

## Article

# Insights into Teachers' Intercultural and Global Competence within Multicultural Educational Settings

Konstantina Papadopoulou \*, Nektaria Palaiologou \* and Zoe Karanikola \*

Language Education for Refugees and Migrants (L.R.M.) Programme, Hellenic Open University, Perivola Patron, 26335 Patras, Greece

\* Correspondence: std509302@ac.eap.gr (K.P.); nekpalaiologou@eap.gr (N.P.); karanikolazoi@ac.eap.gr (Z.K.)

**Abstract:** As multicultural classrooms appear to be the norm nowadays, giving rise to new, more particular and targeted needs which must be accommodated, teachers now need to reflect on and adjust the strategies and practices they apply in order to meet the specific learning needs of their intercultural classrooms. For this reason, teachers' education should be re-examined, evaluated, and enriched. In this light, this original study uses a case study to explore the language views and attitudes of graduates of a Hellenic Open University Master's international programme entitled "Language Education for Refugees and Migrants" (L.R.M.). The aim is to explore teachers' level of intercultural competence and readiness as well as their global competences as future teachers in multilingual and multicultural settings after completing the programme. To do this, the study attempts to evaluate the programme through the lens of the personal experiences of the graduates in terms of successes, weaknesses, and strengths. To conduct the research, both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in the form of a close-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview conducted in two different formats. The results indicate that the majority of the participants were confident enough to manage the challenges arising in multicultural settings after completing the program, as they felt they had developed appropriate Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes; however, a few among them still felt uncertain in doing this. In addition, a number of different approaches and methods were found to be appropriate as used for teachers' training, while the importance of teachers' intercultural training was highlighted.

**Keywords:** intercultural competence and readiness; global competences; teachers' training; diversity; language perceptions; multicultural and multilingual settings; case study



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## 1. Introduction

Europe is developing into an ever-changing diverse community on account of both internal and external migration flows, especially after 2015, with the unprecedented mass influx of refugees and asylum-seekers originating from the Middle East and Africa [1]. Ensuring migrants' and refugees' well-being and social inclusion as well as that their human rights being respected and not violated are among the responsibilities that host countries need to fulfill. Education is no exception. Nevertheless, meeting the educational needs of these specific populations appears to be quite challenging, as most of the already-existing educational systems need to adapt to this new reality. Nowadays, teachers are required to be well qualified, with intercultural and global competences in terms of skills, abilities, flexibility in teaching procedures, and attitudes of tolerance and acceptance during the teaching process in order to be able to support their diverse students.

Referring to the Greek educational context, research shows that there is a major need for intercultural training and readiness [2,3]. Nonetheless, it is essential for teachers to be able to manage issues regarding the negotiation of their students' identities and multiple diversities in order to overcome their own stereotypes and free themselves from any conscious or unconscious prejudices [4,5] through communication and cooperation.

As there is insufficient research regarding relevant training programmes, this case study makes an effort to explore the skills and competences acquired through the master international programme “Language Education for Refugees and Migrants” (LRM) provided by Hellenic Open University (HOU) through the views and experiences of the graduates themselves in an effort to explore future intercultural teachers’ own perceptions regarding their confidence in their readiness to employ intercultural and global competences after having completed this programme. This study could serve as a guide to raising awareness about which training dimensions shape an intercultural and globally competent teacher, what skills and attitudes can be infused through such programmes, and the theoretical and practical knowledge they provide, as well as specific needs; in this same line, useful lessons can be provided about similar training programmes regarding the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (henceforth CLD) learners [6].

## 2. Intercultural Competence and Readiness for Diversity—Global Competence

Global Multicultural schools being the norm nowadays in modern societies, the learning body consists of students from various cultural backgrounds. Today’s teachers therefore need to be endowed with the means to operate at cognitive, emotional, and relational levels in linguistically and culturally complex settings [7]. Additionally, being able to shape their students’ global and intercultural competences facilitates communication, prevents coexistence problems [8], strengthens bonding, and promotes inclusion. This has led to intercultural education, “an educational approach that must respond to the needs of students and attend to the diversity of schools in the pursuit of total educational inclusion” [9] (p. 12), becoming a focus of increasing interest. Its objective, according to Nordgren and Johansson [10], is most frequently the integration and inclusion of ethnic minorities as well as their transnational identities into the community of a nation. Education should therefore act as the medium in which students’ feelings of acceptance are cultivated while fostering their sense of belonging and at the same time facilitating the expression of their identities via recognizing and building upon their cultural differences through interaction [11]. The essence of global education lies in cultivating cross-cultural understanding and developing the skill of perspective-taking while going beyond national boundaries and taking into account the interconnectedness of cultural, political, economic, and even environmental and technological systems [12]. According to the OECD and Asia Society, there are four key aspects to global competence: (1) investigate the world beyond one’s immediate environment by examining issues of local, global, and cultural significance; (2) recognize, understand, and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others; (3) communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences by engaging in open, appropriate, and effective interactions across cultures; and (4) take action for collective well-being and sustainable development both locally and globally [13] (p. 5).

It is obvious that global education is intertwined with multicultural and consequently intercultural Education. This implies that effective teachers incorporate a global perspective into their teaching in an impactful and relevant way that transcends borders and transfers these competencies to their students [14]. In other words, teachers today need to be able to introduce the principles of intercultural pedagogy into the teaching and learning process, which in turn means that they have developed intercultural and global competence themselves. The present study focuses on intercultural competence as a dimension of global competence.

Nonetheless, defining intercultural competence is no easy task, and there are many different perceptions, models, and constructs for it. According to Leung et al. [15], more than 30 models and over 300 constructs exist today. The traditional definition, however, describes an individual’s ability to function and communicate effectively during interaction within various cultural settings with people usually not sharing the same culture [16]. Education is thus tasked with assisting students develop this ability and teachers are entrusted to see to it becoming a reality. Notwithstanding the increasing heterogeneity of European classrooms, the findings of European Commission [17] indicate that the majority

of the teaching population are not sufficiently prepared during Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to address the needs of CLDs, as it remains largely homogenous. What is more, there is limited availability of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes designed to effectively promote teachers' intercultural readiness and equip them with the relevant competences. Although there has been a considerable amount of research regarding teachers' intercultural competence and their readiness to perform in multicultural and multilingual settings [12,18], very little research has been conducted regarding their own perceptions of their competence and readiness. However, understanding teachers' pedagogical beliefs can assist in understanding the practices they employ in the teaching process and the reasons for their choice, as beliefs are considered by many to influence our attitudes.

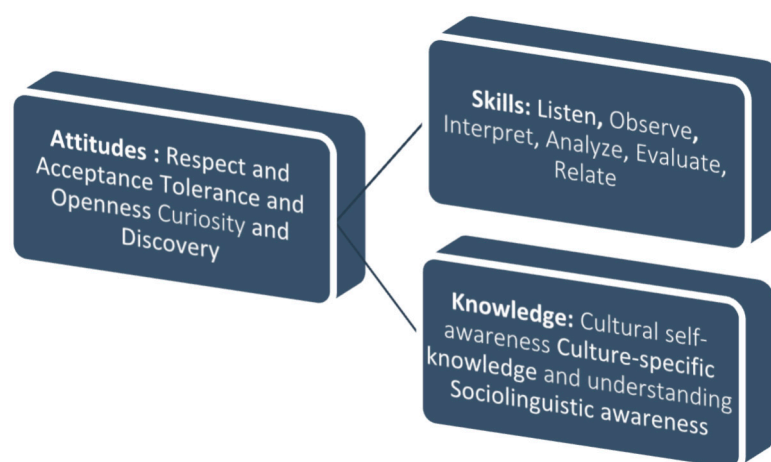
Before examining teachers' personal beliefs regarding their intercultural competence, however, it is deemed necessary to understand the nature of these competences and agree on what they should be. Therefore, it is considered essential to adopt a framework serving as a guide for comparison. For this reason, a framework of teacher competences for engaging with diversity has been proposed by the European Council [19]; the urban teachers' competence framework as identified by Severiens et al. [20] as well as Deardorff's [21] pyramid model of intercultural competence were adopted.

In the first framework, the component "knowledge and understanding", which includes knowledge and understanding of the political, legal, and structural context of sociocultural diversity, Knowledge about international frameworks and understanding of the key principles that relate to socio-cultural diversity education, knowledge about different dimensions of diversity (e.g., ethnicity, gender, special needs and understanding their implications in school settings), knowledge of the range of teaching approaches, methods, and materials for responding to diversity, skills of inquiry into different socio-cultural issues, and reflection on one's own identity and engagement with diversity is referred to as "Knowledge". The component "Management and Teaching" includes addressing socio-cultural diversity in curricular and institutional development, establishing a participatory, inclusive, and safe learning environment, selecting and modifying teaching methods for the learning needs of students, critically evaluating diversity within teaching materials (e.g., textbooks, videos, and media), using of a variety of approaches to culturally sensitive teaching and assessment, and systematic reflection on and evaluation of one's own practice and its impact on students is referred to as "Skills". Finally, the "Communication and Relationships" component includes initiating and sustaining positive communication with students, parents, and colleagues from different socio-cultural backgrounds, recognizing and responding to the communicative and cultural aspects of language(s) used in school, creating open-mindedness and respect in the school community, motivating and stimulating all students to engage in learning individually and in cooperation with others, involving all parents in school activities and collective decision-making, and dealing with conflicts and violence to prevent marginalization and school failure, all of which correspond to "Attitudes" [19].

Similarly, the second framework's component of "Pedagogy" includes diverse classes requiring diverse didactic resources and varied or differentiated instruction, building upon prior knowledge, and promoting interactive learning and discursive classes, all of which refer to "Knowledge". The component "Language Development", which includes multilingual instruction, distinction between academic and daily language, and simultaneous development of heritage and dominant language, refers to "Skills". The component "Social Interaction and Identity" includes familiarizing teachers with concepts referring to prejudice, stereotypes, cultural and ethnic identity, the low expectations hypothesis, and their outcomes in terms of student performance. The component "Parental Involvement" includes familiarizing teachers with the importance of parental engagement and its positive effects on student performance and promoting family involvement strategies. Lastly, the component "Schools and Community", which includes school and community collaboration, can promote social inclusion and academic advancement and reforms in and

with the community, which are more likely to achieve long-term success, corresponding to “Attitudes”.

It should be noted that not the entire model proposed by Deardorff is employed in this research. The set of competences called Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes appears to be more relevant and better identified with the framework the European Union and the one developed by Severiens et al. [20]. For this reason, only those competences are employed to measure teachers’ intercultural competence as a means to complement the aforementioned frameworks, as shown in the scheme below (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Attitudes–Skills–Knowledge scheme from Deardorff’s Pyramid Model (2006).

### 3. Methodology

The present study attempts to investigate teachers’ language attitudes and views as well as their own perception of their readiness to address the emerging challenges regarding the education of culturally and linguistically Diverse (CLD) learners within the public educational system in Greece after having completed a relevant training programme. Their level of intercultural competence, readiness, and global competence is then investigated through the method of a case study with graduates of the LRM programme as participants.

To this end, the following research questions were formulated: 1. What are the challenges a teacher encounters with regard to their readiness and competence when teaching in a multicultural classroom? 2. What methods/strategies do teachers opt for/prefer when teaching CLD populations? 3. In which ways could we develop teachers’ capacity to deal with diversity in a multicultural class? 4. What kind of qualifications/knowledge, skills, and attitudes does a teacher consider necessary to possess to be able to effectively and efficiently deal with a multicultural classroom and address those specific needs?

This research adheres to the philosophical paradigm of constructivism, as a constructivist framework provides the space for individuals to interact, construct, perceive, interpret, and understand the world and their personal experiences within specific sociocultural and socio-historical contexts while creating meanings regarding those experiences which are not innate and do not align for every individual [22,23]. This is the reason for the high complexity; variation, and diversity these meanings are characterized by, which researchers in turn attempt to unveil and discover [24].

The sample used for the questionnaire portion of the study consisted of eighty ( $N = 80$ ) graduates of the postgraduate program “Language Education of Refugees and Migrants” provided by the Hellenic Open University, which consists of a diverse group of teachers in primary and secondary education tiers, language teachers in private institutions, and teachers employed in NGOs and other non-formal education settings, while the sample used for the interview portion consisted of ten ( $N = 10$ ) student teachers with the same demographic profile. In brief, the programme provided by the “Hellenic Open University” is a two-year Master programme divided into eleven modules, which includes a practicum and dissertation/thesis. As the title of the programme implies, graduates specialize mostly

in educating refugee and migrant populations. Nevertheless, other vulnerable groups such as minorities are taken into consideration as well. Additionally, the programme incorporates a number of disciplines, including the legal framework in Greece regarding these populations, second language acquisition approaches and methods in general, digital literacy, and critical and inclusive pedagogy, and makes reference to principles of psychology. Therefore, professionals from other disciplines, such as lawyers or social workers involved in relevant fields, attend this program as well.

Due to the extreme conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, the participants were chosen following the convenience sampling method; according to Bryman, it is “simply available by virtue of its accessibility” [25] (p. 201). Regarding their demographic characteristics, for both the interviews and questionnaires the age ranges of the sample were from below 25 to above 47 (Figure 2). Additionally, 63 females and 17 males (Figure 3) answered the questionnaire, while the interviewees were nine females and one male, all residing in different parts of Greece except for one residing in Germany. Their multifarious work experience varied from formal education to NGO and private settings, while most of them were employed in settings relevant to their studies at the programme within less than a year following their graduation. The Figures in Appendix A (Figures A1 and A2) summarize the participants’ demographic characteristics.

AGE_RANGE		Frequency	Percent
Valid	<25	1	1.3
	26-35	46	57.5
	36-45	25	31.3
	>47	8	10.0
	Total	80	100.0

Figure 2. Age Range.

GENDER		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	17	21.3
	Female	63	78.8
	Total	80	100.0

Figure 3. Gender.

### 3.1. Data Collection and Data Analysis

To address the research questions and to analyze and interpret the data used in this research, the researcher followed the methodology proposed by the mixed research approach, that is, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The use and utilization of multiple methods such as triangulation can provide researchers with the opportunity to answer multiple and various questions, enhancing interpretation. Qualitative and quantitative methods combined can return the best results [26] and enhance the validity of research [25,27]. More specifically, the present research being divided in two phases, the purposes of the study appeared to be best served by adopting quantitative methods in the first phase and qualitative methods in the second. During the first phase, a researcher collected data through a closed-ended questionnaire, while for the second phase, semi-structured interviews were found to best serve the purpose of providing data to complement the results of the questionnaire from during the first phase.

The questionnaire and the interview protocol were created based on the research questions, theoretical framework, and researcher’s personal experience as a student in the LRM programme. The anonymous questionnaire consisted of closed-ended and ranking



questions. In the first section, the demographics of the participants were gathered; in the second, questions referred to the participants' own perceptions of their intercultural and global competences cultivated while completing their training. In the first section of the interview, the demographics of the participants were gathered again followed by interview questions divided in four parts, one per research question.

Finally, the interview protocol consisted of thirteen questions divided into four parts and in two forms. First, interviews were conducted remotely through Skype and Viber ( $N = 3$ ), and later through an online Google Form ( $N = 7$ ) for participants who faced connectivity problems resulting in poor quality sound and disconnections. These oral interviews lasted 20 to 40 min, and were first recorded and then transcribed, while those using Google Forms were in written format.

After transcription, the data analysis followed an inductive thematic approach [28], as this does not restrict researchers and can provide a more holistic outlook on the investigated phenomenon, allowing for a deeper exploration of the ways and the reasons in which meanings are constructed [29]. The four main themes addressed were the following: (a) Challenges of CLD classrooms; (b) Preferred Methods; (c) Skills used to handle diversity; and (d) Intercultural Knowledge/skills/attitudes.

### 3.2. *Validity, Reliability, Ethical Considerations*

In the present study, triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data was performed and relevance was identified, indicating that the data were not contradictory and ensuring the validity of the research [26].

To ensure the reliability and validity of the derived data, the researcher followed the pilot interview technique in both the questionnaires and interviews. To verify the clarity of the questions included in the questionnaire, following the pilot interview technique the questionnaires were sent to four people, all graduates of the program, with the intention of gathering feedback and revising items if deemed necessary [26]. The reliability test of the questionnaire showed satisfactory results (Cronbach's alpha total =  $0.737 > 0.70$ ).

To verify the clarity of the questions included in the interview protocol, three pilot interviews preceded in order to verify that the questions were comprehensible and clear as well as precise and easy to answer. Prior to the last step, a thematic analysis of the pilot interviews revealed which questions were in need of modification in terms of their relation to and ability to answer the research questions according to a literature review, which helped to determine the preferable order of the questions to create a natural flow and produce more tangible data, as well as which should be omitted. Finally, the revised interview protocol was distributed to the participants.

Building trust between researchers and participants is considered of utmost importance [30]. Therefore, this research adopted the four types of ethics identified by Tracy [31] as Procedural, Situational, Relational, and Exiting ethics (p. 840). The participants were informed of their confidential and voluntary participation as well as the content and nature of the research, along with the possibility of withdrawing at any time beforehand. Moreover, informed consent was achieved by their voluntary participation, considering the circumstances and the format (i.e., the digital form of the interview and questionnaire) in advance through their decision to fill in both forms forwarded to them and having received the explanatory message regarding the aforementioned matters. Due to the difficult circumstances, there was no signed consent form, only an oral confirmation. Lastly, the findings were checked by providing the interviewees with copies of the transcripts of their respective interviews in order to check their accuracy and validity and verify that their answers were not distorted.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. *Questionnaire (Quantitative Data)*

The first part of the questionnaire, referring to their personal views regarding the acquired knowledge skills and attitudes after completing an intercultural training pro-

gramme (in this case the LRM programme), required that the participants choose the three most important of the provided options according to their views.

For question one, the participants' first choice (52%) appears to be the realization of ethnicity, migration, and refugee concepts, the second most popular is the realization of stereotypes and racism in classrooms (27.5%), and the third is the realization of the relationship between identity and L = language issues (20%).

The three most prevalent answers to the second question are the options a, d, and e, with 32%, 50%, and 41.3%, respectively.

For the third question, regarding the subjects they feel they should be trained on, psychology is the most prevalent with a percentage of 37.5%, with knowledge about different cultures (35%) and counseling and mentoring (33.8%) following.

When asked about which pedagogy they feel is most suitable for refugee and migrant populations, the first option, with 58.8%, was critical pedagogy, Collaborative pedagogy was next with 36.6%, and the third most prevalent answer was inclusion pedagogy.

Regarding ways to incorporate students' prior knowledge into the teaching process, allowing them to speak about their cultural heritage and language(s) in class was the first option for 71.3% of the participants. Urging them to collaborate and participate in the teaching process was the second option (42.5%) and the third was the use of identity texts (40%).

When asked about the efficiency of the programme in covering their needs in specific areas as teachers of CLD students, the highest answers were options a, c, and f in that order, with 50%, 32.5% and 35% respectively.

Lastly, the participants were asked to choose the three most prevalent areas they were most confident in dealing with after their training. The first option for most (27.5%) was dealing with psychological issues, the second highest was showing empathy and support for CLD students (33.8%), and the third was incorporating intercultural principles into their teaching (48%). The answers are presented in Table 1 below.

The next part of the questionnaire required the participants to define the degree that corresponds more to the question according to their own beliefs. According to their answers, most of them are confident in their ability to implement activities that promote creativity (57.7%); 66.3% consider themselves capable of implementing inclusive practices in classroom that boost the morale of the students, while the majority consider collaborative learning (80%) and inclusive education (87.5%) very important. When asked about the importance of multi-literacy, 63.7% responded that it is very important; regarding the influence of the first language on the second language, 80% of the respondents considered it very important. Lastly, on the importance of being well informed in educational research and keeping in touch with the latest research trends in the field of intercultural education, 55% and 62.5%, respectively, find it very important and consider themselves capable of doing so. The answers to the questions are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 1.** The three most prevalent areas respondents were most confident in dealing with after their training.

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
1. After your intercultural training you consider having			
a. Understood the concept of ethnicities, migration, refugees	42 (52.5%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
b. Realized the concept of racism and stereotypes in classrooms	18 (22.5%)	18 (22.5%)	0 (%)
c. Recognized your stereotypes and managed to overcome them	7 (8.8%)	22 (27.5%)	5 (6.3%)
d. Realized the relationship of identity and language issues	13 (16.3%)	21 (26.3%)	16 (20.0%)
e. understood the intercultural dynamics between different groups		19 (23.8%)	11 (13.8%)
2. Your intercultural training has provided you with ways to			
a. Recognize the different learning styles of your students and opt for the most appropriate	28 (35.0%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
b. Provide motivation for learning	21 (26.3%)	10 (12.5%)	0 (%)
c. Implement approaches that promote equity	25 (31.3%)	18 (22.5%)	0 (%)
d. Critically examine your teaching methods and their outcomes for improvement	2 (2.5%)	40 (50.0%)	5 (6.3%)
e. Develop positive attitudes towards your CLD students and everyone involved in the learning process	4 (5.0%)	8 (10.0%)	33 (41.3%)
f. Create communities of practice to promote collaborative learning	0 (%)	4 (5.0%)	10 (12.5%)
3. Which lessons would you like to have been included in this postgraduate programme?			
a. Quantitative research approaches	34 (42.5%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
b. Psychology	30 (37.5%)	20 (25.0%)	1 (1.3%)
c. Micro-teaching	5 (6.3%)	6 (7.5%)	0 (%)
d. Other cultures e.g., Asian, African	11 (13.8%)	28 (35.0%)	6 (7.5%)
e. Counselling and mentoring	0 (%)	11 (13.8%)	27 (33.8%)
4. Which pedagogy do you find most suiting for refugee and migrant populations?			
a. Critical pedagogy	47 (58.8%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
b. Multicultural pedagogy	14 (17.5%)	21 (13.8%)	0 (%)
c. Intercultural pedagogy	13 (16.3%)	23 (28.8%)	11 (13.8%)
d. Antiracist pedagogy	5 (6.3%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)
e. Collaborative pedagogy	0 (%)	29 (36.3%)	21 (26.3%)
f. Inclusion pedagogy	1 (1.3%)	5 (6.3%)	46 (57.5%)
5. How can you incorporate your students' prior knowledge in the teaching process?			
a. Allow them to speak about their cultural heritage and language/s in class	57 (71.3%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
b. Ask them what they know about the topic	5 (6.3%)	13 (16.3%)	0 (%)
c. Urge them to collaborate and participate in the teaching process	15 (18.8%)	34 (42.5%)	0 (%)
d. Promote agency and initiative	0 (%)	11 (13.8%)	0 (%)
e. Use identity texts	3 (3.8%)	22 (27.5%)	32 (40.0%)
6. You find this postgraduate programme efficient in covering your needs as a teacher of Linguistically and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students (CLDS) in terms of:			
a. Efficient multicultural class managements techniques	40 (50%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
b. Students' linguistic support techniques	25 (31.3%)	25 (31.3%)	0 (%)
c. Teaching approaches suitable for intercultural classes	11 (13.8%)	26 (32.5%)	23 (28.8%)
d. Use of new technologies in multicultural classrooms	2 (2.5%)	15 (18.8%)	14 (17.5%)
e. Teaching material development guidelines- techniques and training	2 (2.5%)	4 (5%)	15 (18.8%)
f. Action research techniques	0 (%)	10 (12.5%)	28 (35%)



**Table 1.** *Cont.*

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
7. After your intercultural training you are more confident in dealing with:			
a. Conflicts between students from different countries	16 (20.0%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
b. Psychological issues many students face (e.g., trauma, adjustment problems)	22 (27.5%)	7 (8.8%)	0 (%)
c. Students' interrupted schooling (school dropout)	12 (15.0%)	14 (17.5%)	6 (7.5%)
d. Overcoming racist behaviors in class	11 (13.8%)	11 (13.8%)	8 (10.0%)
e. Show empathy and support to CLD students	14 (17.5%)	27 (33.8%)	5 (6.3%)
f. Incorporating intercultural principles in your teaching	5 (6.3%)	19 (23.8%)	39 (48.8%)
g. Keeping up with new trends in the field of research	0 (%)	2 (2.5%)	22 (27.5%)

**Table 2.** The importance of being well informed about educational research and keeping in touch with the latest research trends in the field of intercultural education.

	N (%)	M.V.	S.D.
1. How confident are you into implementing activities that promote creativity?			
not at all	0 (0%)		
to a little extent	0 (0%)		
to some extent	15 (18.8%)	4.05	0.654
to a great extent	46 (57.5%)		
to a very great extent	19 (23.8%)		
2. How important is collaborative learning?			
not at all important	0 (0%)		
slightly important	0 (0%)		
important	2 (2.5%)		0.477
fairly important	14 (17.5%)		
very important	64 (80.0%)		
3. How important do you consider multiliteracy?			
not at all important	0 (0%)		
slightly important	0 (0%)		
important	4 (5.0%)	4.59	0.589
fairly important	25 (31.3%)		
very important	51 (63.7%)		
4. To what extent can you implement inclusive practices in classroom that boost the morale of the students?			
not at all	0 (0%)		
to a little extent	0 (0%)		
to some extent	11 (13.8%)	4.06	0.581
to a great extent	53 (66.3%)		
to a very great extent	16 (20.0%)		
5. How important do you consider inclusive education?			
not at all important	0 (0%)		
slightly important	0 (0%)		
important	4 (5.0%)	4.83	0.497
fairly important	6 (7.5%)		
very important	70 (87.5%)		
6. How important is First language influence on second language acquisition			
not at all important	0 (0%)		
slightly important	0 (0%)		
important	5 (6.3%)	4.74	0.568
fairly important	11 (13.8%)		
very important	64 (80.0%)		
7. How important do you find keeping in touch with research in education?			
not at all important	0 (0%)		
slightly important	0 (0%)		
important	6 (7.5%)	4.47	0.636
fairly important	44 (37.5%)		
very important	64 (55.0%)		
8. To what extent are you capable of following trends in the research field of intercultural education?			
not at all	0 (0%)		
to a little extent	1 (1.3%)		
to some extent	16 (20.0%)	3.94	0.643
to a great extent	50 (62.5%)		
to a very great extent	13 (16.3%)		

#### 4.2. Interviews (Qualitative Data)

The first part of the interviews was dedicated to the challenges often arising in multicultural and multilingual classrooms. The participants were asked about the utility of the programme to them and their personal opinion on their readiness and competence to teach in different multicultural and multilingual settings considering the challenges involved. One third of the interviewees stated confidence in their abilities, one third indicated uncertainty, and one third stated that they felt they were not ready to rise to the challenges of a multicultural teaching environment. These results agree with the findings from the questionnaire, that is, the quantitative data; see questions 1 and 2 in Table 1 and question 4 in Table 2. More particularly:

P4: "I feel quite ready, since this programme has provided me with high knowledge and qualifications relevant to refugee education."

P3: "I'll never be ready enough, because each classroom is a different dynamic organization with its own particularities."

P1: "Not as ready as I'd hope. I was taught to use tool and methods that are not applicable to realistic situations."

Continuing with the interview, participants were asked to provide ways in which they were taught to provide emotional support. However, there was a dichotomy in opinions. Specifically:

P3: "... Besides providing me with the ability of empathy [...] I have not learned ways and techniques with which I can deal with these sensitive situations...."

P8: "It helped me understand that each student has his unique identity, specific needs, interests and background. So, it has taught me to meet these specific needs, follow students' pace, give them time and appreciate their personality and cultural heritage ... "

The next two questions focused on the ways provided for handling violent incidents and promoting social inclusion in the event of lacking a common linguistic code. Their answers included setting rules and promoting collaboration, the didactic methods and approaches they were taught through the programme, needs analysis, observation, and practicality, depending on the situation. These answers verify the results that emerged from questions 6 and 7 of the questionnaire; see Table 1. More precisely:

P1: "It helped to set boundaries and remind everyone of their rights and my rights as their teacher."

P5: "LRM has taught me to try to promote a collaborative spirit within the classroom environment, where all students actively participate in activities and therefore, they put aside violent attitudes, coexist and cooperate."

P3: "Because of the programme I was even more familiarized with didactic methods that promote inclusion through the creation of pedagogical climate."

The next section of the interview referred to the teaching methods, strategies, and approaches the respondents felt were more suitable for CLD students. Their answers indicate that the programme provided them with knowledge regarding the promotion of initiative and participation of diverse learners in the classroom, including the creation of a good climate where everyone feels accepted. The methods chosen varied depending on the respondents' specialization and place of employment, as well as the age of their students. Among the methods mentioned were audiovisual methods, intercultural methods, including elements of students' culture and language, needs analysis, differentiated teaching, communicative methods (three answers), translanguaging (three answers), and identity texts. These answers verify the multiple answers presented in the questionnaire (Table 1). A few teachers responded as follows:

P4: "LRM indicated me the value of observation and students' needs analysis and, through these practices I choose the most appropriate."

P3: "Because of the programme, I was even more familiarized with didactic methods that promote inclusion through the creation of pedagogical climate."

P7: “[ . . . ] LRM has helped me realize the importance of a good classroom climate where all students feel welcome and comfortable to participate. I have also appreciated the value of cooperation among students and group work.”

In the third part, ways to address their students’ different cultural backgrounds and ways to handle negative incidents within the classroom were investigated. The answers include the use of multilingual practices and material and incorporation of heritage, language, and culture to have been of assistance, along with collaborative didactic approaches. Specifically, a few teachers answered as follows:

P5: “LRM has helped me to respect and appreciate all the languages, not only the majority ones, and therefore show an equal treatment towards all cultures.”

P6: “Accepting them, encouraging my students’ parents promoting their native languages, realizing relevant activities in the classroom.”

P5: “As a teacher I would do my best in order to prevent negative incidents within the classroom and strengthen my students’ collaborative skills.”

The last part referred to the teaching skills, knowledge, and attitudes considered necessary by the participants when teaching CLD students. Indicatively:

P6: “Multicultural education in depth, digital literacy, critical education.”

P7: “My positive attitude towards CLD students and creative grouping of students while in class have worked as an example for all students who have embraced diversity and included all.”

P5: “Deepening my knowledge concerning refugees [ . . . ] The LRM programme taught me that as a teacher I should also work to encourage students to participate in social events and activities. Learning the target language itself is not the key for inclusion. Task-based activities proposed by the programme and conducted in classroom may also facilitate their adaption to the environment.”

P4: “Of course, since LRM helped me show respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, acknowledge the differences among diverse populations and be willing to support all students without discriminations.”

The aspect of educational research as a means to enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes was investigated in this part. According to their answers, most participants seem in favour of qualitative research. More particularly:

P2: “Qualitative research allows for in depth investigation of the explored areas.”

P3: “Ethnographic with semi-structured interviews, because I get close to the participants and see the world through their eyes.”

P6: “Semi-structured interview. I find this kind of research more interesting, interactive.”

The last questions of the interview focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme in developing student-teachers’ intercultural and global competences. The participants were asked about the most significant advantages as well as ways to ameliorate issues. According to their answers, they found the programme to be beneficial and efficient, especially in terms of its intercultural orientation, interdisciplinary content, flexibility, and the research opportunities it provided. Indicatively:

P4: “It combines the migrant issue with the learning of use modern techniques as digital tools.”

P5: “Strengthening our cooperative skills through forum discussions, offering motivations and initiatives.”

Regarding the dimensions in need of amelioration, the answers included updated and expanded material and as well as additional research opportunities:

P4: “. . . It would be good idea to have more research courses . . . ”

P3: “More support in research . . . ”

P2: “Introduction to African cultures.”

P6: “I would like it if more classes would be offered in real classrooms!”

## 5. Discussion

Teacher's language, beliefs, and attitudes, stemming from their own ideologies, define both the practices they implement in their teaching and the language policies they integrate in the process. Their beliefs on multilingualism and multiculturalism are therefore shaped by multiple factors, including the pedagogical practices and organizational features of schools, such as the cultural variation of the student body or the school curriculum [32]. To this point, the present study reveals by quantitative data that proper relevant training can play an important role, as well-educated teachers are more likely to implement more participatory and inclusive pedagogies and adjust their teaching to the needs of their specific classroom. This is verified by the qualitative data as well, where the different methods the participants use are presented. Designing well-developed and holistic pedagogical frameworks in teacher education can result in shaping teachers' intercultural competencies, enhance their dispositions towards global citizenship [33], and promote mutual acceptability [34]. According to relevant research, intercultural competence can be acquired by implementing official educational policies and can be taught and learnt by training, specific tasks, and assignments [35–39]. In this regard, the majority of the teachers felt confident in their competence and readiness to address a multicultural classroom after having attended the programme, as they understood their significance.

Pointing to a more practical aspect, the participants' responses demonstrate a need for practical skills development in order to face the challenges emerging during the teaching and learning process. The teachers' need to expand more on communication, pedagogical, and research skills on a more practical level was highlighted, a fact verified by the quantitative data when the participants expressed their level of confidence in their abilities and knowledge. As relevant research has demonstrated, this can be addressed through exposure to diverse cultural settings, as during this process knowledge relating to ethnicity, power, and inequity in education is enhanced, cultural sensitivity is cultivated, and perceptions of diversity are expanded [1,40–42]. Developing global competence along with intercultural competence represents an extra benefit. Lastly, as Sakka [38] suggests, pairing theoretical and practical knowledge can help teachers to promote CLD students' co-existence and collaboration, assist them in creating appropriate material to cater to the specific linguistic needs of their students, and adjust the curriculum as needed. The same conclusions can be drawn from the answers of the participants here, as they highlighted their improvement through the programme while acknowledging the need for practice in real classrooms.

It is essential to be adequately aware of educational research, both in terms of keeping informed as well as in conducting research related to education, a fact presented in both the qualitative and quantitative data. According to Elliott [43], following theoretical developments in research and then pairing theory with practice can yield actual educational change. The participants in this study realized this fact, pointing out that keeping in contact with newer educational research findings and being able to perform them in turn is indeed among the most desired skills of an educator open to diversity.

Lastly, in examining how openness, curiosity, and critical ability are represented by the participants, the following emerged. Almost all of them highlighted the importance of being able to develop critical consciousness [44] and apply critical and inclusive pedagogy, promote reduction of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes in the classroom (as they can become hindering factors) [45], realize and overcome their own stereotypes, bias, and prejudice [46], reflect on and develop positive attitudes towards ethnicity and identity, and embrace ethnocultural diversity [47].

The present study reveals a variety of strategies, methods, and approaches the participants employ in their teaching which demonstrate their intercultural competence and readiness. Types of emancipatory and participatory practices include methods such as translanguaging [48,49] and code-switching, communicative approaches, CALL, and multi-modal material [50] as core elements of their teaching. Indeed, all of these methods appear to be effective in making learning relevant to students, documenting their progress, and allowing for continuity [18], and can serve as means of communication while transmit-

ting curricular content [48], providing learning opportunities while embracing diversity, exposing students to authentic multicultural and multilingual material [51], enhancing and speeding up language acquisition with minimal support [47], and promoting comprehension, thus boosting self-confidence. However, other practices such as dialogue, role-playing games, incorporation of arts and theatrical activities, creative writing, and identity texts [50] were mentioned as efficient and effective methods. Translanguaging addresses practical matters as well as psychological ones [52]. Communicative approaches facilitate and foster students' socialization and relationship-building, and ultimately school integration as well [51].

Identifying those areas and domains that are lacking and in need of amelioration for the specific programme investigated here can serve as a future guide as to what elements diversity-oriented programmes should include or incorporate, focus on, and expand, using as evidence the specific programme participants' experiences and viewpoints. In this way, the actual needs of teachers in multicultural and multilingual settings can be better defined and addressed and their intercultural and global competence enhanced and cultivated further. According to the findings of the present research, most of the participants felt that they needed more training regarding pedagogies, methodology, and other disciplines such as psychology, and wanted to be introduced to more cultures and languages in light of the great diversity present in Greek society.

The need to incorporate a wider variety of cultures and languages in the programme, as expressed by the participants, implies their realization of the highly diverse student body in Greek schools. Therefore, mutual acceptance [34] and cultural sensitivity appear to be crucial; as Arvanitis et al. [53] claim, developing intercultural competence presupposes developing intercultural sensitivity. This means that teachers are required to be able to perceive the different cultural features and traits of their students, show empathy towards the different culturally-oriented and defined perceptions of their students, and be willing to transform their attitudes, behaviors, and teaching towards more inclusive communicational class environments. Courses based on culturally relevant pedagogies can therefore help to incorporate core values regarding communication, inclusion, and participation in different cultures [20]. Similarly, intercultural readiness implies perceiving and reflecting on culturally-bound stimuli and then responding to them by adopting appropriate, effective, and efficient pedagogies. It thus becomes evident that the need expressed by the teachers to be better trained in pedagogies and other cultures and languages is not ungrounded, as they at some point must become intertwined in the new multifaceted and composite learning environments derived from the sociocultural complexity within them [54].

For this reason, infusing existing curricula with pedagogies and courses that foster diversity, promote equity, and cultivate teacher's global competence [54], is necessary. In any case, global competence is defined as "the capacity to investigate and connect to the world: that is, to be aware of and interested in the world and its workings" [55] (p. 12). Global competence thus does not refer solely to skills and knowledge. Rather, it describes the mobilization of these very skills and knowledge towards active engagement befitting diverse societies [56]. In this light, intercultural teaching equals teachers' competence "to create a world in a classroom" [54] (p. 34) in order to create fertile conditions for their students to be exposed to multiple points of view and develop plural and multifaceted learning [54]. This means that knowledge regarding both dominant and subordinate groups, including less well-known perspectives, should be infused and included in the curriculum in all types of education, both formal and non-formal [57]. Limited knowledge regarding different languages and cultures can lead to promotion of erroneous stereotypes and prejudices [57] on the part of both teachers and students. Critical, inclusive, anti-racist, multicultural, and intercultural pedagogies can support teachers to increase their awareness about super-diversity, multilingualism, and multiculturalism in the classroom while providing them with practical tools for immediate use [52] that were introduced by this programme. However, many participants felt this was not adequate, perhaps due to their own lack of experience as teachers.



Several participants felt that introducing topics from related areas and disciplines is necessary. More particularly, intercultural mediation could offer understanding and support for emotionally weak or traumatized students, relieving negative emotions such as fear, stress, and anxiety. As one of the main components of intercultural competence, empathy is crucial for being able to build bridges and communicate with these students. Teaching about different cultures and civilizations could enlighten the multicultural perspective of diverse students' identities.

Training in different types of research was one of the participants' main requests. As qualitative research methods appear to be more relevant to research about and for education, training student-teachers in qualitative approaches was the main focus of the programme. However, many among the participants felt that equal training on quantitative and mixed approaches would be beneficial [22] (p. 15).

All of the above dimensions shed light on teachers' needs to become better prepared and trained as teachers in multicultural classes and settings.

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## Appendix A

FIRST DEGREE		Frequency	Percent
Valid	as secondary school teacher	24	30.0
	as primary school teacher	26	32.5
	as language teacher	28	35.0
	Linguistics	1	1.3
	Early childhood education	1	1.3
	Total	80	100.0

Figure A1. Studies.

WORKING EXPERIENCE		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Director of Spanish language academy	2	2.5
	English teacher in the private sector	2	2.5
	as teacher at NGO	14	17.5
	as teacher at public school	41	51.2
	something relevant with the LRM programme	17	21.3
	as an EFL at a frontistirio	2	2.5
	private education	2	2.5
	Total	80	100.0

Figure A2. Working Experience.

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