

# **Intercultural Education on the Move: Facing Old and New Challenges**

## **Conference Proceedings**

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and

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Strand 2: Inclusive Education

Strand 3: Diversity & Human Rights

Strand 4: Migrant & Refugee Education

Strand 5: Digital Learning in Covid-19 Pandemic

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*In memory of Professors Jagdish Gundara, Michele Kahn, and David Coulby*

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James A. Banks, Barry van Driel, Nektaria Palaiologou, Rachel Lotan, George Nikolaou, George Androulakis, Urszula Markowska-Manista, and Leslie Bash

### **Panel 2: Intercultural and Multicultural Education: Research Priorities in the Field**

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## Opening of the International Conference

On behalf of the International Scientific Committee, as its General Chair, we would like to extend a warm welcome to all attendees of the International Conference, "Intercultural Education on the Move: Facing Old and New Challenges," which is organized by the Hellenic Open University together with the International Association for Intercultural Education.

We are deeply honored to have 280 participants from over 20 countries, presenting 190 papers across five main thematic areas, as well as multiple special panels. These presentations cover a variety of thoughts, perspectives and experiences. The IAIE International Conference focuses on the numerous challenges that educators worldwide have faced and continue to face in recent years. Some challenges, such as global climate change and the growing diversity in schools and classrooms, have been on our radar for some time. Others, like the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which has displaced millions of people from their homes, have presented educators with new and unforeseen obstacles. Addressing these challenges places a significant responsibility on the shoulders of educators, who are engaged in preparing future generations to be thoughtful, critical, and responsible global citizens. The central topic of the International Conference "Intercultural Education on the Move: Facing Old and New Challenges," was to reflect on intercultural education and migration policies. "Intercultural Education on the Move: Facing Old and New Challenges" provides a platform for researchers, scholars, and practitioners to share, reflect upon, and discuss how the field can effectively tackle these challenges and progress forward. Our hope is that this conference will inspire new initiatives, ideas, and research that can benefit society and foster a safer, more inclusive, and more equitable world.

Greece plays a very significant role in contemporary discussions about migration and education has found itself at the forefront of Europe's asylum and migration challenges, with a significant increase in arrivals on the Aegean islands during the past five years. Asylum seekers, including many vulnerable individuals, often endure incredibly difficult conditions before, during and after their arrival in Greece. This also relates to the many educational challenges that these individuals, families and communities have. Educational paths have been profoundly disrupted. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated an already challenging situation, particularly in terms of access and inclusion.

This IAIE Conference is dedicated to the memory of Jagdish Gundara, Professor at the University of London and former IAIE President, who passed away on November 10th, 2016, and to the memory of Michele Kahn, Professor at Clear Lake, Houston, who passed away on May 21st, 2019. Both had a lasting impact on the IAIE and will be forever remembered for their commitment and their many contributions to the field.

We are honored to have the participation of delegates from the Ministry of Education and Religion. Specifically, Mrs. Zeta Makri as Deputy Minister has sent her speech regarding the enrollment of migrant and refugee children in Greek public schools. Additionally, the Deputy Minister for Higher Education, Prof. Angelos Syrigos, has sent a note, and Mr. Passias George, General Director of International and European Issues, Homogeneia, and Intercultural Education, has graced us with his presence at the Conference's opening at the Hellenic Open University Headquarters in Athens.

Representing the Ministry of Asylum and Migration, Deputy Minister Mrs. Sofia Voultepsi participated online, delivering a speech on the situation of migrants and refugees in Greece, with an emphasis on the Ministry's policies.

The Conference was inaugurated by Prof. Efstathios Efstathopoulos, Vice President of HOU Academic Affairs, and Prof. Emmanuel Koutouzis, Dean of the School of Humanities.

The first day, October 1st, 2022, commenced with a panel of international experts. We were honored to have Paul Gorski, former Associate Professor of Integrative Studies at New Century College, George Mason University, and Founder of the Equity Literacy Institute, deliver a keynote speech on educating for equity and social justice.

On the second day, October 2nd, 2022, we had the privilege of hosting Prof. Miquel Àngel Essomba Gelabert from the University of Barcelona, a former Commissariat at the Ministry of Education, as our keynote speaker.

Following the keynote addresses, a panel of national and international experts followed, discussing research priorities in the broad fields of multicultural and intercultural education

We would like to once more express our gratitude to all participants!

Nektaria Palaiologou, General Chair, HOU & IAIE Vice President & Barry van Driel, IAIE President

Athens, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022

### **Note for the Proceedings**

This volume includes the full papers related to the presentations of the International Conference 'Intercultural Education on the Move: Facing Old and New Challenges'. These were submitted as whole manuscripts on the Conftool Platform and reviewed by the International Scientific Committee of the Conference.

For relevant references, please always mention the ISBN from the National Library of the Netherlands as follows:

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We hope that this volume offers valuable insights into the current challenges that Intercultural Education faces today, given the refugee crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

As editors of this volume, we would like to thank all the international colleagues who submitted their contributions at the International Conference for the interesting panels, sessions, and discussions that followed.

Also, we would like to thank our colleagues-members of the International Scientific Committee for their valuable assistance in the review process.

Cordially,

Nektaria Palaiologou and Eleni Samsari

Patras, June 2023

# Citizenship Education and International Pupil Mobility: Potential synergies and challenges in Italian Upper Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

The paper presents the results of a section of the research “Civic education and international pupil mobility” in Italy, carried out by Fondazione Intercultura and Associazione “Per Scuola Democratica”. The research investigates the didactical-organizational modalities through which individual international pupil mobility experiences can represent an opportunity for developing citizenship competence. The research involved interviews and focus groups with the teachers and principals of selected high schools, and with experts on inherent research issues. The results constitute the basis for a pilot project for the training of intercultural and democratic competence in Italian upper secondary schools for the school year 2022-23.

**Keywords:** citizenship education; pupil mobility; upper secondary education; democratic competence; Italy.

Contemporary social worlds are challenged by a number of important issues that the “pandemic acceleration” (Cone et al. 2021; Grek & Landri, 2021) and the tightening of global interconnections have contributed to make more pressing. These include the crisis of democracy or the post-democratic era; cultural diversity as a cross-cutting and structural element of European societies; and the emergence and spread of new forms of nationalism (Crouch, 2004).

The worlds of education are undoubtedly called into play amid these tensions. Indeed, the very ideas of justice, freedom and democracy are facing new challenges today. Scholars and practitioners are therefore required to construct cultural visions and actionable practices aimed at understanding and then mending worlds troubled by multiple democratic and educational criticalities (Dewey, 1916; 1938).

The issue of pupil mobility appears particularly relevant in this regard, as it is may be considered as a means to involve the entire school community, allowing the construction and development of intercultural competence, that is a determining component of the competence for a democratic culture (CoE, 2018). In particular, a speculative hypothesis could be made that individual international pupil mobility can constitute a resource for outlining innovative teaching approaches within the delivery of civic education.

This research draws on this premises and hypothesis with the aim at analysing and testing the potentialities of international pupil mobility experiences within the teaching of civic and citizenship education. Through this perspective, a new holistic approach could be developed in order to foster the enhancement of

democratic and intercultural competences in schools. Indeed, the overall objective of the project is to understand how to make the internationalization of schools one of the cornerstones of democratic citizenship education. A new and more comprehensive notion of citizenship has therefore been used that keeps the national and international dimensions together (UNEESCO 2015; CoE, 2018).

In Italy, the teaching of civic education is framed by Law No. 92/2019. Civic and citizenship education has always been considered a “Cinderella” subject in the Italian educational system (Dei, 2002). Several reforms about this curricular area have been carried out but with uncertain results (Palmerio, Damiani, & Caponera, 2021). With Law 92/2019, civic education was reintroduced in the Italian school curricula as an independent subject, with a specific time allocation and mark, to be delivered across the curriculum by selected teachers of the other subjects in every class. This Law has potential as much as limits, among which the absence of attention to the international dimension of citizenship education is one of the main. The Italian school system legally recognizes individual international pupil mobility for one year, usually during the fourth year of upper secondary school. These experiences of long-term learning mobility represent an essential element for fostering the intercultural competence (Barrett 2018) and for allowing an in-depth immersion and experiential learning of different cultural, civic, and political contexts.

The research design encompassed interviews and focus groups with the teachers and principals of selected high schools, identified by their sound experience of international mobility and/or in the promotion of civic and citizenship education. These focused on the modalities through which the mobility experiences can represent an opportunity for developing citizenship competences. The schools involved in the research were selected by Fondazione Intercultura ONLUS and by ANP - National Association of School Principals and High Professionals of the School, and were located in Northern, Central, and Southern Italy. Six institutes in Northern Italy (specifically, in Piedmonts, Lombardy, and Emilia), four Sicilian institutes for the South and one in the province of Rome have joined the research. Precisely, eleven principals of Upper Secondary schools participated in the interviews between June and October 2021, whereas four focus groups with teachers took place between November and December 2021. The semi-structured interviews with the school principals and the focus groups were conducted online, through Google Meet. In both cases, the questions to ask were discussed with and approved by the scientific research committee.

In particular, the goals of the interviews and focus groups were fourfold: (1) understanding how civic education is implemented; (2) framing how the international dimension of civic education is conceived; (3) examining how the students’ mobility experiences are organized and managed; (4) investigating how the return from mobility is structured, in terms of procedures and valorisation of the experience.

Regarding the first aim, i.e., understanding how civic education is implemented, the interviews and focus groups have spotlighted some limitations in its delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic and some issues related to the cross-curricular nature of the subject. In particular, either principals or teachers reported difficulties in the curriculum organisation, in the sharing of methodology and tools, and in arranging occasions to work collaboratively. Regarding the topics and initiatives, the interviewed principals reported a wide range of extra-curricular activities focused on several issues and involving different out- –of-school organisations.

The second topic of the interviews/focus groups was related to the international dimension of civic education in school curricula. Most of the schools involved in the project highlighted that Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and, more in general, the international dimension of civic education, is taught implicitly across the curriculum. All the schools reported to have included the topic of the Agenda 2030 in their programs, in line with the Law 92/2019, which identifies in this subject one of the main focus areas for civic education in Italy. The focus groups with teachers and the interviews with principals underlined a lack of connections between GCED, intercultural education and CCE.

In relation to the ways students' mobility experiences are organized and managed, the interviewees have described three different types of mobility. The first is the short-term mobility, which involves the exchange of a whole class between an Italian school and one abroad. The second type is the individual mobility of foreign students hosted by an Italian school. The third type is the long-term individual mobility of Italian students abroad through agencies and associations. Concerning this last kind of mobility, it is important to underline some aspects. To begin with, there are differences between the mobility experiences coordinated by the agencies and the ones arranged by associations, in terms of organization, costs, and choice of locations. Secondly, according to the interviewees, the relevance of students' socio-economic background is a strong factor that triggers students' choices to leave. Thirdly, the long-term individual mobility experiences are predominantly experienced by students from *liceo*, a type of Upper Secondary School usually attended by students from wealthier families in Italy.

Regarding the fourth topic of investigation, the return from mobility seems to be the most relevant phase of the experience abroad from the point of view of most schools. At this stage, the class council tests and verifies whether and how the returning student possesses the knowledge and competences to pass and be admitted to the next year class (the last one of secondary education). The assessment methods and criteria seem to differ by school. Moreover, returning students are used to reporting their experiences, but each institute has its own format and procedures to give value to it.

As the main evidence of the research so far, findings from the focus groups and the interviews spotlighted a weak relationship between individual international pupil mobility and civic education in the Italian upper secondary schools participating in the project. The institutes involved seem to interpret pupils' international mobility as a "private" experience, that remains and pertains to the individual student (and his/her family) rather than involving the school as a whole. The involvement of the classmates of the student who went abroad in his/her international mobility experience is therefore marginal. The class is mainly excluded from any elaboration, discussion, or reflection on the differences and/or commonalities between the Italian and other countries' contexts.

Hence, the results of this first part of the study pointed out the absence of structured learning paths that link international mobility experiences and civic and citizenship education, involving the whole class/school. Although it seems evident that experiencing and living in a foreign context can represent a key aspect for the development of students' democratic citizenship competences, the experience, by itself, is not sufficient for schools without a comprehensive educational path that can make the best use of its potential.

The next steps of this research are aimed at finalizing a pilot project which designs and develops such a path, devoted to the promotion of intercultural and democratic competences in selected Italian upper secondary schools for the school year 2022-23. This pilot project would attempt to appropriately follow the three stages (before, during, and after) of the mobility experiences combining the individual experiences of international pupil mobility with the collective ones of their peers who remain in Italy.

## Note

This research is part of a larger ongoing research project in which various partners (Fondazione Intercultura and Associazione “Per Scuola Democratica”) are collaborating.

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