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**The impact of Intercultural Education on stereotypical
perceptions of pre-service Physical Education teachers: A
qualitative study**

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the possible effects of an Intercultural Education (IE) course to the attendants' stereotypical attitude, more specifically to their knowledge about terms as 'prejudice' and 'multicultural education', their perceptions about stereotypes and their behavior in case of a stereotypical incident as Physical Education (PE) teachers in multicultural classes. The researcher focused mostly on their definitions of the terms, their personal experiences and their opinion about specific incidents, while analyzing their expressions and feelings. During the interviews, there were also scenarios of possible incidents at school for the participants to hypothesize their behavior on each one of them. The participants were 6 PE students on their third and fourth year of their studies, between 20 and 49 years old that chose to attend to the specific course, which was based on the European EDU- PACT project, and agreed to be part of the study. The conditions of the course and the interviews, which both were held online because of the COVID- 19 epidemic, were also considered. There were two interviews, pre- interview before the start of the course and post- interview after its completion, that were transcribed and analyzed by the researcher through the qualitative approach of reflexive thematic analysis. The results showed that there was an improved performance according to the knowledge about the field of multiculturalism and the terms stereotypes, prejudice and racism. The answers became stronger and clearer after the attendance at the course. However, the behavioral modification was insignificant, while in case of the attitude there was no alteration. They stayed steadfast on their beliefs, even though they considered some of the acquired information.

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Quotation

‘Schools, as the primary formal societal institutions that young people encounter, have the enormous responsibility of helping forge a culture of equality, pluralism, tolerance and unity in diversity. Inclusive education, along with the active participation of parents and society, offers a greater possibility to provide an education to those who are threatened by ignorance and societal rejection’ (Zake, 2010).

‘A multicultural society is one where individuals and groups of different cultures coexist within a common territory, but this does not necessarily imply that there is a communication or relationship between them’ (Carter-Thuillier et al., 2018).

‘Equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that make possible academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social class groups’ (Jackson, 2007).

‘Education has both a responsibility and an opportunity as a social institution to educate future citizens about race issues and foster mutual understanding and respect for each other’ (AERA).

‘Reflecting on intercultural topics requires retaining complexities, accepting multiple voices, openness and the questioning of fixed truths’ (Lanas, 2014).

Introduction

In Europe, and more specifically in Greece, there is a huge wave of various cultural populations inserting the country for many years. This is also happening the last years after the “refugee crisis of 2015 (UNHCR,2015). All around Greece one can meet some of the most common “strangers”. For example, refugees who are trying to save their families’ and their own lives from the wars’ cruelty, immigrants who are trying to create a better future for the next generations or even just young people who are seeking for opportunities to broaden their minds travelling around. This great amount of incoming populations creates an even greater need for adaptation and provision of a good quality lifestyle.

However, except from the everyday life needs, it has been clear that there are many other boundaries that should be overcome to reach a good level of living for the new entries. To those stereotypes and prejudice are included. Based on the literature, people constantly use cultural stereotypes during their attachment with foreign cultures, probably because it feels easier or safer for them to use already existing information and knowledge about the ‘strangers’ (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995; Dovidio, Evans, & Tyler, 1986). The main problem with these mechanisms is that they prolong specific opinions, positive or negative, and generalise them to a group of people. Even more, most of the times these opinions tend to be negative, as they refer to ‘strangers inserting our country’.

Education is one of the most important frameworks that each country can use to provide not only opportunities for language learning, but also to gain critical thinking and cultivate values, as equality and respect (Zake, 2011). Unfortunately, it has been noticed that in many cases this prejudice against specific cultures has been transferred at school by host pupils or even the teachers. There are no few examples of this kind of behaviour, however,

luckily, there are no few examples of criticism against those (Sleeter, 2008). One very significant result of this behaviour is the low level of self-esteem and self-respect that the stigmatized people are expressing, which leads to a lower level of well-being, because they think that this behaviour reflects their own worth and identity (Crocker, & Major, 1998). Many times, this kind of thinking about a specific group of people forms specific behaviours not only from those who create them, but also as a reaction from the stigmatized population, which ends up as a big circle of prejudice and reactions (Schaller, Conway, & Tachuk, 2002).

This situation creates the need for specific interventions at school, in order to get over this kind of beliefs and perspectives against minorities. The roots of the problem are lying in the ignorance of other cultures, their beliefs and lifestyles that make it harder to accept and respect them. A very significant and helpful way to confront this situation is the promotion of intercultural education at schools, not only for the students but also for the teachers (Kaur, Auar-Hasim, & Noman, 2017).

Intercultural Education (IE) is a type of education that promotes the children's right to get educated, regardless their race, origin or social status, while according to Cummins (2015) it also emphasises on its focus on "recognizing, respecting, and celebrating diversity within the educational system". There have been created several modules based on IE in multicultural societies, aiming to establish social cohesion and limit discrimination, according to governmental policies, initiatives and agendas of priorities (Catarci, 2014).

For the purposes of the present study, the researcher attended such a module at Sports Education course at the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science in University of Thessaly. More specifically, the course aimed to a) help students cultivate their self-awareness regarding their perceptions of populations from various cultural backgrounds, b) help students better understand others, by developing their empathy and c) to provide

students with suggested guidelines to design and evaluate intercultural sessions. What seemed to need further examination was the effectiveness of this course not only on students' actions, but also on their way of thinking about other cultures. For this purpose, the researcher chose to approach the research in a qualitative way and more specifically, using phenomenology. This way, the researcher aims to understand and examine a specific, shared experience.

Intercultural education

Intercultural, multicultural or inclusive education are terms that have been used through literature review to refer to a curriculum mostly created and being used by modern schools in multicultural societies aiming to describe the need to educate multicultural groups (Hill- Jackson, Sewell, & Waters, 2007). This kind of curriculum consists of techniques, strategies and activities that in each case have been defined as appropriate to build multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills (Steinfeldt & Steinfeldt, 2011). The first term, awareness, is related to understanding consciously someone's living conditions and developing empathy, while knowledge relates to the tangible knowledge about a specific situation (e.g., other cultures). Multicultural skills refer to the individual's actions on behalf of multiculturalism, not only as a person that chooses equity, but also that promotes it and acts upon it (Steinfeldt & Steinfeldt & M.C., 2011).

The last decades, there have been numerous programs based on this kind of education, according to the needs of each society and their creators' beliefs. According to Bigler (1999), some of those creators were more distinctive, by adding other cultures' references on the basic curriculum, while others changed almost completely the basic plan, to create a new one which consisted of courses specified on cultures. Later, some of them added courses about racism, stereotypes, equity and equality to educate students specifically on these terms and

actions. Beyond the differences on the content, they also differed on the duration and the range of their content.

Before the description of the present program and following the purpose of the current study, it is important to mention that the researcher attended an online course on IE that was designed for pre-service PE teachers based on the guidelines of a European project named “EDU:PACT”. However, the researcher firstly decided to briefly present some previous projects on the same field, which have been used recently and thus, to provide a greater view of the topic. Then, the limitations and the criticism against IE will be also discussed.

The field of training on IE is not that rich, however, certain efforts have been identified. The first example is about the Malaysian Context, a trial to create unity and social cohesion between the three major ethnic groups, Malays, Chinese and Indians. For this purpose, the researchers created an education transformation plan, named “Malaysian Education Blue Print 2013-2025”, which aimed to provide children with same opportunities for education and to build equity (Kaur et al., 2017). To achieve their goals, they acted multifaceted by adding cultural elements on the courses they designed (Fakhri, 2012), organising extracurricular activities and using both the Malaysian and English language (Ha, Kho, & Chng, 2013).

Another project focusing on IE is “VaKE - Values and Knowledge Education” that have been used in many multicultural settings like Norway. The mind-set of this project is also based on cultivating intercultural knowledge and values such as self-awareness. It was addressed to both students and teachers, while, to achieve its ultimate goal, it used ethical dilemmas that should be solved through several steps, like group discussions, self-reflection and sharing (Borhaug & Harnses, 2020).

The last presented project specialized on the preparation of people who plan to visit countries that have different cultural backgrounds. More specifically, its name is “IEREST - Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers”, and its aim was to provide a great level of intercultural learning to Erasmus students, before, during and after their studies abroad (Holmes & Ganassin, 2015). The action of this project contains three phases of interaction that students may experience during their studies abroad: 1) with locals, 2) with people from their country, 3) with exchange student communities. The expectations of the project were for students to discuss how they would respond in those different situations, while also thinking critically and analysing their stereotypical thoughts.

Critical thinking on IE

Over the years, the field of IE has been received criticism in many cases. This criticism is mostly focusing on its usage and its tools. It seems important to initially mention the teachers’ reactions on this topic, as they were mostly presented as incapable of dealing with the challenges multiculturalism fetched (Zeihner, 2010). Teachers seemed to understand their limitations on IE, but highlighted society’s responsibility combined with the funding limitations on manning and educational needs. At the same time, Stables (2005) was concerned that through IE it is more likely to focus on the differences between the several cultures that live together into a society than to restrict the gap between them. Furthermore, he explained that in recently host societies, locals on their attempt to introduce IE strategies referred to refugees as ‘others’. This can be connected with Aikman (1997) and Garski’s (2008) assumption that IE helps maintaining hierarchical relations, distinguishing the old one from the new, the rich from the poor, the strong from the weak.

On the other hand, there were many IE supporters that decided to investigate their time to design IE courses and validate their effectiveness. Generally, the literature shows mixed findings on the field of IE, which is what the IE supporters, also, noticed and discussed, in order to recommend possible changes on the tools aiming to promote IE appropriately. Many years ago, on 1999, Bigler noticed that IE projects did not foresee the different needs of each kid and as a result were not capable of dealing with individual differences, which provided them with ambiguous outcomes. Moreover, Bigler (1999) also highlighted the great need for further examination on the field, as there were theoretical limitations. After a long time and numerous studies, researchers ended up with the outcome that IE courses should include more suitable techniques and strategies (Kaur et al., 2017), while, also, provide all the necessary information and details to provide more precise directions to the participants (Borhang et al., 2020).

Racial attitudes

All the projects described previously aimed to eliminate discrimination and stereotypical behaviours that are materials of racism. The term ‘racism’ refers to the recognition of many different races’ existence, but in a hierarchical way highlights their differences regarding their value (Memmi, 2000). Many researchers focused their studies on racial attitudes in the field of school, showing that minorities had to deal with hostile behaviours based on their origins (Tijoux, 2013) and their physical characteristics (Hernandez, 2016), while many of the perpetrators were using strategies to hide their actions (Riedemann & Stefoni, 2015). One of those has been named by Dovidio and Gaertner (2004) as ‘aversive racism’, which refers to the feeling of believing ‘the others’ are cruel, while hearing they are prejudiced is also aversive. The effects of experiencing stereotypical incidents at young age especially at school, are devastating and contain mostly low

attendance in school and school activities combined with low appearance (Morelli & Spencer, 2000) and frequent use of violence as defence (Blanco, 2010).

Sue (1983) claimed that racial attitudes contain beliefs about racial differences, explanations for these differences and guidelines about how an individual should react to these differences. 'Racial attitudes' are the actions that rise through racism and, it is firstly valuable to understand the mechanisms through which the 'attitudes' act. Attitudes are divided to implicit, automatic reactions existing out of the conscious, and explicit, beliefs, feelings and thoughts based on the conscious (Karpinski, & Hilton, 2001). The results about the connection between these two are mixed. Some researchers claim that they are the same, with implicit being hidden while explicit being the presentation of those, when others suggest that they are independent and could be differentiated (Dovidio et al., 1997; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000).

Prejudice

According to Nelson (2009), prejudice is nowadays defined as mistreating a specific group and/or its members. Allport's (1954) addition regarding prejudice, even if it was presented many years before, would be 'inaccuracy, negativity and overgeneralization'. However, in case of inaccuracy, there are many researchers that disagree claiming that rational or irrational, the mechanisms behind prejudice are identical (Crandall, & Eshleman, 2003). Another Allport's (1954) term that acted as "food for thought" for some researchers was 'prejudiced personality' which led to certain assumptions. For example, a prejudiced person could be predicted by social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), the 'authoritarian personality' (Backstrom & Bjorklund, 2007), need for structure (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) and motivations to control prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998).

Another field Allport (1954) provided was his knowledge regarding children's prejudice. He claimed that a component of prejudice in kids is the lack of productive contact and communication between the members of different groups, which resulted in "Intergroup Contact" theory. Allport in his book (1954) entitled "The Nature of Prejudice", referred on Social Learning theory, which refers to role models' responsibility in children's prejudice, where parents' prejudice was presented as the most powerful component of kids' prejudice. Cognitive theories, like the last one mentioned, explained that kids have immature cognitive mechanisms and are incapable of recognising each person as an individual, so prejudice is inevitable. Finally, Allport also mentioned the Group- Norm theory of Prejudice which supported that the members of a group, in-group or reference group adopt the same preferences, beliefs and attitudes, in order to be able to maintain its existence, which leads to racial attitudes against the out-groups. At this point it is important to explain that for an individual in-group is the party of people they belong based on their culture, beliefs and lifestyle, reference groups are the parties they are connected or willing to be part of and out-groups are all the other existing groups around them.

Fending off Allport's theory, which is a more classic two- factor theory, there were many modern ones, like aversive racism that was mentioned before on this study. The key point of these theories is the focus on people being prejudiced while attempting to avoid the characterization of a prejudiced person. On the other hand, the Justification- Suppression Model supported that every person has a genuine prejudice rising from their cultures and origins, which was being suppressed by social norms, but at the same time justified by their own beliefs and ideologies that allow it to be expressed (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003).

Finally, two other theories are trying to understand and explain the mechanisms of prejudice are Social Identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and Self- categorisation theory (Turner, Hog, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The first one suggests that the

individual's need for higher self-esteem leads them to prefer the in-groups than out-groups, while the second extends to the assumption that the preference of the in-groups rises from the need for evaluating self-categories more positively. Both these theories highlighted the need of people to feel part of a group, while at the same time this group, and so themselves, is better than the others.

Prejudice includes exclusively negative, disparaging characterizations and attitudes against groups of people (Dragona, 2007). These generalizations have been created cognitively, which makes them deeper and more stable. On the contrary, stereotypes, that are presented afterwards, can be either negative or positive ideas, while are based on the unconscious part of the individual's mind. Racism, which has been analysed previously, refers to the discrimination against groups of people because of particular characteristics, in other words attitudes based on prejudice and stereotypes (McDonald & Hayes, 2003).

Stereotypes

The other key point of the current study and, also, a component of racism is stereotype. Nelson (2009) on his soaking in the field of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination, deepened on the definition of stereotypes, because it has been much more difficult than defining any other term of this topic. He ended up with the conclusion that stereotypes are the traits that immediately come to an individual's mind when hearing or thinking about a specific group of people or its members. 'An information-processing model considering stereotypes to be cognitive structures that importantly affect perception, attention, and memory. That is, stereotypes are seen as cognitive structures that mediate the information processing involved in person perception' (Dovidio, Evans, & Tyler, 1986, p. 23). Through the procedure of stereotyping, people can simplify the process of getting to

know, understand and communicate with a stranger (Ford & Stangor, 1992). The last one refers to individuals' preference to use already existing, well- structured impressions rather than analysing each person individually and that is called impression formation (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1994).

During the procedure of searching the mechanisms behind stereotyping, researchers widely used cognitive approaches, like social representations and social schemas. Both highlighted the existence of traits shortening the procedure of understanding society, but they differed on the explanation, as the first had a more social perspective while the second a more individualistic one (Augoustinos & Innes, 1990). This 'advantage' stereotype provides to the individual, of immediate response, led many researchers (Dovidio et al., 1986) to the assumptions that stereotypes are activated automatically with the appearance of the trigger point, which refers to members of a group that stored information and feelings are existing about it. However, there are moderators helping on controlling stereotypes, such as cognitive moderators, like perception and judgment (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991), motivational moderators, like emotion (Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2004) and contextual moderators, as prejudice (Plant et al., 2005).

The effects of stereotypes on 'victims' behaviour impelled researchers that attended to delve deeper into stereotypes' studying. Several examinations, with low exceptions, showed that people that have received stereotypical behaviours later adopted these stereotypes by changing their actions to fit them (Wheeler & Petty, 2001). Many perspectives have been discussed about the explanation of this phenomenon, such as ideomotor and stereotype threat theory. The first one supported that stereotypes activate relevant mental content (Dijksterhuis, 2001), while the second one focused on negative self- stereotypes (Steele, 1997). Moreover, literature review has revealed a connection between stereotypes and self-esteem. More specifically, Cartwright (1950, p.440) mentioned that 'the group to which a person belongs

serves as primary determinant of his self-esteem. To a considerable extent, personal feelings of worth depend on the social evaluation of the group with which a person is identified. Self-hatred and feelings of worthlessness tend to arise from membership in underprivileged or outcast groups'. Another significant notice is that stereotypes keep maintaining through years, which is evidence of their ability to be easily shared among people. More extensively, Clark (1996) separated actual sharedness, which is people in a community offloading knowledge, from perceived sharedness, which refers to an individual's impression that also the rest of the members of their community offload the same knowledge.

Firstly Cronbach (1955) and later Judd and Park (1993), while analysing the data from their research on stereotypes, noticed a particular pattern on participants' answers that made them unreliable. They recognised three types of bias that affected participants' replies. Judgement- elevation bias, which refers to the attempt to reach a specific rate on the questionnaire's scale, judgement- positivity bias, referring to trying to be characterized by positive attributes, or judgement- extremity bias, the attempt to show high or low judgements. This created the need for designing stereotypes' scales that could be able to predict this kind of bias in the participant's answers.

Even though for the purposes of the present study, these three terms, racism, prejudice and stereotypes were analysed separately, they are interconnected. Almost every aspect or theory have been discussed about each one of them could be adopted and applied to the other two terms. Many researchers have described what prejudice and stereotypes are, how they have been created and perpetuated among the decades and how they are applied to social groups. Others have focused on the impact of this behaviour, its roots, how one realizes the differences between several groups of people and how those behaviours are used in everyday life (Biernat & Crandall, 1976).

Currently, researchers mostly focus on how people can deal with stereotypical behaviour in order to help them with the building of a more advantaged way of living. Therefore, the present research aims to investigate the perceptions of pre-service PE teachers, who are still in the initial level of their professional career, on their cultural stereotypes before and after attending an IE course.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative research was to examine whether the attendance at an Intercultural Education course would affect undergraduate Physical Education students' opinions, thoughts and attitudes mostly towards the stereotypes, prejudice and racism. At the same time, several information about their knowledge and experiences about multiculturalism and discrimination have been collected and analysed for the purposes of the study. More specifically, this study has as a target the identification and better understanding of stereotypes and prejudice according to multicultural issues through physical education and sports, aiming to provide means for the upcoming professionals to be able to handle these situations. The whole procedure of the research is being presented afterwards.

Method

EDU- PACT project

The present study was based on the delivery of an IE course to pre-service PE teachers that was designed based on the guidelines of a European project. This is called "EDU:PACT" and was co- founded by the Erasmus⁺ program of the European Union. This project is referred to Teaching and Learning Guidelines on Intercultural Education through

Physical Activity, Coaching and Training and aims to respond to the great need for building intercultural attitudes, knowledge and skills for sport professionals (e.g., PE teachers and coaches), since now more than ever, they are dealing with multicultural groups.

For the purposes of EDU:PACT project, several organisations specialized in sports worked together aiming to achieve their greatest and shared goal of updating intercultural education. More specifically, the organizations that cooperated to this project were:

- University of Vienna
- German Sport University
- University of Southern Denmark
- University of Thessaly
- University of Rome 'Foro Italico'
- Right To Play (Deutschland)
- Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation
- International Council for Coaching Excellence
- Hellenic Ministry of Cultural and Sport

For more information regarding the EDU:PACT, one can visit the website of the project (www.edupact.eu).

The creators of this project understand and eavesdrop not only the benefits of the multiculturalism, but also the challenge of handling appropriately aspects that can be unfavourable for the multicultural societies. Because of this, they created a module capable of providing the necessary knowledge and skills to educators and coach developers, who then could adequately prepare PE teachers and coaches to deal with multicultural groups. The first step was to create this specific module, consisting of both theoretical and practical guidelines for professionals' education on intercultural behaviour. Then, they did the pilot phase, where

they trained some expert university staff from each country-partner. During the third step, the trained experts had to also train PE teachers and coaches on teaching children with migrant background mixed with natives. All this procedure ended up on giving feedback and thus finalizing the module, in order to have a tool to embrace and promote intercultural education for sport professionals.

The module provided was both in an online and written form and was translated to five European languages. Its structure includes four units to follow during PE students'/teachers' training on IE. Each unit is consisted of theoretical and practical sections, with information and activities/games, for them to gain knowledge and skills about the specific field, and, also, links to find additional activities, videos emphasising on the topic and example course outlines on the interactive toolkit on the project's website.

More precisely, unit one is called 'Understanding Yourself' and contains the topics of 'introduction to understanding yourself', 'the professional self', 'the interpersonal self and personal agency' and 'emotion regulation and psychological well-being'. The first unit aims to provide self-awareness regarding stereotypes and prejudices towards different cultural backgrounds. Unit two refers to 'Understanding others' and is split in 'communication', 'cooperation' and 'personal leadership'. This unit aims to help the readers to develop skills of empathy, energetic listening, and respectful communication with others. The third unit presents 'Planning and Delivering Sessions' through 'establish goals for educational programs', 'intercultural learning through sport', diversity management' and 'planning and implementing intercultural learning sessions'. This unit negotiates terms of intercultural sensitivity and discusses certain steps of designing an intercultural session. Last but not least, unit four is called 'Monitoring and Evaluation' and includes 'introduction to M&E in intercultural education', 'defining the focal problem', 'setting specific goals and outcomes', 'developing indicators related to those goals and outcomes' and 'determining the methods to

measure indicators'. The last unit provides methods and tools not only regarding ways on self-assessment but also on evaluation of an intercultural session.

One of the Edu- pact project partners, "Right To Play", suggests every participant of a method for group discussions, they call R-C-A, to follow three steps, in order to process the experience and adopt its outcomes: (R) reflect 'what did you observe, see, feel?', (C) connect 'how does this relate to your experience in real life?', (A) apply 'now what? What will you change or do?'. This method is suggested to be used for guiding group discussions after practical activities, and thus, helping participants to their self-reflection.

University of Thessaly and more specifically the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, as one of the partners of the EDU:PACT project, delivered this effort as an elective course for 3rd year pre-service PE teachers who had already completed their practice in schools. The duration of the course was 3 hours per week for 14 weeks (42 hours in total).

Participants

The participants of this study attended the optional class 'Intercultural Education through physical education and sport' during the second semester of 2021, which was the only prerequisite for taking part on the current study, and they enrolled themselves in the study voluntarily. The total number of participants was six (5 women and 1 man), on the third, fourth and twelfth year of their studies with an age range from 20 to 49. When the study started and during the pre- interviews, the total number of participants was 8, but at the end of the semester and when they had been contacted for the post- interviews, two of them denied participating, because of lack of time, as they mentioned. Based on this situation, the researcher, for the purposes of the study, used the 12 interviews, 6 pre and 6 post, from those that completed both interviews. Only one of the participants had experience in Physical

Education as a coach, but none of them had any previous experience on the field of Intercultural Education.

Procedures

Because of the pandemic, all the interviews, as the classes, had to be conducted online, and more specifically through apps, such as 'Skype', 'Facetime' and 'Zoom'. It is generally proposed by many studies, such as Creswell (2007), for the researchers to take care of the interview location a lot, because some requirements need to be fulfilled, aiming to avoid any kind of influence in participants' answers. However, the last two years, researchers had to face a whole new challenge, which has been mentioned even earlier (Novick, 2008), but has never been tested enough before for its effectiveness, the world of digital interviews. The greatest advantage of digital interviews, as it was mentioned by many researchers that accomplished their studies online, telephone or text interviews (Thunberg & Arnell, 2021), is the ability to participate without any location limit and, at the same time, at a very low cost. In this study, during the interviews all of the participants were on their home cities around Greece, in their houses, which fulfils, also, the requirement of the interview location to be a familiar, friendly environment with interruptions to be as less as possible. A limitation of digital interviews could be the lack of visual and non- verbal cues. However, in the current study video calls were used to overcome this difficulty. At the same time, the greatest issue that has to be faced through digital interviews includes the technical difficulties. Many studies mentioned internet connection issues or even fear of them during the interviews, difficulties in using a specific app, low quality of video or sound and many others (e.g., Jenner & Myers, 2019; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019; Sipes et al., 2019; Sullivan, 2012; Weller, 2017). Another important worry is the possibility of people being excluded of studies because of the lack of internet or any other digital means or even the incapability of using

them. Indeed, some of those incidents happened during the interviews of the current study and, in some cases, the interviews had to be paused and rescheduled for another time.

The students that attended the IE class were informed by the instructor of the class about the purpose of the research and, after introducing them the researcher, she kindly asked them to participate. The contact information was given to them to get in touch in case they agree to participate and then, they got the consent form to sign to make clear they understood and agreed with every part of it. Afterwards, they chose the app they preferred for the digital interview and arranged the date and time of it.

Because of the purpose of the current study, the researcher contacted the participants twice, one when the course started and one after its completion, in order to be able to recognise any possible difference between the two stages. The total course lasted 14 weeks. Each class was once per week and all of the classes were conducted through 'Microsoft (MS) Teams', an online communication app. Thus, the course was adjusted to the COVID 19 conditions.

The interviews duration ranged from 20 to 58 minutes, while the first one was contacted by both the researcher and the instructor of the class, so as the first one to have some guidelines for the upcoming interviews, as no previous experience in qualitative research was held by the researcher. To keep the anonymity of the participants, everyone's answers were written with different colours, which will be also used as pseudonymous for each participant of the study.

Interview design

Based on the research needs, the researcher designed two interview guides, one for each interview, pre and post. The questions were semi- structured to help the researcher being

flexible based on the needs of the conversation, while avoiding deviating. The categories of the pre- interview are the above;

- Definitions, meanings, perceptions and thoughts about terms, as ‘stereotypes’ and ‘prejudice’, and what they think about the current situation according to these terms (‘In your opinion, what does stereotype mean? Do teachers nowadays act based on stereotypes?’).
- Personal experience on what they describe, incidents they have seen or heard about (‘Have you ever been in a multicultural class as a students or teacher or any other experience? Did you notice any kind of discrimination based on the origins, the culture or something else?’).
- Expectations about the IE class they are going to attend, significance, topics, possible new skills or ways of thinking (‘Why did you choose to attend this class? How do you think it will enrich your knowledge?’).
- Perceptions about themselves, their future behaviour, what they will face and how (Let’s say you are a PE teacher in a multicultural class and during the first classes you notice that, when you ask them to create teams, they tend to make the same teams every time. What do you think about this behaviour? How would you act?’).

In case of post- interview, the categories are three:

- Perceptions about IE class, what was earned, possible limits and comments about it (‘According to the class you attended, do you think it somehow influenced your knowledge? How?’).

- Definitions, meanings, perceptions and thoughts about terms, as ‘stereotypes’ and ‘prejudice’ (‘What is stereotype in your opinion? Where does it come from? Can you explain to me your thoughts?’).
- Perceptions about themselves, their future behaviour, what they will face and how (‘Can you think of a technique that you would possibly use to stand by multiculturalism in a conversation with other PE teachers? How do you think you would handle stereotypical incidents in a multicultural class?’).

For the purposes of the pre- interview, when participants were asked to give a definition or a meaning of a term, they were, also, asked to put this term in a situation and explain their thoughts about it in real life, aiming to have as much information as possible for the way of thinking of an individual that there was no other information yet. Also, as it was the first contact with the researcher, the existence of many but small questions would help the conversation flow more effortlessly. In case of post- interview, the aim was to focus on the meanings and the expressions, while doing the same questions again and again would be annoying, especially for a digital interview.

For the same reasons, the researcher asked a lot about their personal experience only in the pre- interview. A significant notice is that in the post- interview most of them felt comfortable to share moments of their personal experience without being asked to, which might be explained by the interaction between the participants and the researcher during the course.

The last difference between the two interviews was about the IE class. In the first interview, they were asked to share their expectations about the class, as they had no experience of it yet, while in the second they were asked about their perceptions and thoughts

about the IE class, as they had completed the semester. The interview guide that was used for this study is presented on the Appendix.

Data trustworthiness

Trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016, p. 435).

There are several opinions about what the ingredients of trustworthiness are, but Lincoln and Guba's Criteria (1985) are generally accepted by many qualitative researches. These criteria are credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014), which means the possibilities that the results of the study can depict the reality, based on how the research was conducted. In this case, credibility was established; first of all, by doing great research on literature and qualitative researches, before designing the research and the interview guides, process that was, also, guided by the two supervisors, one of them is the instructor of the IE class. After the creation of the interview guide and before the interviews, they asked peers and academics for their opinion about the questions and the whole design and did the proper editing. Also, the researcher was attending the class, as it was mentioned before, which provided prolonged engagement with the participants. This action helped, at the same time, on having information through online observation of the participants, which supports credibility by triangulation, as called by Shenton (2004), which is the use of more than one method to collect data. Last but not least, all the participants voluntarily participated, after they were informed about the purpose, the procedure and the ability to withdraw or refuse to answer at any point. Their answers were analysed thoroughly, by re-

reading and re- watching the interviews, to make sure everything was transferred as close as possible to participants' sayings.

Dependability refers to the possibility of the results to be almost the same, if exactly the same steps are followed, on the same conditions with the same population, while transferability to the significance of the results in other cases (Shenton, 2004). Both these two criteria are ensured by the plenty information that are provided by the researcher for the study, more specifically the description of the participants, the analysis of the interview guides and the details about the whole process. In case of transferability, many researchers (Cole & Gartner, 1979; Marchionini & Teague, 1987) insist that also the limits of the study should be mentioned, in order for those who want to reproduce it to be aware of them. This is the reason why the researcher of this study included the limits of the study on the discussion section.

Based on Miles and Huberman (2002), confirmability refers to the ability of the researchers to admit their own predispositions. The importance of triangulation is referred once again, as the different methods provide wider view of the collected data and limit the influence of the investigator's perceptions.

Data analysis

For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis was chosen, as the most proper method to analyse the collected data. Thematic analysis, and more precisely 'reflexive thematic analysis' in this case, is the process of finding patterns, while analysing the data, that will refer to the themes the investigator will use to end up on the results (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

More specifically, after the completion of the course and the interviews procedure, the transcription of the digital interviews provided a total number of 38 pages of information from both the pre and the post interview that will be processed in order to give answers to the research question. In order for the researcher to produce a thematic analysis based on the Braun and Clarke's guidelines (2006), she read and re-read the transcripts until they felt familiar enough to pass to the next step, where the researcher highlighted with different colours the spots that seemed to create patterns interesting for the purpose of the study. These spots gradually were organised and coded. At this point, the researcher asked for the instructor of the IE class opinion and help, to limit the overlap between the coded data, and gradually end up with the most vivid themes. After analysing the data again and again, they agreed to the most representative themes, which are presented on the results by using the most typical quotes from participants' answers and connected them with the research question.

Results

Data analysis revealed participants' several common aspects of how they were affected by the IE class, while also some different perceptions. Four themes were generated from the data by the pre- interview. More specifically, these themes are:

- **Providing definitions brings about confusion**
- **Stereotypes are familiar situations**
- **Self-confidence high and self-awareness lower**
- **Self as less stereotype- driven compared to others**

Providing definitions brings about confusion

As the aim of the study is to identify possible changes on the participants' perceptions and thoughts around stereotypes and multiculturalism, they were asked to give the definitions of several terms, aiming to extract something of their way of thinking according to these terms. At the same time, by asking them to explain these words, several information about their knowledge or the lack of it in the field of multiculturalism appeared.

In case of definitions, the first one mentioned was 'multicultural education'. All of the answers in this question showed confusion on what exactly the meaning of it is, which was mostly connected with the lack of awareness, while most of them connected it immediately with the class, like they were asked about it. Specifically, Black said.

Hmm... I think we will be taught how to live together with different cultures and how to respect each other and living all together peacefully.

Only one, Yellow, mentioned and somehow connected multicultural education with anti-racist behaviour.

At first, I confused the word, then I understood it was something about racism, not anti-racist exactly, but something in order for school to be friendlier for the children from the minorities, not just other cultures.

When they were asked about multicultural understanding, no one had a clue about it, and so the investigator had to provide them with the definition, in order to decrease the confusion and help them understand the term.

After this, the researcher asked for the definition of stereotypes and prejudice and a comparison between them. In case of stereotype, in the pre- interview most of them presented it as intertemporal perceptions that go through generations, when only Light Blue mentioned it as 'habits'. Green said.

Those that pass to the community, like my sport, football, that they say it is a men's sport. Well, to be realistic, the most girls playing football are not 'like ballerinas', the sport makes you like this. Unfortunately for me, stereotypes are those ideas that don't change in the course of time. Like the basic one 'all the foreigners are thieves' etc.

While having a conversation about a specific topic, people tend to transfer through its thoughts and beliefs about terms, even when they are not asked to give a definition. This frequently happens unconsciously, and, for the purpose of the current study, the researcher decided to take these comments in consideration, in order to absorb as much information as possible about them. The most common comment was about the field of stereotypical behaviour and actions and thoughts that was interpreted as prejudice or discrimination. All the participants in at least one of their answers mentioned that the rise of these actions and perceptions is the family. In this case, there are a lot of examples, starting by Green when asked to give the definition of 'stereotype', she presented family and low education as the beginning of stereotypical thoughts.

...the classic one is that the student that studies a lot is the 'plant', every black person is a thief. It rises from the family and the lack of education.

Yellow, besides several times, when was asked about stereotypes, mentioned, also, family as a trigger point.

...it arises from the way someone was grown up, from the environment, from the family, everything.

And Red, when talking about teachers nowadays, explained this.

When I am asked if teachers are to blame for students' racist ideas, I am really soaked as it is not only their fault. You have learnt from your own home that you have to respect other people. I wanted to say this.

Prejudice seems like a more complicated term for them. In the first interview, they provided a limited definition, in which most of them present prejudice as beliefs that people have about others without knowing them or having any kind of interaction with them. Green claimed.

Prejudice is when you have a perception about something without knowing anything about it, and you stuck on what you hear and what you do.

Stereotypes are familiar situations

Another very crucial topic on the conversation was the participants' personal experience on situations connected with the topic of the interviews, like stereotypical incidents or multicultural classes. When they were requested to describe a personal experience, or when they did it occasioned by another question, through their sayings they provided information about their way of thinking, their environment and the things that have stimulated them into specific actions or thoughts.

Some of them in everyday life, some of them in specific incidents, but, generally, they all had an example of a particular background where there were people from different countries. Green described her school years, where there was a great number of foreigners, and later, in a job where there were people from around the globe.

Yes, of course (answering if she ever had an experience in a multicultural class) I remember in primary school, we were 10 Greeks and 10 Albanians, and later in a job I had there were people from around the globe, I mean out of Europe, too. I come from a specific neighbourhood in Athens that there were a lot of foreign kids, especially from Albania.

Also, all of them had in mind an incident of stereotypical behaviour to describe, whether they have been observers or not. In the field of sports, the aspects of stereotypical behaviour

that was touched upon were different for almost every participant. First, Black talked about the weight of the kids, that many times it renders them to be targets of specific comments or just being rejected.

I can remember that they made fun of the kids that were a little bit fatter because they couldn't make it, I have heard my own kid when it was on the first classes of primary school that they didn't want him on the team when they were playing football, because he was playing rarely and he wasn't good, they made fun of him as 'a noob'.

Blue, on the other hand, focused on the gender type stereotypes and talked about her personal experience as a female coach.

Gender discrimination, very very intensely. I lived it on me. When I started as a female in a male- dominated field, they didn't like it. The war I had to face, the racism, the sexism basically, if I didn't have my husband, I would have quit everything and left. Incidents I couldn't even imagine, I was entering the stadium and, because what I created had impact and, when they used to have 7-10 kids, suddenly I had a class of 60 kids, they didn't like it. Some men coaches started acting against me and I lived outrageous situations, we said with my husband that it couldn't be true. And it was clearly my female gender that bothered them and last year, when I was on my second year of school, they created a mess saying that I can't be my husband's assistant. A guy said to another 'but you also worked when you were on the second year', he answered 'well I was capable, she can go wash some dishes'.

Red mentioned incidents from social media and TV that refer to racial stereotypes, and an example from her environment about appearance.

Yes of course (about the existence of stereotypes in sports), in football mostly where everything happens like 'the banana' and the 'monkey', I have seen them. The one with the fishes and the football team, they had thrown a banana to a black guy, and he opened it and

ate it, I remember this one clearly. Also, when they comment under the videos on the internet 'of course it would happen, she eats a lot and she is fat', everything has its impact. For the coaches, my mother calls a basketball coach publican, because he is a little fat and he doesn't seem like a coach, because we have a different template for coaches to be handsome and thin, but this doesn't mean anything.

Self-confidence high and self-awareness lower

In many parts of the interview, the participants were asked to present their predictions about their future behaviour as PE teachers or as individuals, especially in cases of multicultural classes and stereotypical behaviour. These predictions, in case of pre- interview, were a presentation of their perceptions on what kind of knowledge and skills they think they have and how they think they will use them in such cases and how they think they will use them in such cases. It seems important to highlight that, even though they had some experiences with people from other countries, they had no previous contact with multicultural education and, so, most of what they said before the attendance on the class was based on their hypothetical thoughts and perceptions.

All of them thought of themselves as capable of handling a multicultural class according to the beliefs and values they claim they have. Black, also, mentioned the new skills that will be earned through the IE class.

I surely have the will to concern myself with these kids, to make them a team, make them feel familiar with their friends even though they come from another country. Especially now with the class that I will earn new skills, I think until I reach this point and go to a school, if I would ever go. I also like the difference, I am not ok with going with the flow, but against it.

Green predicted she would be fine for such a class, but she has to study more about it, as the way of thinking is not enough.

I think I would be good at it, I would just have to study, because even though I have a lot of will, if I go to a Muslim and tell them something, it would be my own fault. There should be some base, besides the attitude, but I would be good.

Besides their general thoughts about their abilities as PE teachers in multicultural classes, they were asked to describe their possible actions in a hypothetical situation given by the researcher. Even though most of them had no previous experience as teachers, they gave some details and some examples on their ideas. Blue, the only one working with kids as a coach shared some personal experience combined with predictions.

I would try to give them an activity that could bring them closer, that they would have to cooperate, or I would split the teams on my own. I always split the teams on my own, selfish, but because I know the children's capabilities, it is the only way for the teams to be equal, for anyone to be disappointed, because if they do it alone the friend will pick the friend and the one team will be good and after two rounds the game will be over. (...) So, two equal teams should be created, to cooperate and be happy together and the joy will bring them together.

Self as less stereotype- driven compared to others

Besides their predictions about their future behaviour as PE teachers and the description of incidents in the past as their personal experience, the participants, also, talked about their own behaviour as individuals and others' behaviour as their peers or part of the community. At the same time, through commenting these two aspects, or even by just talking about themselves, they provided information about their attitude and, more importantly, their beliefs and values. As beliefs and values the researcher refers to the most crucial thoughts,

those that are the stimulus for the behaviour, those that 'decide' what is good or bad and depict the relationship between the individual and their environment (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003).

When they were asked about their personal characteristics, or when they mentioned some of them occasioned by other questions, all of them described themselves as people that try to decrease their stereotypical thoughts or avoid actions based on prejudice and discriminations. Yellow, while was giving the definition of prejudice, said.

Because I am a person that doesn't act based on prejudices, it is difficult for me, I can't think of something (...)

Red, likely, when talking about the other students of Physical Education, categorized herself as one of those that act against stereotypes.

(...) there are not a lot of as that try to eliminate stereotypes, most of them are on those that create them.

Through the conversation, as already mentioned, there were a lot of questions about the intakes from the class, theoretically, practically or in any other way they could think of. Only two of them, Black and Green, believed that this class could influence in any possible way their values and beliefs.

I don't know. I could possibly become more tolerant, I mean more open- minded, more receptive. (Black)

It is definitely something different and it will make me think something I haven't yet, it will broaden my horizons.

In case of others' behaviour, when they were asked about their peers or co-workers, or generally, community, the majority of them presented them as a negative exemplar that carry

stereotypical ways of thinking and act based on them. Red talking about similar programs as the multicultural education class that she was going to attend, mentioned UNICEF and highlighted the upcoming.

UNICEF and programs like this, if we can characterize them as one of these (programs based on multicultural education), but even though there are such programs, they don't use them (...)

Green, referring to the teachers nowadays and providing her opinion on whether or not teachers in multicultural classes should have a specialization in multiculturalism, said.

I think for me firstly goes the mind-set that you should have. Even if you are attracted to money a lot, because some of them do it only for the money, if you have not convinced yourself, and I am not saying I am 'peace', but if you don't say I will accept the other one exactly as he/she is, it won't happen. You can learn some tricks, you can communicate if you don't know the language, you will learn such things, but for me this (mind- set) goes first.

Only Blue and Yellow in some of their answers gave a positive sign on others' behaviour. Blue, when was asked about the other PE students said.

In my year I think the kids are very mature, they are really younger than me. I can see that they are mature enough in these fields. Maybe they had an experience like this, because me that had such an experience, I will never do the same, I will never talk to an athlete about their weight.

Yellow claimed that teachers nowadays do not act based on stereotypical thoughts.

Those that I know, no they do not (act based on stereotypes).

In case of post- interview, the themes were also four;

- **The landscape of defining meanings is now clearer**
- **Activities and interaction during class kept the interest undiminished**
- **Inclusive strategies and group discussions as guides for professionals**
- **Shaking of fixed perceptions is a difficult task**

The landscape of defining meanings is now clearer

In the post- interview, they seemed surer about their answers, as they were more analytical and expressed themselves easier. All 6 agreed on stereotypes being perceptions and Blue said.

Some specific perceptions for specific things that have been established, they can be positive or negative, not like prejudice that has only negative perspective. They are some deep- rooted perceptions and rise from old habits.

Two of them, when asked to give a definition of prejudice, said it was the same with stereotype, while the rest of them presented it as part of the stereotypes, but in a more negative aspect. Yellow said.

Basically, stereotypes create prejudice, wrong perceptions, thoughts that have no logical base and anyone can have them. More or less, everybody has prejudice in lower or higher level, but some of us are trying to bypass them.

Light Blue added.

All these terms have a same base, but prejudice is the worst of them I think, though they are all very common to each other, interconnected.

Then again, when she was asked how she would act to support multiculturalism to kids, mentioned family as the source of stereotypes and prejudice and, also, discriminated kids' actions because of their age.

It is easier than with teachers (to support to them the multiculturalism). Because a kid is not born with racist perceptions on its own, they take it from home. Because kids are like sponges, if you find a way to handle them, to pass it differently, to trick them let's say, you can immediately change their way of thinking

When they were asked about discrimination, the majority mentioned categorization of people, while all of them connected it with the two other definitions of stereotype and prejudice. Yellow explained.

It is something that arises from the other two terms, we can say. Basically, when you have prejudices, stereotypical behaviour, you create discrimination against specific people, specific teams, and specific categories. You categorize people.

Activities and interaction during class kept the interest undiminished

One of the researcher's goals was to investigate, firstly, the participants' thoughts and expectations for the IE class and, then, their perceptions about it, when the semester was over. Through their views they expressed a lot about multiculturalism and its significance, while presented characteristics of themselves and their environment. As it is mentioned earlier for the definition of 'multicultural education', in the pre- interview participants were more confused about the topics that would be presented during the course, as most of them had no other experience in the past. Their confusion on this field is basically clear when they mentioned multicultural education as an important aspect and the reason, they decided to attend the class, but they were not able to give the definition of the term. For example, Red

said ‘*I can’t really think of something*’, on the question for the definition of ‘multicultural education’, but on the question ‘why you chose this subject’, she said.

I liked the title, and I thought I will be taught about multicultural education, and it will be useful for me.

A significant notice is that before the attendance at the course, only one participant, Black, mentioned clearly the learning of new techniques for their future job as PE teachers. Specifically, Black said.

I think there will be different techniques or ways to approach, or just more than I already know for my compatriots.

Even though there was a specific question about new techniques, they mostly talked about the new knowledge about the other cultures and the contact with a new, different kind of thinking and teaching. Yellow said.

I think we will do a training on other cultures.

After the completion of the class, all of them talked about the new techniques they earned for their practise of their job. Black mentioned the combination of both theory and action, which helped her stay motivated during the whole semester.

I liked it a lot, it was really interesting, and I learned new things. If I had the chance, I would do it again. A very large range was covered, there were a lot of things in action, how to do what you learned in theory and how to establish it through games or activities. It combined theory with action. It was very comprehensible, and it could keep you, it wasn’t boring, even if you have no contact with foreigners, it made you want to learn about this different thing that you will probably meet tomorrow in a school.

Yellow ‘corrected’ his first thoughts.

It was interesting, especially things like the techniques because I have no other experience with education, the whole procedure, the communication with kids, was interesting.

Based on the previous notice and extending it a little more, when they were asked to make predictions about specific situations in the future talking about their actions in the post-interview, they mentioned techniques they learned through the class and talked a lot about their new skills in such situations. Black, when asked about techniques, said.

What we did on the class, showing games from different places that are somehow similar, or the other game we did where each one had to learn specific rules with their teams on their table, and then by changing table, the one stayed at the same knew these specific rules while the one changing table didn't know them and couldn't accept the game. If we bring this to reality, it is that I know my culture, my rules and you yours and so we cannot communicate. But if we learn the same rules, or I learn yours and you learn mine, it will be easier for us to work together or play together or do something together.

Basically, the absence of this question on the post- interview was that there were no expectations to cover this amount of topics and information. Most of them expressed how excited they felt about the class, while some of them described it as a 'like no other' experience in the field of university courses. These are some reactions about the class from Light Blue, Green and Black respectively.

We did a lot more than what I was thinking. I thought it would be based on theoretical classes, but we did a lot of activities and techniques that I didn't expect to.

In no circumstances I was expecting something like this, it was flawless.

I thought it would be a class that gives opportunities and a chance to learn new things, to hear a different perspective on how to handle an uncommon situation for the students. For example, when they make fun of a fat kid, it doesn't need to be a foreigner to

feel the rejection or being out of the team, and I was confirmed. It is a class that I do not regret I attended, and I would like it to be on the basic line of classes. It was great and because everything is changed and everyone will meet a class without a total of kids from same culture, it would be great for people to learn to think like this.

Inclusive strategies and group discussions as guides for professionals

The post- interview was a conversation mostly based on predictions about upcoming situations and their reactions on them. As it is already mentioned, all of them except for one had no previous experience as PE teachers or generally on education, which limited them on answering some of the pre- interview questions. In the second interview, when they were asked about their future behaviour on dealing with several stereotypical incidents, they were more accurate about their actions, talked about specific techniques and mentioned a lot the conversation as one of them and other ways they would try to accomplish a healthy, productive communication to find solutions that would help them establish a multiculturalism- friendly environment in their classes. Green, Light Blue and Black said, respectively.

Keeping the balance and trying to pass them what I want.

With conversation, feedback, chat, explanation, I would make them think more, I would tell them that they should think more before they talk, to increase their empathy. To put them in the other's position, to talk about race discrimination.

I would try through activities to show them that the things that we have heard doesn't mean they are true. To help the kids understand through the action that it is wrong to have a view without intersecting or investigating it to see if it is really true.

Shaking of fixed perceptions is a difficult task

The rest part of the post- interview was covered mostly by questions about the participants' beliefs about their own attitude and other people's behaviour and way of thinking, where, in many cases, there was a concealed comparison. Based on what they said about themselves in both interviews, the researcher noticed a connection on their predictions about a possible a change on their way of thinking, because of the attendance on the multicultural education class. The important notice in this field is that, as in the pre-interview, Green and Light Blue predicted a possibility to some kind of change on their mind-set based on the class they were going to attend at, they, also, claimed in the post- interview that they noticed a change on their beliefs and values because of it. They said, respectively.

I think I used to be more dogmatic, but I understood that you should be slow and methodical, and you should include all your beliefs in the PE class. This is the good of this class, it gives you several solutions to adapt everything, and it goes beyond the basic.

I think I hear more the others talking, I collect my views and I am thinking more before I talk, something like that.

On the other hand, the other participants stayed consistent on their first thoughts that they have significant way of thinking, an anti- stereotype one that would not be influenced or changed based on the class. Specifically, yellow said in the pre and post interview.

I don't think so (when asked if the class would influence them in any way). I am in an age where I have consistent beliefs, but I don't know, I am not negative, but I think it is very difficult to happen.

I think no, there is no change on my perspective.

Discussion

The current research was aiming to explore the possible influence of an Intercultural Education course to PE students on their perceptions about stereotypes. For this purpose, the researcher focused on their knowledge about the term 'stereotypes', the participants' opinion about it before and after the attendance to the course and their lived experiences. Also, the participants' attitude in case of stereotypical incidents was analysed to provide as many information as possible to understand any possible behavioural change after the course. For this research, reflexive thematic analysis was chosen to interpret the participants' answers. Based on this method, themes were made by analysing the answers and observing patterns through them. To give answers to the research questions, these themes were expatiated and compered pre- and post- interview patterns. The participants' sayings revealed that, even though a person seemed open for change, the modification in well- established perceptions and attitude was really difficult to happen. However, this kind of people was amenable to learn new skills and techniques, aiming to be able to handle several situations not only on their job environment, but generally in life.

Perceptions about stereotypes and multiculturalism

As the aim was to investigate the participants' knowledge about stereotypes and multiculturalism, the researcher asked them to explain what these terms mean to them. Through this process of giving definitions and explaining a term, not only the knowledge, but also the perceptions and thoughts about it are being showed up.

The participants were asked about multicultural understanding, stereotypes, prejudice and racism. In order to observe the differences caused by the attendance to the IE course, the researcher analysed, through the process of creating themes, the participants' answers and

compared the pre- and post- interviews. The thematization showed that there was a lot of confusion when the participants were asked to share their knowledge about the terms during the first interview. Many of them had the need to comment that they were not sure about their answers. In case of 'multicultural education', especially, the participants faced difficulty to give any definition, even though they had chosen this specific course of Intercultural Education. In terms like 'stereotypes and 'prejudice', the confusion was mainly about the separation of their meanings. This situation seemed a lot clearer after the course, they seemed more decisive while answering and provided more information. The differences between their answers were not significant, while most of them agreed on the influence of the family on kids' stereotypical behaviour.

Even though the focus of this research was the stereotypes and the stereotypical behaviour, most of the studies, when approaching these terms, mention also the phenomenon of prejudice, racism and discrimination (Allport, 1954; Karpinski & Hilton, 2001; Wheeler & Petty, 2001). This is because these terms are connected, while each of them provides information about the meaning and the source of the others (McDonald & Hayes, 2003). For this reason and in order to have as wider as possible view about the participants' perceptions about stereotypes, the researcher mentioned all these terms during the interview.

In case of multicultural education, the researcher focused on the comprehension of the term 'multiculturalism' and its components, as 'multicultural understanding'. In the first interview, by asking for the definition of these terms, besides the knowledge about them, the aim was to recognise the reasons the PE students chose to participate on this course. This would probably provide better view on the participants' thoughts about multicultural education. Although, the confusion about the explanation of these terms showed that there was a lack of knowledge on the field.

Perceptions of self as professionals

Another crucial point of the two interviews was the participants' thoughts about their future self as PE teachers, especially in case of stereotypical incidents. During the pre-interview, they mostly gave hypothetical answers, as there was no significant previous experience with multiculturalism. Most of them, even though they could recognise the need for further penetration on the field, thought of themselves as well- equipped, ready-for-action PE teachers in the future. Their thoughts presented themselves as low stereotype-driven individuals, capable of controlling any possible racial attitude in a multicultural class, thoughts they confirmed through the beliefs and attitude they claimed they had. It is really important to notice that, while answering questions about their peers or their community, the participants claimed they own less stereotypical- driven behaviour than others.

Except for the presentation of the future self as a PE teacher, the researcher gave them hypothetical situations and asked them to provide their hypothetical actions and behaviour. As mentioned before, the participants seemed quite positive about themselves being able to avoid stereotypical behaviour and control racial attitudes into their classes. Although, in the pre- interview, when asked to describe their reactions, it seemed very difficult to them to think of the proper actions to handle these hypothetical situations. In case of the post-interview, they had absorbed strategies and techniques through the course, and they were able to provide answers about their future actions.

Limitations

The first limitation of the study had twofold effects. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole course and the interviews had to be delivered online. This meant that

both the instructor had to present the whole semester online for the first time, and the students were the first that attended it completely through internet. At the same time, both pre- and post- interview were accomplished through online platforms that allow video calling. However, and as the researcher and the rest participants were aware of the situation, the whole study was designed based on this limitation, in order to be as representative as possible.

The second one referred to the type of the course, as it was an optional one. This meant that the students attended because they chose and preferred it besides others. The preference of the participants on a course like this would be evident that they were already driven to a path against stereotypes, which could make the results not representative for the average PH student.

Conclusion

Besides the limitations, and after a lot of designing and adaptation, the current study achieved its goal to answer the research question about the influence of an IE course on future PE teachers. The researcher ended up with the conclusion that, even though they seemed to be supportive to the attempts of IE courses and projects and willing to gain knowledge and skills in favour of multiculturalism, their main attitude stayed the same after the attendance to the course. However, their knowledge and techniques were upgraded, which means that the six- months course was able to provide them with means for multicultural classes, but it probably needs more time to achieve deepen impact on attitudes.

Appendix

Pre- interview

First of all, I would like to thank you for participating in this research, which will be my thesis, and I would like to remind you that, as you read and agreed on the consent form, all of the information you will provide during the interview will be safe and anonymous when published. Moreover, do not hesitate to tell me if you feel uncomfortable, do not want to answer, or want to stop the interview. Even after the completion of the interview, you can ask me to delete your answers without any consequences.

GENDER:

AGE:

YEAR OF STUDY:

ORIGIN:

1. What is multicultural education to you?

☐ Tell me about why you chose this specific class. How will it inform your teaching practice?

2. Knowledge about these programs – “have you ever attended any other program based on intercultural education? Yes: Tell me about the course?

What were your reflections on this course? No: Ideas about this class – “what

do you think you will be taught?

3. Thinking about the present class, how do you expect it to compare with your previous intercultural courses? If you have not attended an intercultural course previously, what are your expectations for the class? Why? What is the value of this class to you?

4. Thinking about the current class, “do you think this class will influence you in any way in relation to your communication generally? How about as an educator? Tell me about any challenges or confusion in relation to your teaching style as a result of your new knowledge?

5. Based on your experience(s) in multicultural courses when working with students from different cultures did you notice any discrimination based on cultural identities? Examples could include discrimination targeting Greek students or non-Greek students. If so, describe an incident. If you have not witnessed or experienced different treatment, could you tell me about possible scenarios you might watch for based on your new knowledge?

6. What is intercultural understanding to you?

7. What is stereotype to you? What is prejudice to you? Comparing those terms describe me your thoughts.

8. Have you ever experienced an incident of discrimination against you or another person in the field of sports? Have you ever heard about an incident of

discrimination in the field of sports in any media?

9. Have you ever noticed any stereotypical comment in the mass or social media in the field of sports? Tell me your opinion about the presentation of male and female athletes through the media.

10. Thinking about your studies on Physical Education, what do you believe are the thoughts of the PE students about the presentation of the athletes on the media?

How do you think the PE students deal with the presentation of the athletes on the media?

11. Thinking of you as a PE teacher, tell me your thoughts about the multicultural classes in Greece. What do you think about yourself as a teacher in a multicultural class?

12. You are a PE teacher in a multicultural class. From the beginning you observe that students choose to create specific teams in every class.

☐ What do you think about this behavior?

☐ How would you deal with this situation?

13. You are a PE teacher in a school. During class you observe that kids create “cliques” based on their clothing and usually there are humiliating comments against specific kids. This behavior is even more intense during breaks.

☐ What do you think about this behavior?

☐ How would you deal with this situation?

☐ Thinking of the class you are going to attend, do you think it would influence you in a way as a teacher in a multicultural class?

Post- interview

1. How did you feel while attending this class? Can you tell me some general thoughts about it?

2. Based on this class that you attended, how do you think it influenced your knowledge?

3. Based on this class, how do you think it influenced your abilities as a PE teacher?

Beyond the theoretical part, do you think the class affected somehow the techniques you already got? Did you gain new ones or at least ideas to cultivate new practices?

Was there any technique that you used/ wanted to use before the class and now you think you have to avoid it? If yes, why, what changed your mind?

Was there any technique that you used/ wanted to use and now you are confirmed about its effectiveness?

Can you give me an example of a technique that you would use to promote multiculturalism to teachers?

Can you give me an example of a technique that you would use to support multiculturalism to students?

4. Based on this class you attended, how do you think it influenced your way of thinking or your attitude in particular issues?

5. What are stereotypes for you? Where do they rise from?

What are prejudices for you? Where do they rise from?

What is discriminations for you? Do you think these terms are different and is yes, how?

6. How would you handle stereotypical behaviours in a multicultural class?

7. Based on your first thoughts and expectations for this class, do you think you have been confirmed?

8. Can you think of something that impress you? Why? Can you explain me your thought?

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