skills to implement and develop activities in multicultural classes, participants’ expectations of their use of attitudes, knowledge and skills in teaching multicultural classes in future

The skills that will be examined more in depth, are the ones that enable to design, implement and assess an intercultural course. The question that most needed an answer that would bring the participants thoughts in this particular direction, was the scenario. Students were asked to describe their perceptions on their behaviors over scenarios based on pupils’ cultural differences. Everybody tried to answer this question which underlines the will power that the participants had to resolve a difficult situation. Of course they do not have the tools to know how to design, implement and assess an intercultural course, but many creative ideas came out. Below an example from student 4.

[...] Maybe I would also talk to the parents (of immigrant pupils). This could be very helpful for me because if they don't want to be in a group with the local people maybe it's because they are gonna move away again (change residence), so in this case I can't do much. If instead, the parents of the students

want to be a united group, I would try [...], through discussion and through PE, to give the opportunity to the local children to teach the other kids inside the class, [...]

General knowledge about intercultural education and the definition of empathy

Knowledge is a very delicate topic nowadays especially regarding intercultural education, multiculturalism and racism. Knowledge is one of the consequences of education, and it's considered one of the most effective ways to ensure that people know about the history and the consequences that their thoughts and actions could cause.

In a question, the students were explicitly asked if they knew the definition of the word empathy. Only a few of them had a general idea of what it means. As mentioned before, the main focus of this elaborate is the analysis of empathy so this question was posed in order to understand if their perception of their empathetic or non-empathetic behavior is accompanied by the knowledge of the meaning of the word. Moreover, to understand if their actions are or are not entirely influenced by notion. The latter suggestion is the more frequent, not only because of the slightly larger number of participants who did not know the meaning of the word "empathy", but also because the answer of the participants who did know the meaning was quite poor. This fact indicated an uncertainty about the sense of this importance of the term. Student 8 who had only a general idea of what empathy is, described it as "when you can understand the pain of the other person and you can feel what he's feeling".

To help evaluate the perception of what the participants think they should learn, they were asked to describe what kind of knowledge they thought they should have to be able to portray in a multicultural setting. The most frequent comment on the topic was the need to know about the cultural background, student 4 thought it is important "to know what does the culture think it's appropriate, how to communicate with the people in order for them not to be offended". And as student 6 stated.

I need to know the characteristics of the children, their routines, why they are here, in our country, to know how they feel, why their community is here with us, if they want to be here, to my lesson and the knowledge about the psychology I think mainly, and the English language.. [...]

Thematization

The following table shows the three themes that resulted from the analysis of the convergences that were identified within the sub-themes.

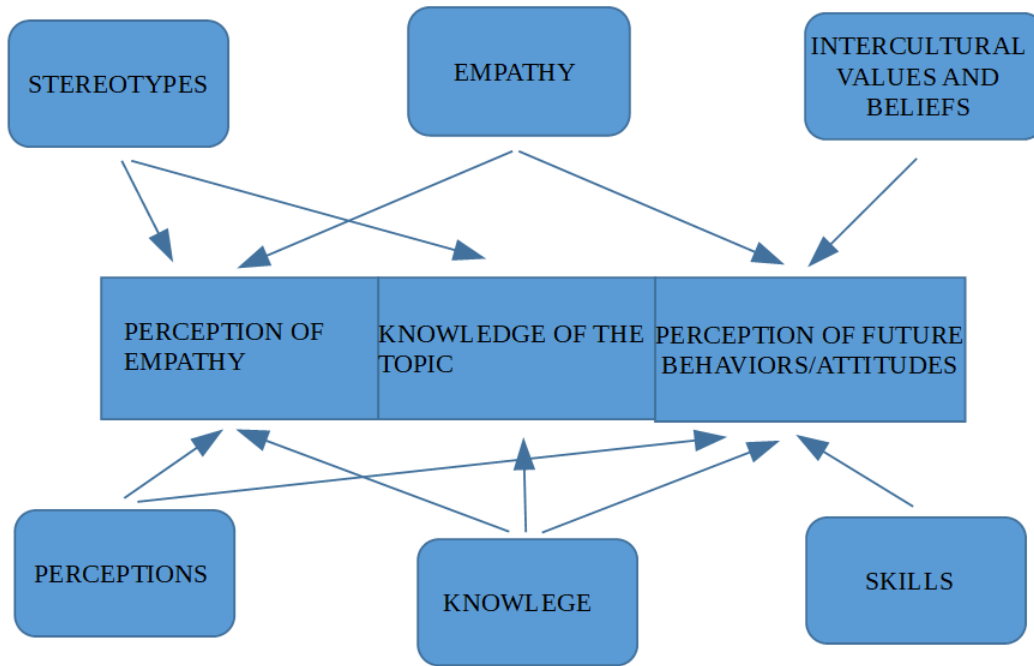
The aim of the totality of this elaborate is to understand if there has been any difference in the participants' empathetic perception (in general and towards pupils in multicultural settings) by comparing the analysis of the interviews at the beginning and at the end of the IE course.

The following three categories will help to assess what is the participants' situation regarding how they perceive empathy, more specifically: what they think they know about empathy, the knowledge of the topic: what they actually know about empathy and in general about the intercultural education process, and lastly, how they perceive their future behaviors to be in relation to multicultural settings.

In order to make the following scheme more "clear on the eye", the sub-themes' titles were summarized as follows.

- Perceptions (of the participants' future experiences, abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge regarding multicultural classes) "Perception".
- Participants' intercultural values and beliefs and the deriving motivation that is at the base for certain actions, in multicultural settings. "Intercultural values and beliefs".
- Participants stereotypical comments "Stereotypes".
- Perceptions on knowledge of empathy and its expression "Empathy".
- Perceived skills to implement and develop activities in multicultural classes, Expectations for their attitudes, knowledge and skills in teaching multicultural classes in future "skills".
- General knowledge about intercultural education and the definition of empathy "knowledge".

IMAGE 1



Theme 1 perception of empathy

This category is called “perception of empathy” because the coding patterns/sub-themes that reside in it, represent an explanation of how the participants were perceiving empathy during the interview. In the questions they were asked to answer, (particularly the ones that implicitly contained the objective of analyzing their empathetic perception) the participants, showed only what they think they know (referencing the research question) about empathy. Only a couple of participants had a vague idea of what empathy is. The most correct explanation came from student 4 who described empathy as the “situation where you are able to feel what others are feeling, to be in their position”.

By breaking into pieces and categorizing the sub-themes, it can be investigated if there is and eventually how big is the detachment between what the students think they know about empathy (perception) and what they know in actual fact. This can be inferred by analyzing the repeated concepts that were mentioned. These concepts represented the foundation of the answers and of the

present theme. The foundation, or better, the material of the concrete that helped create the foundation of this theme, is composed, in no particular order by the sub-themes: empathy, stereotypes, perception and knowledge (image 1). In the following paragraphs it will be explained why the aforementioned sub-themes can be part of the explanation about how the participants perceive empathy.

Provided that the present study is a qualitative one, empathy will not be measured through scales, but purely through the observation and the interpretation of the interviewees' experiences thoughts and perception of life in multicultural settings. More specifically: Empathy represents the attempt to understand another person's experience, as it is commonly said "like being in the shoes" of another person, which refers to seeing life events from another's point of view. This involves the sensation of what is like living as the other person, emotionally and cognitively (Elliot et al., 2011). During the coding part of the analysis many information were found about how the interviewees perceive empathy, and how they think they would act in multicultural settings accordingly. Not many participants had knowledge about what empathy means, however, all of them showed that the projection they have of their empathetic behavior, (especially if they had to deal with people who are going through a situation of discomfort) is of an understanding and helpful nature. According to Zembylas and Papamichaels' (2017) research, this propensity could eventually create a safe environment and even more empathetic behaviors.

As previously commented in the sub-theme analysis, this way of stereotyping serves to better understand the others' behavior, and if found to bring truthful meaning, it can subsequently decrease the stereotyping itself (Van Den Bos & Stapel, 2009). For this reason there is not a big chance that this act of stereotyping could add up to becoming dangerous when it comes for the participants to be in multicultural settings.

In general it was noticed that the stereotyping level was quite low when it came time for the participants to talk about people with multicultural background, essentially because, when they got asked about it, none of them initially used race, ethnic, religious or cultural reason to justify different performances in PE as student 8 explained.

Aah! it's like they are more energetic, (referring to the pupils who are better at PE than others) they want to communicate with the others, play as a group and do activities all together. For me PE is also doing

something as a group, like work with somebody else, not doing it alone. Maybe the students that do physical activity outside the school also (are better at PE than others), maybe the last thing is that they have a physically active life with their parents, so it is something that they took from their house also.

Also because, one of the times that the participants' words contained stereotyped content to refer to people with aforementioned characteristics, was to group them in categories. Another reason was in order to explain how they would have dealt with it in particular situations or to explain why they acted in a certain way. An example can be seen with student 4 who stereotypically grouped all immigrant children in a refugee category.

First I would go to the refugees and ask them "what do you want?, do you wanna be at the side, so you want to be alone? do you want to join the group?" to see their needs[...], I would try to give the opportunity to the local children to teach the other kids inside the class, not like, give them the opportunity to be ehm...to be leaders, but to give them the opportunity to teach the other kids so they can be all together[...]

Regarding perception, one important aspect that can be linked to empathy was noticed. It concerns the fact that the participants were able to imagine the challenge that educators face when it comes to teaching in a multicultural environment. They feel that pupils who have a history of immigration, refugees or asylum seeking, have a different way of receiving the teachers' information compared to the native children. Here is what student 3 has to say.

Ehm... I do not know if I can do it (be a teacher) because it's very difficult to cooperate with all these children, not only in multicultural schools, regular schools too. So I see myself more as just a coach I think, not really as a teacher.

And student 8 also stated.

[...] I see some teachers, they don't know how to speak and how to interact with their students because at the same time, they make all wrong assumptions and they are using all wrong words, they have to be careful because you want to create safe environment for everybody, not only for the children who are coming from abroad, you want to work as a group, so all of them need to feel secure.

After putting themselves in teachers' place the majority of the participants stated that even

though they would be able to adapt to the situation now, they still would need proper learning experience like the IE course, to evolve in the teaching field. As student 4 said.

I feel comfortable (in leading activity sessions in multicultural settings) but I feel I need more knowledge. [...] (after being asked why) the Example that the trainer gave in the class, the one that, if you are not able to touch somebody then use the hula hoop to get to know about it, I wouldn't think about it if I was inside the class before, but now I know, so I think I need to have more of that kind of knowledge.

Theme 2 knowledge of the topic

This Category encases all the sub-themes facets that helped to understand how much knowledge the participants have of intercultural education in multicultural PE settings before going through the IE course. It is important to assess how much of what they say and how they behave is because of their personal learning experiences and knowledge. It is key in the view of evaluating how much knowledge they gained after going through all the classes of the IE course. For the sake of the aim of this elaboration, the participants were asked if they could give the definition of the word empathy, only a bunch of the interviewees broadly explained to the researcher the meaning of the word. Here is a student's 6 explanation.

Well it means to come, to the place, physic.. or not.. wait (giggling), to understand how the other feels, so like, because they had a very bad day with their work we don't know how bad was this for them and we need to put ourselves in themselves to understand why they're here, why they act like this, how do they feel.. this is what I think.

Of course right after, they were given a more precise definition also by illustrating them the difference between cognitive and emotional empathy.

Concerning stereotypes, the participants were not explicitly asked the definition of the word, on the contrary the researcher tried to notice if they used stereotyped expressions to talk about people with a multicultural background. By analyzing the answers it can be concluded that the participants have at least a minimal knowledge of what stereotypes are and how they can affect our

society because the only stereotyping that they used was comprehension based (Van den Bos & Stapel, 2009) and of slight mild and blameless nature. An example can be seen from a student's 1 answer who takes for granted that if pupils come from other countries, they need to be “collected” and “brought together”.

When the participants were straightforwardly asked what kind of knowledge they think they should have when teaching in multicultural PE settings the most frequent answers were: “some more expertise in other cultures” and “proficiency in other languages”.

Theme 3 perception of future behavior/attitudes

Examining the perception of how the interviewees think they will act and cope in multicultural settings such as PE classes, is one way to observe if their predictions correspond to the reality. Even if it does not correspond to the truth, it can help gain more information to understand in which level their predictions will change and what eventually influenced them. All this will be examined through the post/interview comparison. Attitudes is one of the main focuses of the EDU-PACT units as it represents the values, emotions and general psychological orientation towards a certain fact. Attitudes are useful to predict behaviors. Still, attitudes and behaviors are two separate concepts (Chaiklin, 2011).

As previously mentioned, values have an important role in attitudes and in turn, they are part of our behaviors. All values that were detected during the coding process, if correctly approached, could be helpful to predict these students future behavior in multicultural setting and they are: the belief that PE is a useful tool to promote equality and anti-racism, and finally the belief that the IE course could help positively change the quality of life of children in multicultural settings. Here are some extracts from the transcriptions from student 1.

I think mostly [...] with the activity we can lead them (pupils with multicultural backgrounds) more easily and bring them together, more than words or discussions.

[...] Because it's body language and we can express ourselves better.

Student 6

My opinion of what I want to do is teach them (the pupils) to inspire them with a good meaning, to help the others, to respect the others, to ehm... to come together not because [...] I said it, but because they need to do it. To learn that this is right because we are all people, despite the color of the country, anything and there is no reason to ehm.. do something (for equality) because you have to, you should do it because you need to know that it's right.

Student 3

It's pretty much good and useful (speaking about the IE course), pretty useful to the students (participants) because they will be teachers and they will have to cooperate with these children (pupils), they will teach these children how to be a member of the society.

In this category, the aspects regarding skills that were found during the coding process, play an important role. To be able to understand which are the skills that one person has, and how to use them in the best way in order to promote equality, one has to, not only project themselves in a future situation, but also imagine their behavioral answer to it. Now, what can be noticed from the participants' statements is that all of them tried to express how they would employ their life experiences to promote the pupils' well-being. The behavioral translation of their skills was at times realistic and helpful, like in the case of student 5 who would react to a conflict between immigrant and native pupils this way.

I would try to ehm... to put those children in the same team in some exercises to cooperate ehm I would also talk to the children to help them overcome their problem ehm.. if it's good and ehm works I would try to help them through more exercises for example, ehm.. [...] I would say to multicultural children ehm.. that they shouldn't reject the other kids because they can do the same ehm.. that... I would also say to the natives to have patience [...]

Other times was too instinctive, and brought to behaviors that would not be necessarily helpful for the pupils. Like student 1, who would try to solve the hypothetical conflict between natives and immigrant pupils by dividing them in "separate groups" and tell the "Greek" group how the other "group is feeling in our country, that they were not very comfortable with us"

Naturally, the knowledge that the students will gain will influence their behavior as educators. As in right now, the coding process brought to the surface what their behavior with the pupils would be like, if everything that they said would correspond to the truth. Even with a lack of knowledge about what empathy means, still their behaviors would be of an empathetic nature (based on how the participants said they would act in particular situations), as student 2 exemplified.

[...]I had prior experience with racism and as a result I know that the kids think that they are alone and I know how they feel when they don't like to participate in events or in the class. [...] I think I know how to talk to them, and I will say: "Okay, I know what you are feeling right now, and you are uncomfortable, I know I know, I have been there, so let's go with small steps so you can do this event and then stay outside but at least try 'cause it will be best for you to be friends with the kids and yeah.." That's it.

Post interviews analysis

One of the participants (student 8) withdrew from the research so finally, the interviewees were 7.

The following are the aims of the post interview

What knowledge did the participants gain particularly about empathy and empathetic behaviors within multicultural classes, during the course?

Did the participants' perception about their behavior/ empathetic behavior change after the course?

How did the online platform influence their learning process?

The interview guide was slightly different from the pre-interview one. The areas of investigation that the questions covered, welcomed a new topic: The online platform modality and its influence on the participants learning process. For this reason, the majority of the questions that were added or changed, were about the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic that forced Greece to go on lockdown in March 2020. This caused most of the IE classes to be taught through an online platform

modality. This important event certainly influenced the experience of the participants (especially because they did not get to complete the practical part of the course). Accordingly the topic was considered of great importance and was decided to add among the aims and questions of the post-interview investigation.

The inspiration for the conduction of reflexive thematic analysis was taken from Martinez and colleagues' research (2016). In their paper, the themes development that followed the pre-interviews, served not only to better understand and group the contents of the pre- interviews, but it also provided a means to compare pre and post-interviews. (a) The same initial themes were located also in the post interviews transcriptions (b) comparisons were made between excerpts of pre and post (c) new themes were discovered and analyzed in the results (Martinez et al., 2016)

The following represent the titles of the themes that were generated in the pre-interview analysis (image 1)

- Perception of empathy and its expression
- Perception of future behaviors/attitudes
- Knowledge of the topic

It was decided not to implement the same technique of the pre-interviews. Therefore, the sub-themes that were previously used, will not be added this time. This decision was taken because at this stage of the research, a comparison has to be made between what the participants said (in the pre and post-interviews), taking as a landmark the patterns generated in the first analysis, that hence, are already there and do not need to be regenerated. (See image 1)

Thematization

1_Perception of empathy

In the present theme empathy will be investigated. Empathy represents the ability to share, understand and experience emotions that another person is feeling (Elliot et al., 2011). Particularly this theme will concentrate on the empathy that the participants think they would have within multicultural settings. Moreover, this part of the investigation will provide help for the analysis of participants' perceptions on empathy's meaning and the possibility of changing it after attending the IE course.

In the pre-analysis' color coding, it was noticed that the majority of the participants did not know the definition of empathy. Although, their answers showed they would have acted with an empathetic behavior in situations that required help in guaranteeing equality, among children with a multicultural background. Student 6 said

[...] I know that I help those children to be happy because nobody wants to be refused, I feel bad despite if they don't tell others, if someone doesn't want to be your friend, you will think..."why?"... and it will make you feel sad or confused or anything, so if you know that you're accepted by the locals and by the others, you have nothing to despair about. I will be happy to help them

In the post-interview answers, the response to children with different cultural backgrounds' negative feelings was extrapolated from the participants' direct experiences with the pupils. Almost all the participants have had the chance to lead a PE lesson in multicultural classes. Even if the limited number of practical classes that the participants had, is not at all representative of their behavior, it is still interesting to hear some behavioral responses on this matter. The following extract represents participants' empathetic behavioral response to difficult situations during the practicum part. Many of the participants found it hard to enact empathetic behaviors when they were working face to face with the students, in the specific case of student 2, she did not notice that a non-local student was excluded by her peers from an activity so the IE trainer had to personally act to help solve the problem. Here is an extract from students' 2 experiences.

[...] when we were in the practical lesson, [...] two native girls did not want to play with a refugee girl, (because of the different skin color – they were asked after the PE lesson to answer why) and this girl was obviously very sad. The trainer realized that and silently intervened in the game (or activity) by cooperating with this girl. Thus, gradually, she managed to create one team of these three girls and at the end of the lesson she let us reflect on children's behavior and explained the way of acting in such conditions.

Stereotyping is taken into consideration within the analysis of empathy because as Van Den Bos and Stapel (2009) stated in their research, it helps give an explanation to the reasons why people behave in a certain way, the author states that the main reason is to help understand and interpret behaviors. This is quite an empathetic way of organizing thoughts.

In the pre-interviews analysis none of the participants used race, ethnic, religious or cultural reasons to justify different performances in PE. For example student 8 explained

It's like they are more energetic, (referring to the pupils who are better at PE than others) they want to communicate with the others and play with each other as a group and participate in activities all together. [...] Maybe the last thing is that they have physically active lives with their parents, it is something that they have gotten used to from their parents, too.

This trend continued for the great majority of the participants also after the IE course. Student 5 for example claimed

[...] first of all they may do..be in the football team, some kids outside of the school or they may play basketball, and maybe some other students don't do any sport, other than PE ehm.. of course maybe ehm.. some kids don't like PE so they don't give their attention to it [...]

Another stereotypical moment that again served to group and categorize something that the participants did not yet have the proper vocabulary about, with the goal of better expressing it happened when the interviewees grouped all immigrant children in a “refugee” category. Here is an extract from the pre-interviews transcriptions of student 4:

Firstly I would ask the refugee children “what do you want?, do you wanna be at the side, so you want to be alone? do you want to join the group?” to see their needs[...], I would try to give the opportunity to the local children to teach the other kids inside the class, not like, give them the opportunity to be..to be the boss, but at the same time to give them the opportunity to teach the other kids so they can cooperate all together[...]

In the post- interviews, it was noticed that most of the participants were more accurate when they had to refer to immigrant children. An example can be seen with student 5 who put in effort to widen the range of vocabulary when she was talking about the background of the pupils.

[...] At first it was difficult because I didn't know how the native children would have reacted to foreign children[...] and if they would reduce the racism, and if they had a problem to speak with immigrants, but it was Okay, [...] there wasn't any difference between Greeks or Syrians, because they were a unity and they had the ability to communicate [...]

Concerning the topic of perception, in the pre-interviews, the participants were roughly able to put themselves into the shoes of the teachers who work in multicultural environments and imagine the barriers that they face when they have to communicate with pupils who probably perceive the message in different ways, due to their diverse cultural backgrounds. Here is an extract from students' 3 pre-interview.

Ehm... I do not know if I can do it (be a teacher) because it's very difficult to cooperate with all these children, not only in multicultural schools, regular schools too. So I see myself more as just a coach I think, not really as a teacher.

The same type of perception was presented in the interviews after the IE course, but it was broader and more enriched of information about this perception that maybe now can be called knowledge. This can be noticed for example in students' 4 answers.

[...] I think teachers should have the basic psychological knowledge, on how to handle a multicultural class and also know about the situation that exists in the pupils' countries. Like their religions, the culture and maybe if there are some restrictions. [...] teachers should know how to handle a multicultural class, how to give advice and also act in conflict resolution and know how to be understanding and empathetic and [...] a teacher should

be open minded and give choices to their students and make them problematic about values and also reduce stress.

In the pre- interviews the majority of the participants doubted their adequacy in being able to cope with situations in multicultural settings like a PE class. This aspect is included in the theme of empathy because recognizing our own adequacy to do something, also means trying to understand if the well-being of the person we are working with can be guaranteed by us or not. As student 4 said

I feel comfortable (in leading activity sessions in multicultural settings) but I feel I need more knowledge. [...] (after being asked why) the Example that the trainer gave in the class, the one that, if you are not able to touch somebody then use the hula hoop to get to know about it, I wouldn't think about it if I was inside the class before, but now I know, so I think I need to have more of that kind of knowledge.

In the post interviews almost all of the participants expressed a feeling of an increased comfort when having to teach in multicultural settings. Here is an example from student 2

[...] I think I'm way more comfortable compared to the first time we did the interview and you asked: "are you comfortable to do the class?". Now, if somebody told me to teach in a class with intercultural characteristics would be Okay because I wouldn't have many second thoughts, because the first time I had my second thoughts like " I don't know what to do, or how to approach them, what to do if something happens " I'll be cool I'll just solve my problem and be cool with it I think, I won't have lots of insecurities.

2 knowledge of the topic and how did the online platform modality influence it

This theme serves to compare the knowledge that the participants had prior to the IE course (about IE through sport, Physical activity and PE) with the knowledge they had right after the course came to an end. Through this comparison, it can be seen how much the participants did learn during the course and which were the key topics that stood out. The title of this theme has changed since the pre-interviews, in order for it to be more appropriate to describe the new findings.

In the pre-interviews the participants were asked to give a definition of the word “empathy”, only a few students knew the meaning and the definition that they gave was not so accurate. Here is an example of student 6 explanation.

Well it means to come, to the place, physic.. or not.. wait (giggling), to understand how the other feels, so like, because they had a very bad day with their work we don't know how bad was this for them and we need to put ourselves in themselves to understand why they're here, why they act like this, how do they feel.. this is what I think.

After the participants were asked this question, the researcher gave them the correct definition of the word and explained the difference between cognitive and emotional empathy. In the post-interview the participants were expected to know the meaning of the word, not only because it was previously explained by the researcher, but also because empathy was one of the topics that the IE course focused on. This time though, the extent to which the participants knew the meaning of the word was not investigated by asking a direct question about it, but on the contrary, it was observed how much and how the participants spontaneously used the word during the interview. Almost half of the participants mentioned the word empathy in their interview, contextually using it in a correct way. It is worth mentioning that the participants who brought up the word this time, were different interviewees than the ones who already knew the meaning of the word in the pre-interviews. This could suggest that the majority of the participants know what empathy means. Here is an example of how student 2 contextualized the word in her post-interview.

(speaking about the characteristics that a PE teacher should have in a PE multicultural class) [...] the empathy i think ehm, to be understanding and don't be like “oh I will focus on the good athletes and I will leave the worst athletes be” and having equality between them, they expect to see that I'm a leader, [...] for me to be open minded, ehm for me to be able to adjust to problems, like if something happens I would have to be able to do another activity really quick and not be just in the corner and think how to act [...]

Knowledge wise, in the pre-interviews it was observed that the participants had a basic understanding of what stereotypes were because it's almost like they didn't dare to make stereotypical comments. In fact no one made serious stereotypical comments. To make an example of the innocent

nature of the few stereotypical comments that were found in the transcriptions, here is what student 1 said.

I think that it is necessary for us (referring to the IE course) because a lot of children or students my age, don't know how to react with children from other countries and they have to build a personality that will be respectful for others and, [...] I think this will be helpful also for us because we will have students from other countries and we have to recollect them or bring them together so...this is important. [...]

Again no alarming stereotypical expressions were noticed in the post-interviews, below an example of a mild stereotyping expression from student 6 who took for granted that when native pupils come in contact with pupils with multicultural backgrounds there must be a “need” to learn how to live together, while this is not always the case, sometimes things go naturally well in these contexts and nothing needs to be done, rather, some confrontations can be healthy and serve to build a stronger relationship among the pupils. (Ministero della pubblica istruzione, 2007)

[...]I think that because we need to learn how to live with those people, they need to learn how to live with us, they have to [...] meet things with us and we have to meet things with them, this is like PE ehm... children need to know what we are doing here and we need to know what they did before because they don't have to forget what they did and lose their [...] roots to forget what they did [...].

The present theme can not only be made by comparisons, in fact it also needs to be broadened, mostly because the IE course (live and online) brought a notable amount of knowledge and new ways for the participants to interpret and be opinionated about this topic. During the interviews it was noticed that there were two subjects of the course that were mostly memorable for the participants. The first one was cooperation, the other concerned the technique that consisted firstly to work on these issues alone and then as a group. Here are some examples. Regarding cooperation, student 3 describes that “teaching to the pupils how to cooperate” is one of the skills he has acquired during the course. Student 5 talked about this subject without hesitation when he had to describe what he would have done if he had the chance to teach a PE lesson during the course.

[...] first of all I would have prepared my plan for the class and once there, i would just start for example [...] with the kids in 2 rows, 1 row every 2 kids is a girl and a boy and they would be of different cultures then I would make them play the game for example running from court 1 to court 2 from court 3 to court 4 [...] and of course I would have a subject of the class for example: cooperation and with my exercise I would like to make the kids ehm.. to be better at this goal [...]

Concerning the topic of the technique of conflict resolution engaged firstly by the pupils themselves, here is what student 2 had to say.

[...] (I would not want) to say: “Okay there is a problem: you are doing this and you are doing that” [...] Without emphasizing the problem. I would let them realize there is a problem between them. [...] That is also what the trainer taught us like when there is a problem, make them find a solution. [...] this is what I think I would use, yeah! I think it's a really good method.

An important event that has to be taken into consideration and added to this theme is the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic that forced the IE course to be taught online. How and if the online platform modality used to communicate with the participants affected their learning process, is something that was investigated in the post-interviews. Almost all the participants like for example student 2 stated “live classes are better than online ones” especially because of the “benefits of the physical interactions” (student 4). The participants also expressed that they felt that between the live and online classes they did not gain knowledge in a different amount. Most of them said that the reason for this was because the trainer was very careful to ensure that all the information was provided in the clearest way possible, and as similar to the live classes that it could get. Below are some examples of students' comments on the argument.

Student 5 expressed herself in various parts of the interview.

I didn't believe that it could be bad for the subject (when he got to know that the classes were going to be online) only that the activities that we were doing in the class, we couldn't do them, because of the online distance, [...] (But) I think that we would have done the same things even if we were in the class.[...] (talking about how the

online platform could have influenced his feelings while teaching) I believe that even if we would have been in the class it would have been the same.

Student 6 said

The trainer helped us, she explained us a lot of things so it was easy to understand, if she [...] didn't, it would have been difficult to understand what she was saying. It wouldn't be the same anyway (the learning process online and live) but she helped us make it easier.

_ 3 perception of future behavior/attitudes

In the pre-interviews, the researcher analyzed the participants' perceptions of their future behavior with pupils having multicultural backgrounds. Values and attitudes were the bases for investigating this social aspect because they are good predictors of it (Maio et. al, 2003). The belief that PE is a useful tool to promote equality and anti-racism, and the belief that the IE course could help positively change the quality of life of children in multicultural settings, were the most common values and beliefs that were observed in the pre-interviews. Below an example of student 6 extract.

My opinion of what I want to do is teach them (the pupils) to inspire them with a good meaning, to help everyone to respect each other to ehm... to come together not because [...] I said it, but because they need to do it. To learn that this is right because we are all people, despite the color, the country, anything and there is no reason to ehm.. do something (for equality) because you have to, you should do it because you need to know that it's right.

In the post interviews, participants confirmed this way of seeing IE through PE and they articulated their phrases with a lot more specific information and reasoning that are behind their opinions. The actual behavioral translation of the participants' perceptions could not be observed with the fact that they only had the chance to do one practical class. This type of orientation can be noticed in the part of the interview where the participants were asked what kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes they think they should have in multicultural classes. Student 5 says.

[...] first of all I think that I should know a few things about the culture of the children, then, ehm I should know how to bring people together through special activities, ehm.. and besides that about PE for example, I should know very well the rules of the sport, I think I should have some skills like empathy, fairness ehm.. and not to be racist but being open minded..

In the pre- interviews the participants were not yet trained on how to use the skills that they already possessed, to help promote equality in multicultural classes, but the behavioral responses to certain questions that they imagined, was always empathetic. However not always necessarily helpful. It is important to show and compare also what the participants already knew about the argument, and if they had some sort of predisposition in using these skills in promoting equality in the first place. Some of them did, for example student 5 who would react to a conflict between immigrant and native pupils this way.

I would try to ehm... to put those children in the same team in some exercises to cooperate ehm I would also talk to the children to help them overcome their problem ehm.. if it's good and ehm works I would try to help them through more exercises for example, ehm.. [...] I would say to children who are from different cultures ehm.. that they shouldn't reject the other kids because they could do the same ehm.. that... I would also say to the natives to have patience [...]

The same participant, to the same question in the post-interview, answered similarly.

[...] I would choose the subject, I would attend the exercise, I would make teams but the teams wouldn't be the locals versus the others, but I would combine them so I would try to make them understand the power of cooperation. [...] If I see this doesn't work I would make some conversation [...] about racism for example... and after the conversation I would, even if this was not working, I would talk to some students individually and then again in the exercises I would put them in mixed-cultures groups and see if it works.

One less realistic and more instinctive answer in the pre-interview about how to handle a conflict in a multicultural class was from student 1, who would try (with good intentions) to solve the hypothetical conflict between natives and immigrant pupils. She would do this by dividing them in

“separate groups” and tell the “Greek” group how the other “group is feeling in our country”, that they were not very comfortable with us”.

The same student in the post interviews said that she would act like this.

I would try to do some activities from my own ideas or from ideas I took from the course [...] in order to make them realize that we are all the same [...] We would do a game with unfair things in order to make them realize that they could win or not, but the unfair rules, we would make them. With the unfair rule, we will support one team and not the other and at the end of the day we would talk with the students and make them understand why we put these rules.

In the pre-interviews all of the participants made the researcher understand that if their behaviors' perception corresponded to the truth it would have been of an empathetic nature. Like in students' 2 case

[...]I had prior experience with racism and as a result I know that the kids think that they are alone and I know how they feel when they don't like to participate in events or in the class. [...] I think I know how to talk to them, and I will say: “Okay, I know what you are feeling right now, and you are uncomfortable, I know I know, I have been there, so let's go with small steps so you can do this event and then stay outside but at least try 'cause it will be better for you to be friends with the kids and yeah..” That's it.

The same empathetic tendency was noticed in the post- interviews. But this time the participants had the necessary training to be more specific about how this empathetic behavior towards children with multicultural backgrounds would act. Here is an example from student 7 who described how he would implement what he has learned in the course in a real class. (which he did not have the chance to do even once)

I would use the exercise [...] where we put children into couples and the only thing in common has to be the first letter of their name, I found this exercise very interesting and I'm sure I will use it in the future. [...] I would begin with overheating their parts (icebreakers), [...] then I would try to put the exercise [...] with the names, secondly I would put an exercise like the broken phone, [...] And then I would try to put the students in 2 teams and make them play basketball or football, but the ball has to pass from all the children or else the point will not be granted.

[...] At the end of the class I would ask them what they gain from the lesson and have a discussion on that.was [...].

Table 1

Overview of themes and correspondent quotes from the participants

Themes	Pre and post-interview quotes		
	Pre-interviews	Post-interviews	
Perception of empathy and its expression	Difference between the perception of the participants behavior, and what it actually translated in, during the practicum	<p><i>“ if someone doesn’t want to be your friend, you will think...”why?”... and it will make you feel sad or confused or anything, so if you know that you’re accepted by the locals and by the others, you have nothing to despair about, I will be happy to help them”</i></p>	<p><i>“when we were in the practical lesson, [...] a girl because of the colour of their skin, other 2 girls didn’t play with her, [...], obviously she was very sad. The trainer saw this, and went and sat with her and payed the game with her and slowly tried to take the girls to play, first one and the another”</i></p>
	Empathetic stereotyping	<p><i>“ I would go to the refugees and ask them “what do you want?, do you want to be at the side, so you want to be alone? do you want to join the group?” to see their needs[...], I would try to give the opportunity to the local children to teach the other kids inside the class”</i></p>	<p><i>“At first it was difficult because I didn’t know how the children would have reacted between them [...] and if they would reduce the racism, and if they had a problem to speak with immigrants, but it was Okay, [...] there wasn’t any difference between Greeks or Syrians”</i></p>
	Perception of teachers' obstacles	<p><i>“ I do not know if I can do it (be a teacher) because it’s very difficult to cooperate with all these children, not only in multicultural schools, regular schools too”</i></p>	<p><i>“ I think teachers should have the basic psychological knowledge, on how to handle a multicultural class and also know about the situation that exists in the pupils’ countries. Like their religions, the culture and maybe if there are some restrictions. [...] teachers should know [...] how to give advice and also act in conflict resolution and know how to be understanding and empathetic. [...] A teacher should be open minded and give choices to their students and make them problematize about values and also reduce stresses”</i></p>
	Perceived comfort with the pupils	<p><i>“I feel comfortable (in leading activity sessions in multicultural</i></p>	<p><i>[...] I think I’m way more comfortable compared to the first</i></p>

		<p><i>settings) but I feel I need more knowledge. [...] (after being asked why) the Example that the trainer gave in the class, the one that, if you are not able to touch somebody then use the hula hoop to get to know about them, I wouldn't think about it if I was inside the class"</i></p>	<p><i>time we did the interview and you asked: "are you comfortable to do the class?". Now, if somebody told me to do a class with intercultural characteristics, I would be Okay because I wouldn't have many second thoughts, because the first time I had my second thoughts like " I don't know what to do, or how to approach them, what to do if something happens " I'll be cool I'll just solve my problem [...] I think I won't have a lot of insecurities."</i></p>
	<p>Definition and contextualization of the word "empathy"</p>	<p><i>"Well it means to come, to the place, physic.. or not.. wait (giggling), to understand how the other feels, so like, because they had a very bad day with their work we don't know how bad was this for them and we need to put ourselves in themselves to understand why they're here, why they act like this, how do they feel"</i></p>	<p><i>"(speaking about the characteristics that a PE teacher should have in a multicultural class) [...] the empathy i think ehm, to be understanding and don't be like "oh I will focus on the good athletes and I will leave the worst athletes be" and having equality between them, they expect to see that I'm a leader, [...] to be open minded, [...] to be able to adjust to problems, like if something happens I would have to be able to do another activity really quick and not be just in the corner and think what to do [...]"</i></p>
<p>knowledge of the topic and how did the online platform modality influence it</p>	<p>Knowledge about stereotyping</p>	<p><i>"I think that it is necessary for us (referring to the IE course) because a lot of children or students my age, don't know how to react with children from other countries and they have to build a personality that will be respectful for others and, [...] I think this will be helpful also for us because we will have students from other countries and we have to recollect them or bring them together so...this is important."</i></p>	<p><i>"I think that because we need to learn how to live with those people, they need to learn how to live with us, they have to [...] meet things with us and we have to meet thighs with them, this is like PE ehm... children need to know what we are doing here and we need to know what they did before because they don't have to forget what hey did and lose their [...] roots to forget what they did"</i></p>
	<p>Remembered topics</p>		<p><i>" of course I would have a subject of the class for example: cooperation and with my exercise I would like to make the kids ehm.. to be better at this goal"</i></p>

	Learning on the online platform		<p><i>"I would let them (the pupils) realize there is a problem between them. [...] That is also what the trainer taught us like when there is a problem, make them find a solution. [...] this is what I think I would use"</i></p> <p><i>The trainer helped us, she explained us a lot of things so it was easy to understand, if she [...] didn't, it would have been difficult to understand what she was saying. It wouldn't be the same anyway (the learning process online and live) but she helped us make it easier.</i></p>
	Behavioral values	<p><i>"I want to teach them (the pupils) to inspire them with a good meaning, to help the others, to respect the others, to ehm... to come together, not because [...] I said it, but because they need to do it. To learn that this is right because we are all people, despite the color, the country, anything and there is no reason to ehm.. do something (for equality) because you have to, you should do it because you need to know that it's right."</i></p>	<p><i>" first of all I think that I should know a few things about the culture of the different children, then, ehm I should know how to bring people together through special activities, ehm.. and besides that about PE for example, I should know very good rules of the sport, I think I should have some skills like empathy, fairness ehm.. and not to be racist , to be open minded."</i></p>
Perception of future behaviors/ attitudes	Handling a conflict	<p><i>"I would do activities that would bring them (the pupils) together like the group strategies [...]in order to make the Greek ones realize the others civilization, culture and psychology and what they are feeling, or, I would like to give them some examples ehm [...], so for the Greek ones, I will tell them how the other separate group is feeling in our country, that they were not very comfortable with us"</i></p>	<p><i>"I would try to do some activities from my own ideas or from ideas I took from the course [...] in order to make them (the pupils) realize that we are all the same [...] We would do a game with unfair things in order to make them realize that they could win or not, but the unfair rules, we would make them. With the unfair rule, we will support one team and not the other and at the end of the day we would talk with the students and make them understand why we put these rules."</i></p>
	Empathetic behaviors	<p><i>"I had prior experience with racism and as a result I know that the kids think that they are alone and I know how they feel when they don't like to</i></p>	<p><i>"I would use the exercise [...] where we put children, to couple and the only thing in common has to be the first letter of their name, I found this exercise very</i></p>

participate in events or in the class. [...] I think I know how to talk to them, and I will say: "Okay, I know what you are feeling right now, and you are uncomfortable, I know I know, I have been there, so let's go with small steps so you can do this event and then stay outside but at least try 'cause it will be best for you to be friends with the kids"

interesting and I'm sure I will use it in the future. [...] I would begin with overheating their parts (icebreakers), [...] then I would try to put the exercise [...] with the names, second, I would put an exercise like a broken phone, [...] And then I would try to put the students in 2 teams and make them play basketball or football, but the ball has to pass from all the children or else the point will not be granted. [...] At the end of the class I would ask them what was their opinion about the lesson".

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to understand the impact of an IE program on pre-service teachers' perceptions about empathy. The focus was particularly on the knowledge and perception of it, and its behavioral translation, from the participants towards multicultural classes of pupils. The analysis also focused on how the participants' perception and knowledge of empathy would affect their behavior in multicultural PE settings. Finally, the evolution of their knowledge through the online platform teaching modality was taken into account. Reflexive thematic analysis was the qualitative approach that was chosen to be applied to try to give an answer to the research question. By utilizing this method themes were created. These themes were made of the explanation and the interpretation of patterns and of concepts that were common and got repeated from the interviewees, linked to the research question (Braun et al., 2012). The results of the second part of the analysis represents the comparison between the pre and post-interview quotes that mostly portray the heart of the matter in study. These same paragraphs will be the focal point of this discussion.

Perception of empathy

From the comparison between pre and post-interview answers, the empathy that the participants think they would have had within multicultural settings was investigated. Moreover, the comparison highlighted whether participants' perceptions on the meaning of empathy and also on its perspective of action, changed after attending the IE course.

In the pre-interviews it was noticed that even though almost none of the participants knew the meaning of the word empathy, when they were asked about how their behavior would have been in a fictitious situation given by the researcher (within a multicultural PE class), their perceived future behavior would have been of an empathetic nature. What actually happened during the few practical lessons they got to teach, was quite different, in fact, while probably the participants' mindset was completely meant for good, they found it very hard to enact empathetic behaviors when needed. It is important to mention that this last statement is not at all representative of the participants' actual behavior since the number of practical classes they got to teach was too low.

Stereotyping is taken into consideration within the analysis of empathy because as Van Den Bos and Stapel (2009) stated in their research, it helps give an explanation to the reasons why people behave in certain ways. The authors declared that the main reason people have stereotypes, is to help themselves understand and interpret other people and their behaviors. This is quite an empathetic way of organizing thoughts. Pre and post-interviews results confirmed that the participants are not used to using race, ethnic, religious or cultural reasons to justify different performances in PE. Another facet of stereotypes that could be observed during the interviews, was the inaccurate grouping method that the participants used to describe pupils with multicultural backgrounds. This way of stereotyping was observed to decrease after attending the course. This can be a sign that the IE course served to awaken the participants' consciousness about why it is important to correctly name things that one is talking about, especially when it comes to the delicate environment of multiculturalism. One of the reasons is that stereotypically naming groups who are already normally stereotyped does not help reduce prejudice while, when basing what we say about people on more specific characteristics and information, this, can help lessen intolerance (Van Den Bos & Stapel 2009).

When participants spontaneously and empathetically described their perception on how PE teachers' experiences and feelings could be like, when they are working in multicultural classes, it was observed that the information they gave after the course were richer and broader. The IE course gave the participants information about how a PE teacher should be prepared and what are the challenges that could be faced in such settings. Probably this kind of perception could have been described as empathetic in the period before the course. Now, by observing how all the participants minutely added explanations and accurate descriptions to others' teaching experiences, it can be ventured calling this type of perception, knowledge.

Empathy and the feeling and perception of adequacy can be two connected aspects when thinking about the fact that recognizing our own adequacy to do something, also means trying to understand if the well-being of the person we are working with can be guaranteed by us or not. After the course the participants felt more adequate and comfortable teaching in multicultural settings. Likely, the reason is because intercultural education is seen to be an efficient means to demote racism and xenophobia, (Zilliacus & holmes, 2009). By going through the course, its purpose probably came to reality and likely caused the participants to be more eager to have the responsibility of pupils' emotions.

Knowledge of the topic and how did the online platform modality influence it

Participants' knowledge on the topic of intercultural education may just be the most explicit and observable aspect that got reshaped during the course of this research. Regarding the meaning of the word "empathy", as previously mentioned, not many participants gave a satisfying definition of it in the first interviews, while after the course even if they were not explicitly asked about it, the fact that almost half of them brought it up on their own meant that in some way that word stuck into their minds.

As stated in the first part of this discussion, knowledge and awareness of the power of stereotyping were present both in pre and post-IE courses. This could mean that school, parents and peer education could have influenced the participants' approach towards this subject, denoting that the monocultural education that has been characterizing Greece's scholastic system (Sakka, 2010; Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017) could be successfully influenced by the general and personal culture of these pre-service teachers.

Two were the topics that the participants recalled most frequently after the course. The first one was cooperation, the other concerned the problem solving technique that consists of firstly making the pupils work on issues alone (between them) and then as a group.

Surely the COVID-19 pandemic affected the experience of the participants because it directly influenced the course this knowledge was going to be gained from. The expectations on this part of the investigation were that the online platform used to continue delivering the lessons would have had a negative influence on the participants' knowledge. Instead, the participants' thought on the argument was that even if the classes continued being live, they would have not gained knowledge in a different amount. The reason for this was because of the ability of the trainer to ensure clear communication, active lessons, as similar to the live classes that it could get. This confirms the fact that educators need to be prepared on how to deal with technological scholastic equipment (Verawardina 2020).

Perception of future behavior/attitudes

The initial plan for this study was to investigate the comparison between participants' perceived behaviors and attitudes and ones they actually would have had within multicultural classes. The practical PE classes the participants got to teach in, were so few that they could not be taken as a strong landmark for analyzing participants behaviors. Interviews revealed that the values and attitudes that the participants expressed when talking about IE through PE, remained the same throughout the course. These findings are aligned with Maio and colleagues (2003) who stated that these are predictors of future behaviors and Lee and Trail (2011) who presented them as an anticipation of sport cognitive involvement. These values and attitudes were: (a) the general belief that promoting equality through PE is something that can improve childrens' quality of life in multicultural classes, (b) the principle of being opposed to racism, (c) the belief that their actions as a consequence of the IE course can make a significant positive change in multicultural environments.

Behavior of an empathetic nature was something that most interviewees expressed they would have in pre and post-IE courses. This was noticed especially when the participants had to answer questions about their skills, (what and how they perceive them to be like). In the pre-interviews, because of their lack of knowledge, and because being empathetic does not necessarily mean doing the right action (Jacobson, 2009), the projection they had of their empathetic behaviors towards pupils in multicultural PE classes, was not always realistic nor helpful. Through the interviews after the course, a change in the explanation of how the participants would apply their skills was noticed, as it was more articulated and justified with examples of exercises that they learned in the IE course. Reasonably it can be supposed that the course helped enhance the skills of the participants to express and transmit empathy, through techniques and activities that are consonant for an educational setting.

This research enriches the literature that provides information on the emotional experiences of pre-service teachers when going through courses focusing on PE and sports' training, during a particular year like it is 2020.

Limitations of the study

The COVID-19 pandemic and consequently the sudden change in the flow of the lessons caused the interview guide to be modified accordingly. In fact not the same questions appear in the

pre and post-interview guide. But maintaining the initial purpose of the research, an attempt was made to approach the subject adapting it to the current situation.

Conclusion

Through the words, ideas and experiences of the pre-service PE teachers who participated in this research, it can be concluded that the research questions of this thesis can, and have been answered. In fact the IE course focusing on PE and sports had an impact on them. The knowledge of the meaning of empathy was observed to be broader after the course because of the precise and more frequent utilization the participants made of the word in the post interviews. The perception of the feelings of others and of the way and the level that empathy can affect situations in multicultural PE settings was affected as well. This was noticed because the participants showed an increased awareness about certain topics found to be linked to empathy which are, stereotyping, the experience of other PE teachers who work in multicultural classes, and the feeling of adequacy to teach in these kinds of contexts.

The IE course seemed to have an enhancing effect also on the participants' knowledge of the topic especially regarding empathy, stereotyping and other arguments of the course, mostly cooperation and techniques for conflict solving. The majority of the participants themselves stated that the online platform modality of teaching did not affect their information intake because of the ability of the trainer to portray the material and give directions in an effective way.

Participants frequently referred to their future behaviors as empathetic. This was observed pre and post-IE course. Finally the latter showed more detailed conscious and realistic explanations about the realization of empathetic based actions, towards pupils in multicultural PE settings. It can be inferred that the IE course focusing on PE and sports has successfully also affected this fundamental aspect of participants' future experiences as educators, not only in multicultural settings but also in the broader education canal.

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Appendix

INTERVIEW BEFORE THE COURSE

1. Gender

2. Age

3. Do you generally feel that there are some groups of students that are more prone to be good at PE? Not particularly good? What are their characteristics?

- Do you think the learning process in PE is different based on race/ ethnicity and

cultures?

4. Previous experience with multicultural education (Seminars, volunteering coaching, workshops, etc.)

5. What do you think about intercultural education through sport and PE nowadays? Why?

- Do you think it can have any influence on students? In which aspect?

6. Describe at this point of time, your comfort level and adequacy with leading activity sessions within multicultural settings. Why?

- Do you think you already possess any skills that will help you interact/handle a multicultural class? Which ones?
- What skills do you think that the pupils you will work with, are expecting you to have?

7. What does empathy mean (in your opinion)? ενσυναίσθηση (ensynaísthisi)

In case the interviewees don't know the meaning of the word. I will explain to them empathy is the ability to understand and share feelings of another person.

COGNITIVE EMPATHY refers to how well an individual can perceive and understand another person's mind. In other words it refers to having a more complete and accurate knowledge of the other person's mind, including how he/she feels.

EMOTIONAL EMPATHY: Automatic drive to respond to another's emotion and/or understand it.

8. You are teaching PE to a group of pupils and during the first month of your practice, you notice an attitude of rejection towards native children, from some children who have a multicultural background. After a while the native pupils start feeling this distance and react in the same way. The result is a class made of culturally different groups that don't cooperate during the PE classes and are always in competition between them. What would you do in this situation?

- Do you think PE could be a facilitator to reduce intercultural tension, and promote inclusion for all cultures? under what conditions this can happen in your opinion?
- Do you think PE could be a barrier to reduce intercultural tension, and promote inclusion for all cultures? under what conditions this can happen in your opinion?

- How do you think you would feel if you see students going through this kind of experience?
- Do you think sport/ physical education can in some cases be a barrier for intercultural learning? When?
- Do you think sport/ physical education can in some cases be a barrier for intercultural learning? When?

9. Do you think these intercultural classes are different from typical classes? Why?

10. Do multicultural classes require enhanced/intercultural-related teaching skills and teacher knowledge for more effective teaching?

- What kind of knowledge do you think you should have when teaching in a multicultural class?
- What kind of skills do you think you should have when teaching in a multicultural class?

11. Can you see yourself as a teacher in multicultural classes in the future? Why?

POST INTERVIEW

1. Gender

2. Age

3. How many of the Intercultural Education (IE) classes have you participated in/ missed?

- Tell me your general thoughts about the course.
- Were your expectations about the course fulfilled?

4. Have you had the chance to do the practical part of the course?

- IF YES How many times did you get to meet the pupils?
- Bring me through the whole experience with the multicultural classes. How did you feel? how do you think the children felt? how do you think it went? why? Looking back, is there anything you would change about the design or/and the implementation of the activities that you chose?
- IF NO, how would you have implemented what you learned from the course in your practice? try to imagine and bring me through all the steps of the PE class you would have conducted.

5. Do you generally feel that there are some groups of students that are more prone to be good at PE? Not particularly good? What are their characteristics?

- Do you think the learning process in PE is different based on races/ ethnicity and cultures? Why?

6. What do you think about intercultural education through sport and PE nowadays? Why?

- Do you think it can have any influence on students? In which aspect?

7. Describe at this point of time, your comfort level and adequacy with leading activity sessions within multicultural settings. Why?

- What skills do you think you possess now, that can help you interact/handle a multicultural class?
- What skills do you think that the pupils or athletes you will work with, are expecting you to have?

8. I will present you 2 scenarios and you will tell me which one could be the most realistic, and why.

a) You are teaching PE to a group of pupils and you notice an attitude of rejection towards native children, from some children who have a multicultural background. After a while the native pupils start feeling this distance and react in the same way. The result is a class made of culturally different groups that don't cooperate during the PE classes and are always in competition between them.

b) You are teaching PE to a group of pupils and you notice an attitude of rejection towards children who have a different cultural background, from the native children. After a while the migrant and/or ethnically diverse pupils start feeling this distance and react in the same way. The result is a class made of culturally different groups that don't cooperate during the PE classes and are always in competition between them.

- Which one of these scenarios is more likely to appear? why?
- What would you do in this situation?
- Which topic of the IE course helped you the most when it came to answer this question?

9. What kind of knowledge do you think you should have when teaching in a multicultural class?

10. What kind of skills do you think you should have when teaching in a multicultural class?

11. Looking back to the whole experience (the course, working with the children, the exam), is there something you would add, eliminate or change?

12. Can you see yourself as a teacher in multicultural classes in the future? Why?

