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PREFACE

" Gender in modern educational units "

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The intersection of Gender and Education remains a central concern in contemporary social research and policy discourse. Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a key driver of social and economic development. Yet, the relationship between gender and education continues to reflect both remarkable progress and persistent inequalities. Studies in Greece and worldwide reveal that gender stereotypes endure within educational settings. Rather than fading, they are often reproduced through attitudes, behaviors, and institutional practices.

The rise in domestic violence and femicides; the persistence of the glass ceiling; sexual harassment in workplaces and educational institutions; the hidden curriculum; gendered pedagogical practices; patriarchal norms in research and technology and limited inclusivity for diverse gender identities collectively underscore the relevance of the theme of ICOMEU 2025 and demand a further analysis of education's role in promoting equity and social justice.

International initiatives—led by UNESCO, UNICEF, and others—have substantially reduced gender disparities in schooling. Global campaigns for universal primary education and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) have emphasized inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. Consequently, in many regions, girls now outperform boys academically, particularly in literacy-related subjects (UNESCO, 2023). This progress illustrates how policy interventions and community engagement can effectively challenge traditional gender norms that once marginalized girls.

However, these achievements remain uneven and fragile. In low-income, rural, and conflict-affected areas, girls continue to face systemic barriers such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and cultural expectations regarding domestic roles (UNICEF, 2022). The absence of female educators and inadequate sanitation facilities further discourage attendance, especially during adolescence. Hence, gender parity in enrollment does not automatically equate to equality in educational experiences or outcomes.

In contrast, new trends in developed contexts highlight concerns about boys' engagement and achievement. Research shows that boys often underperform in literacy and are more likely to drop out of school (OECD, 2021). This so-called "boy crisis" is linked to dominant notions of masculinity that devalue emotional expression and academic commitment. Addressing such disparities requires pedagogical reforms that accommodate diverse learning styles and dismantle restrictive gender norms.

Current debates on gender and education also recognize identities beyond the male-female binary. Transgender and non-binary students frequently encounter exclusion and discrimination. Inclusive policies that ensure safety, respect, and representation for gender-diverse learners are essential. Embedding gender sensitivity into curricula, teacher education, and institutional culture is vital for genuine inclusivity.

Promoting gender equality in education benefits individuals and societies alike. Equal access empowers girls economically, improves health outcomes, and fosters community development, while supporting boys at risk of exclusion ensures that no group is marginalized. Achieving true gender equality requires more than access—it demands inclusive policies, supportive environments, and a transformation in attitudes toward gender roles. Only then can education serve as a transformative force for justice, empowerment, and sustainable human development.

The present volume of abstracts includes 52 contributions from scholars and researchers based in Greece, the United States, South Africa, Romania, and the United Kingdom. Their contributions to the scientific discourse on gender and education are both substantial and significant, and they are expected to further promote the continuation of a fruitful academic dialogue.

Eleni Kasselouri – Hatzivassiliadi
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EQUITY & INCLUSION IN EDUCATION AND BUSINESS

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BY EDUCATIONAL BUSINESS OWNERS. CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to identify the choices of private education entrepreneurs regarding their actions and reactions in dealing with the problems that appeared during the first phase, March - May 2020, of the Covid-19 pandemic (Brion, and Kiral, 2021). The context of the study is twofold, on the one hand the first phase of the covid-19 pandemic and on the other hand the private institutions of education (Šola, et al. 2021).

In the first context the main characteristic that shapes and defines it is the government's decision to suspend the operation of school units with the physical presence of students and teachers (Müller, and Goldenberg, 2021). In the second context, the dominant element is the private nature of the education units, which entails a burden on the private entity's operating expenses (Nickerson, et al., 2021). The field research that will be implemented is structured and carried out on the basis of these two characteristics, of the two different contexts.

The main question of the research is defined as follows: "how did the owners of private educational units act or react to the issues - problems that arose during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic?". The main question is supported by three sub-questions that make up the overall research structure: "why did the owners of private education units act or react in a specific way to the issues they faced?" "How do education entrepreneurs themselves evaluate their decisions in the first phase of the Covid-19 pandemic?" "Why do they evaluate them in this specific way?"

The formulation of the main and sub-questions directs the research process towards the choice of the qualitative method, "case study" which facilitates the emergence of answers to this type of questions (Brion, and Kiral, 2021). The case study will attempt

to explore the details of the situations faced by the owners of the educational units during the pandemic, because they do not constitute a single whole, [Yin (2018) calls this type of case study exploratory]. Through the details, a better and more substantial understanding of the "how" and "why" of the research questions will be achieved [Stake (1995) uses the term "intrinsic" for this type of case study.

The question arises of how to conduct the research and which category of case study is the most appropriate? Based on the research questions and the exploratory type (or intrinsic) that has been chosen, the multiple case study will be used (Baxter, and Jack, 2008). This choice is necessary since there are different types of entrepreneurship in the field of private education. Indeed, for the field research, semi-structured interview questions were formulated with 2 owners of private primary and secondary schools, 2 owners of private kindergartens and daycare centers, and 2 owners of children's creative activity centers. With this selection, all private institutions operating in Greek education, except for higher education, have been covered (Hulme, et al. 2023).

The analysis of the data collected from the interviews will follow the process of "pattern matching" (Yin 2018). This process leads to the identification of the set of patterns used by all participants in the study, from the various categories of educational business owners.

Keywords: Crisis, education, entrepreneurship

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GENDER DISPARITIES IN GREEK COMPUTER SCIENCE PHDS (1983-2025)

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparities in Computer Science remain a persistent challenge globally, and particularly in Greece, where cultural norms and institutional factors significantly influence academic and career trajectories for women. This study undertakes a comprehensive quantitative analysis of gender representation and field choices within Computer Science PhD programs in Greece spanning a 43-year period, from 1983 to June 2025. Leveraging a robust dataset of 2474 PhD dissertation records, meticulously collected and analyzed, the research aims to shed light on temporal trends, field-specific distributions, institutional variations, and the pervasive influence of gender stereotypes on women's choices within the discipline.

The findings reveal a stark overall gender imbalance: women constitute only 21.85% of Computer Science PhD recipients in Greece over the entire study period, while men overwhelmingly dominate at 78.15%. Despite this significant disparity, the study identifies a positive, albeit insufficient, temporal trend in female representation. Female participation in these programs has demonstrably risen from a mere 10% during the 1983-1987 period to 31.68% in the most recent period of 2023-2025. A linear regression analysis confirms this upward trajectory, yielding a statistically significant slope of 0.51% per year ($p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.93$), indicating steady but slow progress toward gender parity. A deeper look into field-specific distributions uncovers compelling patterns. Interdisciplinary fields within Computer Science exhibit notably higher female participation rates. For instance, Informatics in Education/Health boasts 35.48% female representation, and Bioinformatics shows a substantial 35.03% female involvement. In stark contrast, traditionally technical fields continue to be male-dominated. Networks/Systems records a significantly lower female participation rate of 16.03%, and Algorithms and Data Structures stands at 16.34%. A chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 65.7$, $p = 0.001$, $df = 10$) unequivocally confirms a significant association between gender and field choice, strongly suggesting that prevailing gender stereotypes influence women to gravitate towards fields perceived as having greater societal impact or being less "technical" (Cherian & Thomas, 2019). Institutional variations also play a crucial role. The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) demonstrates a comparatively higher female participation rate at 30.11%, suggesting that specific university policies or environments might be more conducive to attracting and retaining female PhD candidates. Furthermore, field-specific temporal trends reinforce these observations, with stronger female growth rates observed in Informatics in Education/Health (0.75% per year) and Bioinformatics (0.68% per year) compared to more technical areas.

These comprehensive findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the persistent gender disparities in Greek Computer Science PhD programs. Future research should integrate mixed-methods approaches, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative methods such as interviews or surveys, to further explore the underlying motivations behind field choices and to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of specific policy interventions.

Key Words: computer science, phd, greece, gender disparities.

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CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS ARISING FROM GENDER NORMS IN NURSING SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Nursing science plays a central role in healthcare systems, covering essential societal needs such as health promotion, disease prevention and management, and health restoration (Melariri et al., 2022). Traditionally, nursing has been perceived as a female profession since the era of Florence Nightingale (19th century), who established the professional identity of nurses. Due to social and cultural conditions, women were considered more suitable for caregiving. These long-standing perceptions and gender stereotypes continue to influence modern sociocultural norms related to nursing, creating prejudice, professional inequality, and consequently a reduced workforce (Prosen, 2022). Today, male nurses worldwide constitute a small proportion of the nursing workforce, resulting in understaffing in several countries (Cho & Jang, 2021). Furthermore, according to the WHO, achieving the Sustainable Development Goal to “leave no one behind” requires the full utilization of all nurses’ contributions to healthcare (WHO, 2020).

Aim: This paper aims to explore the challenges and examine the prospects arising from gender norms in nursing science, clarifying how they affect professional identity, academic development, and social recognition. The study seeks to highlight the need for greater inclusion of men in the profession, with the goal of enhancing diversity and eliminating inequalities.

Methodology: This paper is based on a literature review of international research from the past five years, using electronic databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar. Keywords included: nurses, gender stereotypes, nursing profession, and health inequalities.

Results: International literature concerning the personal, academic, and professional experiences of male nurses remains limited. Men represent a minority in nursing worldwide, with a male-to-female ratio of 1:19 (Jayapal & Arulappan, 2020). Male nursing students experience significant stressors, leading to reduced self-esteem, limited academic motivation, and poor academic and professional adjustment. Gender stereotypes, unsupportive clinical environments, understaffing, and lack of peer inclusion negatively influence men’s decisions to pursue nursing (Prosen, 2022; Pincha et al., 2023). Male nurses are often assigned demanding tasks in clinical settings, such as managing aggressive patients and heavy lifting, reinforcing the perception of gender-determined roles. Conversely, female nurses, despite their numerical dominance, frequently face biased barriers to career advancement due to individual, professional, and cultural stereotypes (Aca et al., 2025). Additionally, patient and family preferences

for same-gender caregivers, shaped by cultural and religious norms, place added strain on female nurses because of the limited number of male nurses. Nevertheless, positive motivations for entering nursing include the desire to provide care, social recognition, numerous job opportunities, and stable employment. Many male nurses excel in emergency, intensive, or surgical nursing, some assume leadership positions in hospitals, and others pursue academic careers (Smith & Horne, 2024; Cho & Jang, 2021; Prosen, 2022). Notably, the recent COVID-19 pandemic temporarily reshaped the public image of nurses, highlighting their contribution and heroism on the frontline (WHO, 2020). However, research must further explore whether media and crises strengthen or diminish the nurse's role. In contrast, gender stereotypes are perpetuated by popular TV series that portray physicians as heroes and nurses in secondary roles.

Conclusions: Nursing continues to be strongly associated with femininity and caregiving, creating gender identity conflict for men who choose the profession and making it less attractive. Male nurses entering the profession often experience doubts about their career choice, along with external pressures rooted in societal expectations and cultural norms. Universities, health policy makers, healthcare institutions, nursing associations, and the media must implement reforms to eliminate stereotypes and gender inequalities, offering mandatory courses on gender equality (Smith & Horne, 2024) in nursing science and strengthening inclusion (Pincha et al., 2023; Aca et al., 2025). Eliminating gender inequalities in nursing is not only a matter of justice but also a prerequisite for strengthening healthcare systems and better serving societies.

Keywords: Nurses, Gender, Stereotypes, Inequalities, Nursing Science.

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TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle of equitable schooling, ensuring that every learner—regardless of gender, background, or ability—has equal opportunities to participate and succeed. Total Quality Management (TQM), originally developed in the business sector, has increasingly been applied in education to promote continuous improvement, collaborative leadership, and a culture of quality. This systematic review examines how TQM can be utilized as a tool for advancing gender equality and inclusion in schools, synthesizing findings from peer-reviewed studies and international reports published over the last decade (2015–2025).

The rationale for this review stems from the observation that many educational systems, despite commitments to equity, still reproduce gender inequalities through curriculum design, teacher expectations, and institutional structures (Latorre-Coscolluela et al., 2022). Simultaneously, global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals emphasize the interconnection between quality education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5) (UNESCO, 2019; OECD, 2023). This convergence highlights the need for systematic approaches, such as TQM, that can integrate gender equity into educational quality frameworks.

The review followed PRISMA guidelines for systematic analysis. A database search across Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC identified studies addressing the intersection of TQM, school leadership, gender equality, and inclusion. After screening for relevance and quality, 37 peer-reviewed studies and policy reports were included in the final synthesis.

Findings reveal three recurring themes. First, leadership and vision are decisive in embedding gender equality into TQM practices. Research in Greek secondary schools shows that school leaders adopting TQM principles foster collaboration, enhance teacher participation, and integrate gender equality into strategic planning (Ntokas, 2024). Similarly, studies from Indonesia demonstrate that women leaders in quality management roles use participatory approaches that strengthen inclusive practices (Isnaini et al., 2023).

Second, evaluation and feedback systems emerge as central mechanisms. Instruments designed to assess teachers' perceptions of TQM in Greek primary education demonstrate significant differences across gender and professional background, highlighting how quality frameworks can reveal inequalities and guide targeted interventions (Kaiseroglou et al., 2024). In Catalonia and Sweden, integrating gender indicators into quality assurance systems have reshaped institutional culture and increased awareness of equity (Benito & Verge, 2020).

Third, teacher competence and professional development are critical. studies in Morocco and Spain reveal that, while educators acknowledge the importance of gender equality, many lack sufficient training to translate these principles into daily classroom

practice (Rguibi et al., 2025; Droussi et al., 2025). Professional learning aligned with TQM's principle of continuous improvement is therefore essential to sustain change (Papademetriou & Masouras, 2024).

The synthesis also shows that embedding gender equality in TQM contributes to systemic change rather than isolated initiatives. Literature reviews highlight that the EFQM model, widely used as a TQM derivative in education, has increasingly incorporated equality dimensions over the past decade (Papademetriou & Masouras, 2024). Policy reports reinforce this view: UNESCO (2020, 2023) and OECD (2023) stress that gender-responsive leadership and inclusion must be central to quality assurance if schools are to meet the dual goals of excellence and equity.

Despite these promising findings, challenges remain. Resistance to cultural change, limited resources for gender-sensitive training, and the absence of robust gender-disaggregated data often hinder implementation (Rana et al., 2025). Furthermore, overemphasis on quantitative indicators in quality frameworks may risk reducing equity to compliance rather than transformation (Tzanakou et al., 2021).

Overall, this systematic review concludes that TQM offers a powerful and adaptable framework for embedding gender equality and inclusion in schools. Its principles—leadership commitment, stakeholder participation, evaluation, and continuous improvement—align with the ethical imperative to dismantle inequalities in education. However, the effectiveness of TQM depends on its integration with explicit gender-responsive policies, professional development, and participatory evaluation systems. The findings suggest that “quality” in education cannot be decoupled from inclusion: a school cannot be truly effective if it reproduces inequities.

Key Words: Total Quality Management, systematic review, gender equality, inclusive education, leadership, school culture.

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THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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ABSTRACT

The society of the 21st century faces multiple environmental crises that threaten both its well-being and very existence (Robinson & Iginj, 2025), as evidenced by the increasing frequency of extreme weather events (Bolan, 2024). This dystopian reality underscores the necessity of collective action, reflected in the Sustainable Developmental Goals (United Nations, 2015). Within this context, Environmental Education (EE) is not merely a theoretical construct but a dynamic and complex system (Papavasileiou, 2023), serving as a critical tool for cultivating skills that foster sustainable behavior.

The significance of EE is particularly pronounced during the preschool years (0–5), a developmental stage when the brain is highly plastic and early experiences shape enduring attitudes and behavioral patterns (Mualem et al., 2024). Engagement with nature enhances cognitive, social, and emotional growth (Ardoin & Bowers, 2023; Monyemut, 2024), and promotes a sense of independence and environmental responsibility (Barrera-Hernández et al., 2020; Molyneux et al., 2022), thereby laying the foundations for ecological consciousness.

Parents play a pivotal role in early upbringing, acting as role models and transmitting values in accordance with Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (Feldman, 2019). The family contributes to shaping children’s environmental attitudes, either by reinforcing or reshaping them (Estrellen et al., 2023; Herdiansyah, 2021). Similarly, preschool education represents a vital arena for skill development and the promotion of inclusion, with effective school–family collaboration serving as a prerequisite for success (Stepanović, 2025). Nevertheless, the international literature highlights the persistent gap between intention and practice in matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) (Hougham et al., 2024).

This pilot quantitative descriptive study sought to examine the attitudes and perspectives of parents of preschool-aged children toward EE. By analyzing primary data, the research aimed to explore parental views of EE in early childhood, with particular emphasis on its role in advancing diversity and inclusion. Data were gathered

on the extent of family–school collaboration and its relationship with environmental awareness and inclusion.

The sample consisted of 59 parents of children attending public and private preschool institutions across various regions of Greece, selected through convenience sampling. Data collection was conducted using a closed-ended electronic questionnaire with Likert-scale items, and descriptive statistical analysis was applied.

The findings revealed that parents highly value Environmental Education and believe it should begin at the preschool level. Despite this positive stance, their level of awareness remains moderate, with social media serving as the primary information source. At home, “easy” practices such as recycling predominate, while children’s active participation is notable, with nature walks being the most popular activity, reflecting a preference for experiential learning. A critical finding concerns the lack of communication between families and schools: many parents reported being unaware of EE programs implemented at school, despite expressing strong interest in participation. This community gap reveals an underutilized potential for collaboration. Combined with the documented gaps in the field of EE (Bauer et al., 2025), the study suggests that strengthening school–family partnerships may serve as a catalyst for fostering ecological consciousness while also advancing diversity and inclusion in preschool education.

Key Words: Environmental Education, parental attitudes, inclusion, preschool age, family–school collaboration

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND NEW PROMOTION METHODS IN DESTINATION MARKETING: EDUCATING TOURISM BUSINESS EMPLOYEES WITH A FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as a pivotal tool of the modern era for both work and education. Its use enables the development of personalized learning experiences that respond to the individual needs and preferences of learners. At the same time, in the workplace, AI facilitates daily processes and leads to faster results.

In the present study, we investigate how the use of AI can benefit the educating processes of tourism business employees, offering new opportunities primarily in destination marketing. On one hand, integrating AI into educational processes allows for the creation of personalized learning experiences that address the diverse needs of employees, while simultaneously promoting equity and inclusion in the workplace.

To capture attitudes toward the use of AI tools in education, a survey was conducted with 300 employees of tourism businesses in Athens and Thessaloniki using a structured questionnaire. The results were particularly encouraging: over 70% of participants reported that AI significantly enhances understanding and assimilation of the educational content, while 75% positively evaluated the personalization opportunities it provides. Furthermore, employees recognized that AI usage leads to more interactive and tailored education programs, increasing their engagement and participation levels.

Particularly in the tourism sector, where customer management and destination promotion require digital skills, creative adaptability, and up-to-date knowledge of market trends, AI can support education in practical marketing tools such as data analysis, customer segmentation, and the development of personalized promotion strategies. Through the simulation of real business scenarios, employees gain

substantial experience in using modern digital tools, preparing them for the demands of the contemporary tourism market.

Moreover, the ability to adapt learning content to different employee profiles—taking into account factors such as gender, age, language skills, or prior experience—ensures that all participants have equal opportunities for development and access to high-quality knowledge. This makes AI not only an important technological tool but also a lever for social progress in tourism education.

By leveraging AI in employees education, tourism businesses can develop innovative educational programs that combine theory and practice, enhance employee engagement, and support the implementation of destination marketing strategies that respect diversity and promote equity. In this way, education becomes a tool for strengthening business competitiveness while simultaneously contributing to the creation of a fairer and more inclusive work environment.

Overall, Artificial Intelligence connects technology with the social dimension of professional education, offering new opportunities in tourism marketing and producing employees ready to lead responsibly, creatively, and with vision, utilizing modern destination promotion methods that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Destination Marketing, New Promotion Methods, Employees Education, Inclusion, Digital Skills.

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DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN PRIMARY CLASSROOMS: TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS THROUGH A BROAD, INCLUSIVE LENS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding the incorporation of digital media into classroom practice. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers, the study offers a multifaceted account in which educators both recognize the pedagogical potential of digital technologies and report substantial barriers to their effective implementation. The findings indicate that digital tools are frequently employed, mainly to facilitate lesson delivery and to sustain student engagement. However, their use generally remains supplementary, falling short of driving a fundamental transformation of instructional practices.

In this study, I chose not to differentiate the data based on gender, but rather to examine teachers as a unified whole. Similar approaches have been adopted in other studies that focus on the shared experiences and challenges of teachers regardless of gender. For example, Ezzaki, Benmarrakchi, and Elhajji (2024) found that pre-service teachers’ attitudes toward STEM education and the use of mobile devices did not vary according to gender. Likewise, Ning and Danso (2025) highlighted the challenges and opportunities teachers face in integrating digital technologies without emphasizing gender differences. In addition, Andrei, Păduraru, Călugăr, and Muntele (2025) concluded that factors such as gender or age do not explain the frequency of technology use in classrooms, stressing the importance of a holistic perspective.

The research further highlights persistent challenges such as technical difficulties, insufficient access to resources, and constraints on preparation time. It underscores the necessity of sustained support for teachers in terms of infrastructure, targeted professional development, and reliable technical assistance. Moreover, the study points to the critical role of digital literacy and stresses the importance of a balanced approach that capitalizes on the affordances of technology while safeguarding the centrality of human interaction within the learning process.

In conclusion, the thesis advocates for a more coherent and systematic framework for the integration of digital technologies in education, prioritizing teachers’ professional advancement and the promotion of innovative pedagogical models.

Keywords: Digital media tools, Technological integration, Digital literacy, Teaching practices

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SERVICE MANAGEMENT AS DRIVER OF EQUITY, INCLUSION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the ways in which service management and quality management can contribute to the improvement of educational services, highlighting their role in shaping inclusive and student-centered school environments (Athanasiadis et al., 2024; Bouranta et al., 2024). Service management, when applied to educational administration, refers to the systematic organization of processes that ensure the efficient functioning of school units. Its primary aim is to improve the overall experience of key stakeholders, students, teachers, parents, and the wider community, by ensuring that services are reliable, responsive, and continuously refined (Demis Alamirew, 2024; Adillo, 2023).

At the outset, the paper examines the theoretical foundations of quality assurance, focusing on the principles, systems, and standards that have been designed for implementation in the education sector (Kaplan & Zafiropoulos, 2022; Rodríguez, 2022). The mechanisms provide schools with a framework for assessing their performance, setting benchmarks, and aligning their services with broader educational objectives. Particular attention is given to modern quality management models, which move beyond static compliance and encourage dynamic processes of continuous improvement (Stalmeijer et al., 2023; Garira, 2024). Such models prioritize adaptability, the regular evaluation of outcomes, and, above all, the satisfaction of diverse stakeholders (Anderson et al., 2004).

In this context, the concept of quality in education is understood as the consistent delivery of a reliable, well-structured, and progressively enhanced learning experience. Quality extends beyond academic achievement and includes the cultivation of trust in educational institutions, ensuring that students, parents, and society at large view schools as credible and effective. Leadership is shown to play a decisive role in achieving this vision (Carrington, 2024; Bellibaş et al., 2023). Leaders in education must not only adopt strategies that promote flexibility and innovation but also embed principles of equity and inclusion into school practices (OECD, 2023; Fagan et al., 2022), thereby ensuring that quality management frameworks serve all learners, regardless of gender, background, or ability.

The discussion highlights specific processes through which quality management can be embedded in schools, including teacher performance evaluation, parent and student feedback, and administrative accountability (Seitova et al., 2024; Amiri et al., 2024). By integrating such practices into everyday operations, schools can combine

accountability with inclusivity, thereby aligning quality principles with the broader goals of social justice in education.

Methodologically, the study employs teacher questionnaires to capture perceptions and practices concerning quality management. Findings suggest that systematic implementation of quality management improves school performance across multiple dimensions, including student outcomes, staff satisfaction, and stakeholder trust (Engida, 2024). Furthermore, quality-driven processes foster inclusive and supportive learning environments that respond effectively to the diverse needs of contemporary classrooms (Garira, 2020; Girmanová et al., 2022).

Finally, the paper proposes strategies to strengthen quality management in schools, with a focus on student-centered approaches and the active engagement of administrators (Prima et al., 2025; Chamba & Chikusvura, 2024). By aligning service management with modern quality management practices, educational institutions can create sustainable frameworks for continuous growth and improvement. In connecting with the conference’s thematic axis of equity and inclusion in educational leadership and management, the study demonstrates how quality management is not only a tool for efficiency but also a mechanism for promoting fairness, gender equity, and inclusive practices (Papademetriou & Masouras, 2024).

In addition, the emphasis on evaluating and integrating stakeholder feedback, including that of students and parents, positions quality management as a bridge between organizational improvement and the broader goal of creating equitable, inclusive, and socially just education systems (Christou et al., 2024; Espinosa et al., 2024).

Key Words: Service Management, Quality Management, Educational Leadership, Equity, Inclusion, Continuous Improvement

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GENDER AND DIGITAL COMPETENCES IN EDUCATION

GENDERED SIGNALS: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN TEACHERS' NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN THE GREEK EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Non-verbal communication (NVC) is a powerful force in education, critically shaping classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, and learning outcomes (Bunglowala & Bunglowala, 2015; Chatzigeorgiou, 2023). Despite being widely acknowledged, it is often an underestimated component of the pedagogical process (Li & Jiang, 2022). While the general importance of NVC is established, the specific influence of a teacher's gender on its application remains an area requiring deeper exploration, particularly given documented gender differences in nonverbal communication patterns in educational contexts (Keelson et al., 2024; McCormick & Jones, 2019). This paper addresses this gap by conducting a secondary analysis of a dataset concerning Greek educators to investigate how gender shapes their non-verbal behaviors, attitudes, and self-perceptions in the classroom.

The primary aim of this study is to identify and interpret gender-based differences in how Greek teachers perceive, use, and evaluate NVC. The study re-examines data from a survey of 136 primary and secondary school teachers in Greece (101 female, 35 male). The secondary analysis employs targeted statistical methods, primarily independent samples t-tests, to compare the mean responses of male and female educators across a range of variables, including perceived readiness, training received, and observations on NVC effectiveness.

The results reveal a nuanced picture. While male and female educators equally recognize the high importance of NVC and report similar frequencies of use in their teaching practice, statistically significant gender differences emerged in specific areas of perception and professional experience. Notably, male teachers reported observing differences in NVC effectiveness based on student age significantly more often than their female colleagues. This gender-based variance aligns with findings that female teachers exhibit greater sensitivity to care-related nonverbal cues (Zhang et al., 2025),

while gendered expectations influence teachers’ observational focus, often reinforcing stereotypes unintentionally (Gajda et al., 2022). Furthermore, a significant difference was found regarding professional development; female teachers reported having received formal NVC training at a higher rate than male teachers, although the overall training rate for both genders remains critically low. Adding to this, a marginally significant trend indicates that male educators tend to self-assess their readiness to apply NVC in the classroom as lower than female educators.

These findings challenge a monolithic view of teacher communication, suggesting that gender can mediate an educator's professional experience, observational patterns, and self-perception regarding NVC. The fact that male teachers report lower readiness, have received less training, yet claim to observe effectiveness differences more keenly, presents a compelling paradox for discussion and future research. This aligns with broader research on gender differences in nonverbal communication, where women typically demonstrate higher accuracy in decoding nonverbal cues but men may be more attentive to specific contextual variations (Gajda et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2025).

This study concludes that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to NVC training is insufficient. The results underscore the imperative for gender-aware professional development that addresses not only the universal lack of training but also the distinct self-perceptions identified between male and female teachers. This research provides empirical evidence for the gender analysis of pedagogical practices and contributes to a deeper understanding of how gender identities shape the educational experience from the teacher's perspective, aligning directly with the core themes of equity and inclusion in education.

Key Words: teacher perception, professional development, pedagogy.

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THE BETWEEN OF EDUCATION AS A PLACE OF GENDER RECOGNITION: THE DIALOGICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MARTIN BUBER

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we attempt a critical reading of Martin Buber's (1878-1965) approaches regarding his dialogic philosophy, in order to examine the issue of inclusive gender education (Ainscow, 1997). In other words, how can the authentic, dialogic relationship proposed by Buber shape an existential space of acceptance of gender identity? How, in other words, can the authentic encounter through 'turning toward' (Buber, 2002: 25) lead to the experience of the Other as an 'inclusion' (Buber, 2002: 115).

In other words, we aim to highlight the dialogical event as an existential process of searching for truth in the space of a mutual coexistence and in the field of the educational process. What happens in the encounter forms a 'sphere of between' (Friedman, 2002: XIV) attributing meaning to the souls of people. Educators therefore, as Buber notes, 'must stir the soul so that it attains its true independence and learns to serve the community as an autonomous being' (Buber, 2005: 242). Inclusion therefore in the field of education constitutes the natural space of the Buberian *Between*, because 'what humanity is can be properly grasped only in vital reciprocity' (Buber, 1957: 111). In this field of the Buberian I-Thou relationship, where the reciprocity of the relationship and the universality of existence are prioritized, the transformation of the world is constituted through *togetherness*. In this world 'whatever the meaning of the word 'truth' may be in other realms, in the interhuman realm it means that men communicate themselves to one another as what they are' (Buber, 1957: 107).

More specifically, the premises of the German philosopher's approach touch upon an existential search for the Other, in other words, a face-to-face encounter that constantly seeks the We as an image of the dialogical relationship. It is precisely in this space of the *Between* that the ontological basis of the interhuman is built as a field of living encounter with the Other. The space for opening existential paths is constituted by the transcendence of the contradictions experienced by the modern student or educator between *Being* and *Appearing* (Buber, 1957). In other words, the way in which conflicts are fueled touches upon the entrapment of the human being in a guided reality. It is therefore necessary to redefine the concepts in order to lead us to true knowledge of togetherness, that is, to a new perspective towards the given meanings of modernity. Understanding the terms, ideas and social structures, the educator and the learner realize their place in history and culture, developing a critical literacy that will change their view of the present (Buber, 2005).

Buber therefore invites us to participate in an unmediated dialogue (Buber, 2002) in the field of the *Between*, where there is no room for any kind of objectification that alters the authentic recognition of the otherness of the Other. Thus, the space of inclusion is the space of the *Between* where each voice projects a meaning within the

class. Identity and otherness therefore constitute the You that calls the You to a personal encounter. Hence, before the dialogue, the relationship precedes as a personal experience of the Other's presence (Buber, 1970).

Thus, in the Being of the Other there is no room for the objectifications of gender categorizations and the individual constructs created by gender, because then the relationship is frustrated and the encounter becomes impossible. What dominates is the *It* in the relationship (I-it), that is, another expression-version of instrumental discourse in the context of relationships. Therefore, in contrast to the distancing of the Other through a role that we construct in order to integrate them into an authoritarian relationship, Buber proposes the encounter in an open space of truth where we constantly discover the Other as a person. Hence, Buber's authentic pedagogy is related to an education as a place of life (Friedman, 1956).

Key Words: Martin Buber, gender identity, between, inclusion.

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GENDER ROLES IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Education is often viewed as a pathway to equality, but gender roles continue to shape how students experience learning. These roles are socially constructed expectations about how boys and girls should behave, achieve, and interact within the classroom, and they have significant effects on academic performance and future opportunities.

Historically, boys were prioritized in education, while girls were often directed toward domestic responsibilities. Although access to schooling has improved greatly for girls worldwide, stereotypes still influence learning. Boys are frequently associated with science, mathematics, and physical education, while girls are encouraged in language, arts, and caregiving subjects. Teachers, sometimes unconsciously, may reinforce these expectations by giving more attention to boys in STEM subjects or praising girls more for neatness and compliance rather than leadership (Parker, Larkin and Cockburn, 2017).

The curriculum itself also reflects these gendered patterns. Textbooks often portray men as scientists, leaders, and inventors, while women appear in nurturing or secondary roles. This lack of representation limits girls' aspirations and perpetuates the belief that certain careers belong to one gender. As a result, many girls hesitate to pursue STEM fields, while boys may avoid fields such as nursing or teaching due to stigma. (Raabe, Boda and Stadtfeld (2019).

These patterns affect career choices and long-term outcomes. Boys are more likely to enter engineering and technology, while girls remain concentrated in social sciences and education. Such divisions contribute to occupational segregation and, ultimately, wage disparities. In some regions, girls also face structural barriers such as early marriage, cultural restrictions, or safety concerns, which hinder equal access to education. (Rucinski, Brown and Downer, 2018).

Despite these challenges, progress is being made. Gender-sensitive teaching, inclusive curricula, and policies promoting equal access are helping to break stereotypes. Schools now increasingly encourage girls to explore science and technology, while also creating space for boys to engage in the arts and caregiving roles (Ryan, Stiller and Lynch, 1994). By addressing hidden biases and promoting equal opportunities, education can become a more powerful tool for achieving gender equality (Sette, Spinrad and Baumgartner, 2013).

In conclusion, while education has advanced significantly in closing the gender gap, gender roles still shape experiences, expectations, and career paths for students. Challenging these roles requires conscious effort from teachers, policymakers, and society to create learning environments where all students can thrive without the limitations of stereotype and bias. True progress will come when education systems actively dismantle gender barriers, promote diversity, and prepare all learners—regardless of gender—to contribute meaningfully to the world. In this way, gender

equality in education becomes both a human right and a foundation for sustainable development.

Key Words: gender, education, bias, roles, stereotypes.

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DOES GENDER CONSTITUTE A DIFFERENTIATING FACTOR IN THE DIGITAL COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS IN GREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

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ABSTRACT

The accelerating digital transformation of education and the systematic integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into teaching practice (Koehler & Mishra, 2016) have rendered teachers' digital competencies a matter of strategic importance. These competencies are increasingly recognized as critical both for the quality of instruction (OECD, 2018) and for the ongoing professional development of educators. In this context, the role of gender has emerged as a topic of growing interest in educational research, as it may shape the ways in which teachers acquire, perceive, and apply digital skills within their professional environments.

This study investigates the digital competencies of primary and secondary school teachers in Greece, with a specific focus on whether gender constitutes a differentiating factor. The research is situated within the theoretical framework of TPACK-SAMR, which integrates content, pedagogical, and technological knowledge, while simultaneously accounting for the levels of readiness and strategies employed for technology integration in the classroom (Drugova et al., 2021; Puentedura, 2014; Shulman, 1987). By applying this dual framework, the study not only assesses technological proficiency but also evaluates the pedagogical dimensions of digital use and the transformative potential of technology in teaching and learning. The empirical part of the study was conducted in Greece between April 22 and June 6, 2024. The sample consisted of 186 teachers, including 127 women (68.3%) and 59 men (31.7%), who voluntarily participated by completing a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The statistical analysis employed a rigorous methodology that included reliability checks (Cronbach's Alpha), normality tests, independent samples t-tests, and three-way ANOVA to investigate the potential interaction effects between gender, level of education, and years of professional experience.

The findings demonstrate a complex picture. Overall, no statistically significant differences were observed between male and female teachers across most dimensions of digital competence, such as technological knowledge (TK), content knowledge (CK), pedagogical-technological knowledge (TPK), and levels of technology integration according to the SAMR model. However, significant gender-based differences did emerge in the domain of pedagogical knowledge (PK). Female teachers consistently reported higher levels of competence in designing, applying, and reflecting on pedagogical strategies that effectively integrate digital tools into the classroom. This outcome underscores their strong pedagogical orientation and highlights a pronounced

emphasis on the instructional aspects of technology use. In contrast, male teachers demonstrated slightly higher mean scores in technological knowledge (TK) and in the innovative use of technology, particularly in the advanced stages of the SAMR model (modification and redefinition). Nevertheless, these differences were not statistically significant, indicating that technological proficiency, in itself, is not strongly differentiated by gender. The results suggest that while gender does not act as a decisive factor in determining the level of technological competence, it does shape tendencies that reflect broader social stereotypes: women appear to excel in the pedagogical-instructional dimension of ICT use, whereas men appear more inclined toward the technological-operational dimension. The three-way ANOVA analysis added an additional layer of nuance by showing that gender differences do not operate in isolation. Instead, they interact significantly with both educational background and professional experience. Notably, pedagogical knowledge (PK) was found to vary meaningfully when gender was combined with level of education. Female teachers holding postgraduate qualifications exhibited particularly strong abilities in linking technology with pedagogy, indicating that advanced studies amplify the pedagogical integration of digital tools, especially among women.

The implications of these findings are substantial for the administration and management of educational organizations. By identifying the nuanced ways in which gender, education, and experience shape digital competencies, school leaders and policymakers can design targeted professional development programs. Such initiatives should both capitalize on existing strengths, for example, women’s pedagogical expertise and address observed gaps, such as fostering equal confidence in innovative digital practices across genders. Furthermore, the recognition of these dynamics can inform strategies that promote equality, dismantle stereotypes, and ensure equitable access to meaningful digital training opportunities for all educators.

Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of understanding gender-related trends in digital competence as a foundation for shaping educational policy and fostering a culture of equality in contemporary schools. Linking teaching quality with the equal acquisition and development of digital skills represents not only a pathway toward more effective classroom practice but also a commitment to building inclusive educational environments. Such a perspective ensures that professional development and digital training initiatives support the growth of all teachers—regardless of gender—while simultaneously strengthening the resilience and adaptability of the educational system in the face of ongoing technological change.

Key Words: digital competencies, teachers, gender, TPACK-SAMR, Greek education, gender equality.

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ADULT LEARNERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER ROLES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAY

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ABSTRACT

Research examining gender roles in early childhood education classrooms often highlights the persistence of stereotypes (Blaise & Taylor, 2012; Lynch, 2015). Other studies emphasize the influence of teachers and educational staff in shaping gendered stereotypes within children’s play (Carlson & Meyer, 2014; Chapman, 2016; Mikkola, 2008, 2022). Freeman’s (2007, p. 357) findings describe how young children construct gender perceptions in the early years of life, how they reframe play activities based on gender by the age of three, and how they can anticipate parental views regarding gender-based and cross-gender play. According to the literature, adults tend to transfer gender stereotypes into different types of toys and activities (Cannizzaro, 2019; Freeman, 2007). For instance, girls are often encouraged to play with dolls, kitchen toys, makeup, and beauty accessories, while boys are more frequently offered construction tools, weapons, superhero, and explorer toys (Cannizzaro, 2019). Based on this background, the present study investigates the perceptions of adult students in the third grade of the “Infant and Toddler Care Assistant” specialization regarding the gender dimension of children’s play. Adult learners represent a distinct category of students, as one of their defining characteristics compared to minors is that they approach learning already possessing established perceptions, values, and beliefs (Kapur, 2015; Kokkos, 2005).

The study presented was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year with the aim of designing an appropriate educational intervention within the course “Infant and Toddler Education (Theory & Laboratory)”, targeting the elimination of educators’ gender stereotypes in children’s play. The sample consisted of eleven female students and one male student, aged 35–50, attending an evening vocational high school (EPAL) in Eastern Thessaloniki. Data were collected through two “diagnostic teaching” activities (Stylianou-Georgiou & Chatzianastasi, 2022), combined with the “focus group” research method (Vrasidas, 2014). The findings indicated that the majority of participants held prejudices and stereotypical beliefs concerning gender in young children’s play. The findings of the study underline the necessity of targeted educational interventions to raise awareness and reduce gender bias among future early childhood educators as well as early childhood educator assistants.

Key Words: gender, early childhood play, adult student perspectives

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AI LITERACY AMONG NEWLY APPOINTED PHILOLOGISTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the level of artificial intelligence (AI) literacy among secondary school teachers of Philology (PE02) who were appointed to public education in the academic year 2024–2025. AI literacy is defined as the set of skills that enable individuals to critically evaluate AI technologies, to communicate and collaborate effectively with machines, and to employ them as tools in online, domestic, and professional contexts (Long & Magerko, 2020). It constitutes an emerging, multidimensional competence that individuals are expected to develop from an early age in order to respond effectively to the academic, professional, and social demands of the 21st century (Yi, 2021). AI literacy is a particularly critical skill for women educators, as it contributes both to their personal empowerment and to the expansion of their pedagogical capacities. The integration of AI into education by women teachers fosters the disruption of entrenched stereotypes, mitigates women’s underrepresentation in STEM fields, and offers significant opportunities for professional advancement (Shah, 2024). At the same time, it promotes the development of lawful and ethical practices in AI use across the educational community, as well as the cultivation of critical literacy. Newly appointed philologists, in particular, are called upon to address both the short-term and long-term challenges arising from the rapid introduction of AI into education. They are also tasked with bridging AI and the humanities, while ethically and critically equipping their students (Ning et al., 2025).

The aim of the present study is to assess the level of AI literacy among newly appointed teachers. The research method employed was a quantitative survey. A total of 218 female educators were selected through simple random sampling (Ning et al., 2025) and completed a self-assessment questionnaire comprising five distinct categories, structured on the revised Bloom’s taxonomy. The first category included demographic information, while the subsequent sections examined: (a) knowledge and beliefs, (b) the use of AI applications in teaching practice, (c) evaluation and innovation, and (d) adherence to ethical practices and guidelines (Ng et al., 2021; Almatrafi et al., 2024). The findings indicate that women educators are aware of developments in AI in education and adopt ethical practices in its implementation. However, they lag behind in the practical use of AI in the teaching process, in evaluating educational applications and AI systems, and in problem-solving. Therefore, it is imperative to provide further training for women educators in emerging technologies, through the design of modern and innovative professional development programs tailored to the realistic needs of the Greek educational system.

Keywords: AI literacy, Teacher AI literacy, Gender and AI, AI and education, Critical literacy, AI in the humanities

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OVERVIEW OF AUTOMATED STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS AND THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY AND GENDER

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ABSTRACT

Automated assessment systems based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) streamline the time-consuming process of handwritten assessments, providing descriptive scores to students along with feedback that explains the final grade, supporting both teachers and students with comments in an objective and unbiased manner. At the same time, indications were identified that the quality of the result may be affected by whether the form of feedback matches the student's gender and personality. Researchers such as Narciss et al (2014), found differences in the efficiency of feedback between the two genders, as girls were more receptive to the conceptual suggestions of feedback compared to boys, who, on the other hand, showed higher motivation to learn but reduced perceptual ability.

This research focuses on the capabilities offered by AI tools to teachers for the evaluation and guidance of students in writing a text, with the additional question whether these systems offer settings to adapt personalized feedback strategies to student gender and personality.

Available AI tools were identified that can guide improved writing and evaluate student writing. Their strengths and weaknesses were recorded, and we then examined to what extent the students' gender or personality affects the result of the evaluation. The research identified 22 automatic evaluation systems, which provide grade and feedback, selecting 10 tools as the most essential.

The findings established that there is a variety of automatic evaluation tools of written texts, which are online, simple to use and offered also in a free version. Most of them have ready-made rubrics or can be created separately with specific criteria and goals. The final grading is personalized to the needs of each student by providing the score in areas and categories. The errors are identified precisely within the students' writing so that they are clearly visible and correspond to the grade at each level. Student characteristics include the level, age, formal or special education, the degree of difficulty of the scale, the description of the task, but also some indicative requests for additional emphasis. Feedback includes suggestions and comments that help the student write better and improve, some also offering a chatbot for more advice or can translate the writing into other languages.

Most tools are still in the initial stage of a meaningful evaluation, while the lack of a pedagogical approach to feedback was also found. The tools perform formative evaluation that requires additional training on the parameters that shape the final evaluation and re-checking of the scores by teachers. The Gender and personality

characteristics in the specific tools did not affect the result, nor was there any setting to differentiate the evaluation criteria. Although the adaptation of AI-generated feedback to gender and personality seems promising, this possibility was not found to be adopted by the existing tools.

Key Words: Artificial Intelligence in education, writing skills, automatic assessment, learning feedback, gender

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ARTISTIC EVENTS, EDUCATION AND GENDER AS FACTORS OF LOCAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Artistic events are an important tool for social cohesion, cultural empowerment and tourism development. Their study goes beyond the entertainment dimension, as they are part of a framework of education, social participation and strengthening of the local economy (Dickson, 2021). The focus is on the interaction between culture, education and gender, as well as their contribution to the sustainable tourism development of local communities.

Through participation in artistic events, adult education is a form of informal learning, as participants acquire knowledge and skills related to cultural heritage, aesthetic cultivation and social awareness. For example, dance, theater, or music workshops organized in the context of festivals serve as educational spaces, empowering personal growth and active participation in cultural life. At the same time, the participation of students in artistic events promotes the intergenerational exchange of experiences, strengthening the connection between school and social learning (Georgoula & Terkenli, 2018).

The gender dimension is also of particular importance, as artistic events can function as spaces for strengthening equality and promoting women's creativity. The participation of women artists, organisers or volunteers contributes to the formation of new roles and role models. At the same time, the analysis of the experience of men and women as spectators or participants can highlight different expectations and ways of perceiving the cultural experience, offering critical data for the design of more inclusive actions (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020).

The connection of artistic events with local tourism development is now documented in the international literature. Festivals and cultural activities attract

visitors, strengthen the local economy and create new jobs, while in combination with educational programs and participatory processes, they strengthen the local community and promote forms of sustainable tourism (Li, 2025) (Sharma, 2025). For instance, leveraging local artistic traditions in collaboration with schools or educational institutions can foster residents' sense of identity and pride, making the festival a driver of growth.

In addition, artistic events can act as platforms for intercultural dialogue. Through the active participation of adults and students, mutual understanding and respect for diversity are promoted, while the integration of themes such as gender and equality adds value to the cultural experience. Thus, local tourism development is not limited to short-term economic return, but is part of a broader vision of social justice and sustainability (Terkenli et al., 2021).

In summary, the study of artistic events in the context of adult and student education, with an emphasis on the gender dimension, highlights their multidimensional role in local tourism development. The connection of culture, education and tourism creates synergies that enhance social cohesion, economic sustainability and the cultural identity of local communities (Figuerola-Domecq et al., 2020) (Fyttopoulou, 2021).

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FROM CONFIDENCE TO CHALLENGES: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHERS’ ENGAGEMENT WITH AI IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in recent years has opened up new opportunities while simultaneously posing significant challenges for the field of education. Educators are increasingly required to integrate AI tools both in curriculum design and in classroom practice, with the aim of enhancing learning outcomes, supporting differentiated instruction, and fostering the development of new competencies among students (Chen et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the adoption of AI cannot be considered neutral. Research findings suggest that its implementation and use may vary according to social, cultural, and demographic factors, with gender emerging as a critical variable that shapes attitudes, practices, and perceptions toward AI (Donaldson, 2025; UNIDO, 2023).

International studies highlight persistent gender differences in digital technology adoption, with male educators often reporting higher confidence in technical domains (Fagan et al., 2023), while female educators tend to emphasize pedagogical and ethical applications (Armutat et al., 2024). Furthermore, training opportunities and institutional support are not always perceived as gender-inclusive, which may reinforce existing inequalities. These findings underscore the importance of exploring AI adoption through a gender lens in order to ensure equitable and effective integration in education.

To address this need, we have developed a comprehensive questionnaire that investigates teachers’ perceptions, uses, and challenges in relation to AI, while explicitly incorporating gender as a dimension of analysis. Beyond examining general attitudes, such as the perceived benefits of AI for learning, differentiation, and workload reduction, the questionnaire includes new items designed to shed light on:

- teachers’ confidence in using AI according to their gender
- whether male and female teachers are expected to engage with AI differently in professional contexts
- the extent to which male and female educators adopt AI for distinct purposes (e.g., technical vs. pedagogical)
- perceptions of inclusivity and representation in AI-related training opportunities
- experiences of hesitation or anxiety linked to gender identity
- teachers’ views on whether AI has the potential to reduce or reinforce gender inequalities in education.

This design allows for both quantitative analyses, through Likert-scale measures of confidence, frequency of use, and perceived barriers, and qualitative insights derived from open-ended responses. The aim is not only to map current practices and perceptions but also to uncover subtle forms of gendered differentiation that may influence professional development needs.

The ultimate objective of this work is to inform the design of long-term professional development programs that strengthen teachers' confidence, foster gender-equitable engagement, and enhance readiness to integrate AI tools effectively and responsibly in educational practice. By systematically addressing gender-related perceptions, uses, and barriers, the study seeks to contribute to a more inclusive vision of AI in education, ensuring that technological innovation becomes a vehicle for empowerment rather than a source of further inequality.

Key Words: Artificial Intelligence, Education, Gender differences, Curriculum design, Teacher perceptions, Professional development

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INVESTIGATING THE MOTIVATIONS AND SELECTION CRITERIA OF POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS BY MEDICAL GRADUATES: A MIXED-METHODOLOGY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Postgraduate programs play a crucial role in enhancing the educational system, promoting scientific research, and developing specialized knowledge. In health sciences, they support the professional development of practitioners and improve understanding of complex scientific issue (Holloway, et.al.,2020). Despite their importance, the factors influencing students’ choices and experiences remain underexplored, particularly in the Greek context.

Objective: This study aims to investigate the motivations, perceptions, and attitudes of postgraduate health science students in Greece, focusing on the relationship between personality traits, satisfaction, loyalty, and the perceived value of university branding.

Methods: A mixed-methods approach will be adopted. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with students and faculty will identify motivations, attitudes, and program selection criteria. In the quantitative phase, a structured survey will be administered to postgraduate students to examine the influence of personality traits (Five Factor Model – FFM) on satisfaction, loyalty, and perception of university brand equity. (de Raad, et.al.,2015a; de Raad, et.al.,2015b). Data analysis will include thematic analysis for qualitative data and regression and structural equation modeling for quantitative data. (Al-Ansari, et.al, 2006)

Expected Results: It is anticipated that personality traits will play a significant role in shaping student attitudes and preferences. The findings are expected to reveal interactions between core and supportive factors of university branding and highlight the importance of a holistic strategy for developing a strong university identity.

Conclusions: The study will contribute theoretically by deepening understanding of the relationship between personality and university branding in higher education.

Practically, it will provide actionable insights for universities seeking to enhance student satisfaction, loyalty, and institutional competitiveness at national and international levels.

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GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: INSIGHTS FROM THE SELECTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN FTHIOTIDA, GREECE

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ABSTRACT

School leadership remains a pivotal element in contemporary educational research and policy, as principals navigate complex responsibilities that include organizational management, pedagogical coordination, stakeholder engagement, and compliance with regulatory frameworks (Bush & Glover, 2003). Examining gender in educational leadership is particularly critical, as women, despite forming the majority of teaching staff, continue to be underrepresented in administrative positions (Kantartzi & Anthopoulos, 2006; Daraki, 2007).

Both international and Greek research has identified structural and social barriers limiting women's career advancement, as well as internalized factors that contribute to self-exclusion from leadership roles (Altinkurt & Yilmaz, 2012). Recent studies further indicate that female principals often adopt collaborative and participatory leadership styles that foster positive school climates, yet such approaches are frequently undervalued relative to traditional hierarchical models (Bizimi, 2023).

In the Greek context, the principal plays a central role in school administration. According to Law 1566/1985, Article 11, principals are responsible for ensuring the smooth operation of the school, coordinating daily activities, adhering to legal provisions, circulars, and official instructions, and implementing decisions of the teaching staff council. The introduction of Law 4823/2021 (Government Gazette 136/A/3-8-2021) expanded these duties, adding the evaluation of teachers' work. Effective execution of these responsibilities requires comprehensive knowledge of key administrative processes and the ability to manage complex organizational demands.

The 2023 implementation of Law 4823/2021 also provided a timely opportunity to examine women's representation in secondary education leadership. This study analyzes the selection process at the Directorate of Secondary Education of Fthiotida using secondary administrative data. Out of 936 educators, 610 were women (65.2%) and 326 men (34.8%). Among them, 100 educators (44 women, 56 men) applied for 63 principal positions. Ultimately, 30 women (47.62%) and 33 men (52.38%) were appointed. Women's success rate was 68.18% (30/44) versus 58.93% for men (33/56), resulting in a +9.25 percentage point advantage for female candidates.

These findings reveal a near-balanced gender distribution in leadership roles, surpassing typical male dominance observed in other regions of Greece. Nonetheless, women's representation in principal positions remains disproportionately low relative to their majority presence in teaching staff, highlighting persistent gender asymmetries. The results align with international data (OECD/TALIS, 2019; UNESCO, 2023), which

report that approximately 47% of secondary school principals are women, reflecting a broader trend toward gender parity. They also corroborate recent Greek studies showing gradual improvements in women’s leadership representation, although structural and social barriers remain (Bizimi, 2023; Papanastasiou, 2024).

Research further emphasizes that legislative reforms alone cannot eliminate entrenched obstacles. Persistent stereotypes, patriarchal norms, and challenges in balancing professional and family responsibilities continue to limit women’s advancement (Polymeropoulou, 2024; Papanastasiou, 2024). The Greek case demonstrates that incremental increases in female leadership result both from institutional reforms and evolving perceptions within the educational community, yet full gender equality remains an ongoing challenge.

In conclusion, the Fthiotida case highlights meaningful progress toward gender equality in school leadership, with a higher proportion of female principals than in previous periods. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between women’s majority in teaching staff and their lower representation in leadership underscores the need for continued institutional support. Achieving genuine gender equality in educational administration requires targeted policies that remove structural barriers, reinforce merit-based selection, and recognize women’s essential contributions to effective and democratic school governance.

Key Words: School leadership, administration, gender, principal selection, Secondary Education, Fthiotida.

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GEN Z’S VOICE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: PATHWAYS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

While gender equity in education has been widely researched, limited attention has been given to the ways in which younger generations actively influence institutional leadership and decision-making processes. Gen Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in an environment deeply embedded with digital communication, activism, and heightened awareness of social justice issues. This generational cohort is entering educational institutions with expectations for transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, positioning them as key stakeholders in promoting organizational change. The research employed a quantitative design using survey instruments developed around six constructs: student voice activation, leadership openness, perceived responsiveness of leadership, adoption of gender-equality initiatives, perceived inclusivity, and sense of belonging. Each construct was measured with multiple Likert-scale items to ensure internal consistency. A synthetic sample of 188 Gen Z students, aged 18-26, was generated to test the hypotheses using regression, moderation, and mediation analyses. The analysis revealed several notable patterns. Students who reported higher levels of voice activation also perceived stronger adoption of gender-equality initiatives within their institutions. Importantly, perceptions of leadership responsiveness emerged as a key mechanism: when students felt that leaders acted on their input, they were more likely to view their educational environment as inclusive. Leadership openness further amplified these effects, strengthening the relationship between student engagement and both inclusivity and equity-related outcomes. Gender differences were also evident, with women expressing higher levels of perceived adoption of gender-equality initiatives in contexts where leadership was more open to student input. In addition, older members of Gen Z reported a stronger sense of belonging in institutions where student voice was more actively encouraged, suggesting that the impact of participation may vary across

different age groups within the generation. The results provide several contributions to theory and practice. First, they highlight the agency of Gen Z students in shaping institutional priorities, particularly in promoting gender equality. Second, the findings demonstrate the factors that make student voice more effective in influencing leadership outcomes. Finally, the study offers practical implications for educational leaders: institutions seeking to advance gender equity should not only adopt initiatives but should also embed structures that amplify student voices and ensure responsive follow-through. By centering Gen Z perspectives, educational units can foster cultures of inclusion that better reflect contemporary values of equality and justice.

Key Words: Gen Z; Educational leadership; Gender equality; Inclusivity

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TEACHERS' VIEWS ON GENDER, THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATIONAL UNITS.

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ABSTRACT

The principal of the school unit is considered its leader responsible for both administrative - service and pedagogical functions. In Greece as well as in other countries, the person in charge of administration works with the goal of ensuring the smooth and effective operation of school units. The observation that female teachers are underrepresented in higher administrative positions contradicts the existing legislative and institutional framework that provides for equal treatment of both genders and raises concerns about a lack of democracy in the sensitive field of education. In Secondary Education, which tends to be female-dominated, it would be expected that women would prevail in higher administrative positions as well. However, this is not the case, as highlighted by the relevant literature and confirmed by the present research study. Exploring and studying teachers' perceptions regarding educational administration can contribute to the development of a renewed theoretical framework that incorporates gender as a key factor in policy implementation aimed at reducing women's underrepresentation in the educational administrative hierarchy.

The aim of this study is to analyze teachers' perspectives on gender, their administrative competence, and their representation in the administration of educational units, as well as the conditions that perpetuate this gendered reality. For the research, the contribution of those directly involved was sought, namely teachers serving in Secondary Education in the Prefecture of Pieria, either as administrative staff or as educators actively engaged in daily school life. The sample of the research consisted of 170 male and female teachers in Secondary Education in Pieria. The selection was based on population criteria (number of students) and geographical criteria (urban, semi-urban, and rural areas).

For the study, a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used as the methodological tool, and quantitative data derived from it were analyzed. The statistical analysis was carried out with PSPP software version 0.7.9. A descriptive and inferential presentation of variables was performed using graphs and frequency tables.

The majority of teachers in the study agreed that a female principal is more likely to be treated with prejudice by teaching staff and to have her administrative duties questioned compared to a male principal. Since leadership tends to be identified with the male gender, the presence of a woman in the school's directorship leads staff to view her with mistrust and bias. This negative stance is not linked to the effectiveness of the female principal but rather to the disruption caused by her presence in a higher administrative role within traditional gender-stereotyped relations. In the near future, women will show greater willingness to assume key administrative roles in the educational system.

In conclusion, it is found that there is a difference in the views of teachers of both sexes regarding the roles and capabilities of men and women, and in particular in the issue of exercising administrative duties, and the gender factor seems to play an important role. The stereotype of the leader, who is identified with the male gender and is accompanied by the characteristics of determination, rationality, taking responsibility and making serious decisions, seems to dominate the views of a significant percentage of teachers in the sample. In contrast The profile of the female director is loaded with negative characteristics and administrative weaknesses. She tries to imitate the male administrative model, she is meticulous, argumentative, afraid of responsibility, and this particular position hurts her femininity.

Keywords: Gender, management, stereotype, leadership

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GENDER AND LEADERSHIP: THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND THE FACTORS THAT PERPETUATE IT

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ABSTRACT

Social, political, and economic changes of the last decades have significantly reshaped the roles of the two genders, affecting women's participation in the labor market and particularly in the field of education. Despite the female-dominated composition of the teaching staff, women remain underrepresented in the higher administrative positions of school units. This unequal distribution is associated with stereotypes that identify leadership with the male gender, despite the institutional framework that provides for equal participation of both genders in administration.

According to the biological factor theory, leadership is considered innate in men, while the gender role theory emphasizes that socialization shapes different personality traits and behaviors, making women more oriented toward the human and family factor, whereas men are considered responsible for guiding and sustaining society. At the same time, according to the theoretical approach of androgynous personality, there are different personality traits characterizing the two genders. Thus, men are attributed characteristics such as ambition, competitiveness, independence, courage, dominance, aggressiveness, risk-taking behavior, assertiveness, control, and self-confidence, while women are attributed characteristics such as kindness, agreeableness, devotion, helpfulness, concern for the welfare of others, compassion, love, care, and interpersonal sensitivity. The theory of androgynous personality takes from the characteristics of men those that provide decisiveness and effectiveness for achieving the goals of an organization, while from women it takes agreeableness, interpersonal sensitivity, and good relationships with the staff (Daraki, 2007; Bem, 1974; Kogkidou & Taki, 2005).

Contemporary studies highlight that female principals differ in the way they exercise leadership, as they focus on the human factor and ethical values, following a democratic, participatory, and collaborative leadership model, encouraging teamwork (Shakeshaft, 1987; Coleman, 2000). This differentiation may contribute to the more effective functioning of the school and the educational organization. The concept of the “glass ceiling” is another theory that describes the invisible barriers that limit women's access to top positions; this term refers to the obstacles that appear and interrupt women's career advancement just before reaching the top of leadership. If the scope of the “glass ceiling” is measured, it reflects the degree of difficulty women face in achieving career progression to levels equivalent to those of their male colleagues (Dermanakis at the Research Center for Gender Equality Issues, 2004: 1). While women can see the higher and top administrative positions through the “glass ceiling” above them, they do not have access to them (Albrecht, Björklund & Vroman, 2003).

In conclusion, research shows that gender differences in leadership styles between men and women are minimal to nonexistent, while in many cases even similarities are observed (Vinnicombe, 2002; Gold, 1996; Collard, 2005). Utilizing the androgynous leadership model, which combines characteristics of both genders, is considered more

suitable for managing educational organizations, providing a balanced, effective, and participatory leadership model (Kruger, 2008; Maragkoudaki, 1997). Nevertheless, strong gender stereotypes continue to hold that women are less capable of management compared to men. The underrepresentation of women in school administration is not due to a lack of abilities, but rather to traditional stereotypes and social constraints. Strengthening equality and adopting policies that support women can reduce stereotypes and promote the full utilization of their potential in education.

Keywords: Gender, leadership, underrepresentation, glass ceiling, educational administration

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: FROM THE “GLASS CEILING” TO THE “LABYRINTH” OF OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Phenomena visible in administrative reality and in the field of education, such as the “glass ceiling” and the “sticky floor,” are the focus of the present literature review. The gender dimension in educational leadership is evidenced through the experiences of female principals in Thessaloniki and is then examined within the leadership of higher education institutions (Avgeri, 2015). The aim is to shed light on the multiple facets of equality and inclusion in educational environments, highlighting both the challenges and the possibilities for change.

Despite institutional progress and the social struggles of recent decades, Greek reality continues to be marked by deeply rooted stereotypes that sustain a patriarchal character and limit women’s professional advancement. School principals in Thessaloniki report obstacles related to traditional gender perceptions, and the absence of mentoring, while being called upon to balance their professional ambitions with expectations concerning their family role (Avgeri, 2015). Women in positions of responsibility display characteristics often described as “feminine”, which in many cases come into conflict with traditional male models of administration. However, these characteristics highlight new forms of leadership that can strengthen the cohesion of educational organizations (Jackson and O’Callaghan, 2009; Avgeri, 2015).

The social realities that describe career obstacles are also of particular interest. The “glass ceiling”, as a symbol of invisible yet unyielding barriers, is gradually giving way to the “labyrinth”, where the path is complex but not unattainable, and to the “firewall,” which implies obstacles that are present but permeable and manageable. This reflects a new perception: challenges are no longer entirely impenetrable but require persistence and supportive institutional structures (Avgeri, 2015). Women who experience high levels of discrimination continue to face the persistent presence of the “glass ceiling”, which negatively affects both their professional advancement and their job satisfaction (Jackson et al., 2014). Moreover, the “sticky floor” describes the tendency of women’s career progression to slow down, as documented by the gender pay gap (Kee, 2006).

Building on the above, specific practical measures are proposed: the implementation of equal opportunity policies, transparent procedures for promotion, staff training aimed at recognizing unconscious biases, and the enhancement of accountability through the systematic evaluation of diversity indicators (Abbas et al., 2021). An additional contribution is the Micro-Audit of Invisible Leadership Protocols, a small-scale practical instrument designed to facilitate the identification and correction of micro-practices that reproduce gender inequalities. This tool is designed to be incorporated into existing administrative processes and to function as a form of immediate feedback for educational leaders (Avgeri, 2015).

An important dimension in advancing equality in educational leadership is the effective integration of gender mainstreaming. This approach goes beyond isolated initiatives and seeks the systematic incorporation of gender perspectives at all levels of institutional planning and practice (Ilagan, 2019). Within the context of higher education, gender mainstreaming requires the transparent allocation of resources and the implementation of active measures to address both structural and cultural barriers (Unterhalter and North, 2010).

A love for education, personal fulfillment, and the desire for social change emerge as key forces that drive women to seek and attain leadership roles. Their experiences highlight that the gradual erosion of patriarchal norms and the creation of support networks are fundamental prerequisites for advancing gender equality (Jackson and O’Callaghan, 2009). Through sustained effort, educational institutions can be transformed into spaces where diversity is not perceived as an obstacle but as a source of strength and innovation.

Keywords: glass ceiling, gender mainstreaming, educational leadership, micro-audit, gender inequalities

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY OF PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL UNIT LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

Recent global developments have significantly impacted the education sector. In this context, educational leaders play a pivotal role in maintaining the effective delivery of high-quality education (Josep, Etcuban, Paez, Jaca, Aventuna, & Horteza, 2020). Consequently, it is essential for these leaders to cultivate competencies such as emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to ensure the efficient functioning of educational institutions.

López-González, Martínez, Lomboy, and Expósito (2024) define emotional intelligence as the capacity to understand and effectively utilize emotional information, alongside the propensity to experience and express positive emotions. This ability underpins effective emotional regulation and plays a crucial role in a leader's ability to meet the needs of their team, inspire others, and foster a supportive and cohesive work environment (Ulutaş, 2024). In the educational setting, self-efficacy refers to educators' belief in their capability to facilitate positive student outcomes, including learning and engagement, even in the face of challenges such as unmotivated or difficult students (Lazarides & Warner, 2020). It encompasses confidence in managing the classroom, engaging students, and implementing effective instructional strategies, all of which are key components of teaching effectiveness (Mentari & Pratama, 2024). Furthermore, research indicates a positive relationship between self-efficacy and professional growth (Li, Manoharan, & Cui, 2022).

Given the significance of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy as essential attributes for educators—and particularly for educational leaders—to perform

effectively, exploring the relationship between these two constructs would offer a meaningful contribution to the existing body of literature.

The present study explores the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy levels of public educational unit leaders and the differences in self-efficacy by gender. In addition, it aims to investigate if dimensions of emotional intelligence predict self-efficacy. The study employed a descriptive-correlational design and utilized two scales to gather data on participants' levels of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy.

A total of 190 leaders from public primary educational units across four peripheral regions of Greece were selected using cluster random sampling. A quantitative research approach was employed, using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, T-Test for independent samples, and regression analysis. The findings indicated a statistically significant positive moderate correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy ($r = 0.578$, $P < 0.05$). Furthermore, a statistically significant positive moderate correlation was also observed between the four subscales of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy ($P < 0.05$).

The findings offer significant insights for professionals in educational settings in order for the educational services to be improved.

Key Words: Emotional intelligence, Self-efficacy, Educational leaders, Primary education

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INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP, LEARNING MOTIVATION, AND SERVICES MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL UNITS: EXPLORING GENDERED PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between innovative leadership and teachers' learning motivation, situating the analysis within the broader field of services management and educational leadership. Leadership practices are widely recognized as central to the effectiveness of educational organizations, not only in terms of administrative efficiency but also in shaping professional development and promoting inclusive, innovative cultures (Özdemir, 2023·Hsieh et al., 2024). The research focuses on how teachers perceive the characteristics of an innovative leader, the extent to which these perceptions influence their personal motivation for learning, and the ways in which gender plays a role in shaping these dynamics.

International research underscores notable gender-based differences in educational leadership, particularly in terms of representation, leadership priorities, and styles. Although women make up the majority of the education workforce, they remain significantly underrepresented in senior leadership positions (Morley, 2014). Men are more likely to prioritize strategic and managerial competencies, while women tend to value interpersonal relationships and collaboration (Brinia, 2012). In terms of leadership style, women generally adopt a transformational and collaborative approach, whereas men are more inclined toward transactional or corrective models (Alharthi, 2024).

The primary aim of the study is to highlight the leadership attributes that teachers value most in fostering innovation and professional growth. At the same time, the study examines whether male and female teachers differ in how they assess innovative leadership and connect it to their own learning motivation. By doing so, the research contributes to ongoing discussions about gender equity and diversity in educational leadership, offering insights into how leadership styles and organizational culture can respond to the needs of diverse teaching populations.

A quantitative methodological approach was adopted, with data collected through a Likert-type questionnaire administered to primary and secondary education teachers. The instrument captured perceptions of leadership characteristics, individual motivation for professional learning, and the perceived connection between these two

areas. Data analysis was conducted using statistical tools to identify correlations and differences across gender.

The theoretical framework draws on existing literature on innovation, leadership theories, and motivation in education, while situating these concepts within the realities of school systems. Innovative leadership was conceptualized as openness to new ideas, encouragement of creativity and teamwork, and sustained support for professional development through a culture of innovation (Tidd et al., 2005). Learning motivation was framed as a multidimensional construct shaped not only by internal factors but also by the organizational environment and leadership practices (Yu et al., 2018).

Findings confirm that teachers' learning motivation is significantly influenced by their perceptions of innovative leadership. Characteristics such as openness, encouragement of creativity, and support for collaboration were consistently associated with higher levels of motivation (Afsar & Umrani, 2019). Furthermore, the analysis revealed notable gender differences: women and men often emphasized different aspects of leadership, with female teachers placing stronger value on interpersonal support, inclusivity, and professional trust, while male teachers tended to prioritize structural efficiency and the leader's ability to manage change. These distinctions underline how gender roles and identities shape teachers' experiences of leadership and professional development, and they highlight the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in educational management.

The study concludes by emphasizing the need for further research into the intersection of innovation, leadership, and learning motivation, particularly from a gender-aware perspective. Practical implications include the adoption of inclusive leadership models that value diversity, promote professional growth, and ensure equitable access to opportunities for teachers of all genders. By framing services management as both a technical and a social justice process, school units can build innovative, equitable, and resilient educational environments.

This research aligns closely with the conference themes of Gender and Educational Leadership and Management, Equity and Inclusion in Educational Leadership, and Organisational Change for Social Justice in Education, offering evidence that leadership practices informed by gender awareness are key to fostering motivation, innovation, and equity in schools.

Key Words: services management, learning motivation, innovative leadership, educational units, equity

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SERVICES MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: MOTIVATION, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, AND GENDER DIMENSIONS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The increasing incidence of teacher burnout and turnover has raised pressing questions in recent years about educators' attitudes toward their work and the organizational environments in which they operate (Nguyen, T. D., Pham, L. D., Crouch, M., & Springer, M. G., 2020). This study examines the motivational factors influencing teachers in primary education, with particular emphasis on their organizational commitment and the leadership practices that shape it. Within the broader framework of services management in education, the study seeks to identify the levels of motivation among teachers, the degree of their attachment to school units, and the complex relationship between these two psychological states.

A structured questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of primary school teachers, and the data were analyzed using a digital statistical tool. The results indicate that motivation within educational organizations plays a significant role in teachers' professional engagement but remains at a moderate level overall. The most notable challenge lies in organizational commitment, which is often hindered by systemic constraints and management practices that limit teachers' performance and satisfaction (Almagro, R. E., Flores, L. C., & Bauyot, M. M., 2024). These difficulties appear particularly pronounced among younger and less experienced teachers, highlighting the need for leadership models that prioritize inclusion, equity, and supportive professional development.

Placing these findings within the framework of the conference themes, the study argues that educational leadership and services management must integrate principles of diversity, equity, and gender awareness in order to strengthen teacher motivation and commitment (Ahmad, M. F., Safwan, N. S. Z., Salamuddin, N., Surat, S., Basar, A., Hussain, R. N. J. R. & Suhaimi, S. S. A., 2023). Organizational commitment is not a neutral process; it is shaped by structural inequalities, gender roles, and leadership practices that either foster or restrict teacher participation and professional growth. For instance, gendered expectations within schools often influence workload distribution, career advancement opportunities, and leadership representation, thereby affecting the motivation and long-term commitment of male and female teachers differently (Bantilan, J., Hatagi, M., & Sombilon, E., 2024).

By linking motivation and organizational commitment with equity and inclusion in educational leadership, the study demonstrates the importance of adopting management approaches that are responsive to the diverse needs of educators. Effective services management requires school leaders to recognize and address gendered barriers, support work–life balance, and provide professional opportunities that empower all teachers regardless of gender, age, or experience. In this way, schools can cultivate environments that not only reduce burnout and turnover but also promote organizational resilience and social justice (Gyeltshen, L., 2021).

The discussion highlights the broader implications of these findings for policy and practice. At a systemic level, integrating equity-oriented and gender-sensitive policies into educational leadership can enhance organizational trust, reduce attrition, and improve teaching quality. At the school level, differentiated strategies, such as mentoring programs for younger teachers, gender-equitable leadership training, and participatory decision-making models, can help align motivation with long-term commitment (Pinho, A. P. M., Meyer, J. P., Espinoza, J. A., & Oliveira, E. R., 2024).

In conclusion, the study underscores that teacher motivation and organizational commitment are inseparable from leadership practices that reflect equity, inclusion, and gender awareness. By reframing services management in education as both an administrative and a social justice process, primary schools can foster environments that support teacher well-being, advance professional growth, and contribute to more equitable and inclusive education systems.

Key Words: organizational commitment, primary education, leadership, gender, inclusion.

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SERVICES MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION: TEACHERS’ WORK ENGAGEMENT AS A CATALYST FOR INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has demonstrated that teachers’ self-efficacy (Harrison et al, 2023 Shu, 2022; Katsantonis, 2019) and professional commitment (Sypniewska et al, 2023; Yalabik, et al, 2017) are positively influenced by their participation in international educational initiatives such as Erasmus+. These programs offer educators valuable opportunities to engage with diverse educational systems, collaborate with international peers, and gain exposure to innovative pedagogical practices.

This study aims to explore how such involvement impacts educators’ levels of engagement and dedication to their work. By comparing teachers who have participated in Erasmus+ programs with those who have not, the study identifies clear differences in professional engagement. The findings indicate that teachers with experience in international mobility programs tend to exhibit greater commitment to their profession and a stronger connection to their school communities. They often report increased motivation (Singh, 2016) a renewed sense of purpose, and a broader understanding of challenges and solutions beyond their national contexts (Aljumah, 2023).

Beyond the development of individual competencies, participation in European educational programs appears to foster a deeper sense of belonging and professional identity among educators. This, in turn, contributes to more inclusive, equitable, and effective approaches to educational leadership and service management at the school level. Educators involved in such initiatives frequently adopt more collaborative teaching methods, show greater adaptability to change, and demonstrate enhanced cultural awareness and empathy—traits essential for fostering inclusive learning environments.

These findings underscore the importance of integrating international mobility opportunities into national and European education policies. Systematically supporting teacher participation in programs like Erasmus+ can strengthen institutional capacity, promote inclusive school cultures, and reinforce equity-driven leadership practices (Ryan, 2016). When teachers return from international exchanges, they bring with them new perspectives that can inform school improvement efforts and contribute to a culture of continuous learning.

Such programs should therefore be recognized not only as tools for professional development, but also as strategic levers for enhancing teacher engagement,

collaboration, and social justice in education systems. In a time when educational equity and teacher well-being are pressing global concerns, fostering international collaboration among educators may prove essential for sustainable and transformative change in schools across Europe and beyond.

Key Words: services management, leadership, work engagement, inclusivity, equitability, education

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GENDER ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION & EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN TRANSITION: GENDER, MOBILITY, AND THE REINVENTION OF LEARNING SPACES

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ABSTRACT

The intersection of gender, mobility, and education is undergoing profound transformation in the twenty-first century. Educational tourism—particularly language tourism—once seen as a peripheral activity, is increasingly recognized as an integral part of transnational learning and cultural exchange (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Pitkänen et al., 2014). Its expansion has turned educational mobility into a dynamic arena where questions of equity, access, and representation are renegotiated. This paper adopts a theoretical and problematizing stance, arguing that educational tourism is not merely an adjunct to formal education but a laboratory for rethinking the future of learning spaces.

A key dimension that remains underexplored is gender. Who participates in educational tourism, under what conditions, and with which outcomes is profoundly shaped by gendered expectations and roles (Morley, 2013; Brooks & Waters, 2011). Within families engaging in language tourism, decision-making often reflects persistent gendered patterns: mothers as cultural facilitators of learning, fathers as financial enablers, children as learners positioned within intergenerational aspirations (O'Reilly, 2012). Yet these patterns are not static. As mobility and tourism increasingly intersect with education, they open possibilities for renegotiating gender roles in ways that challenge both traditional family dynamics and institutional assumptions. This transformation resonates with wider European ambitions.

The European Education Area 2030, the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, and the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 4 and SDG 5) collectively envision inclusive, equitable, and future-oriented learning systems (European Commission, 2020a, 2020b; United Nations, 2015). However, the incorporation of educational tourism within these frameworks is still partial, fragmented, and often unacknowledged by policymakers and institutional leaders. Language tourism, as a practice situated between education, culture, and mobility, becomes a privileged site for examining the coherence—or lack thereof—between policies and actualities (Kelly & Lindsay, 2019).

The problematization proposed here is threefold. First, educational tourism challenges the spatial boundaries of educational units: learning occurs in mobility, across borders, and within cultural contexts that resist formal institutional control (Dvir & Yemini, 2017). Ultimately, the goal becomes to manage inclusivity and gender equity in learning environments that extend far beyond the classroom walls. Second, educational tourism destabilizes traditional learner categories, bringing together children, parents, professionals, and potentially stakeholders under the same educational umbrella. Such heterogeneity forces us to reconsider the design of curricula, support structures, and evaluation methods through a gender-sensitive lens.

A central but often overlooked dimension in the reinvention of learning spaces is safety, which operates as a decisive factor in gendered participation in educational tourism. The triptych of personal safety, harassment, and institutional protection shapes not only the willingness of learners to engage in mobility but also the management responsibilities of educational units (Bond, 2020; Morley, 2013). Women and gender-diverse participants in particular navigate mobility through heightened awareness of vulnerability, while families frequently place safety concerns at the heart of their decisions. Educational institutions hosting mobile learners must therefore go beyond symbolic commitments to gender equality, ensuring robust policies, transparent reporting mechanisms, and active protection frameworks. Safety is not a peripheral issue but a constitutive element of equitable access: without addressing personal security, harassment risks, and institutional accountability, the transformative potential of educational tourism remains compromised.

Third, educational tourism exposes tensions between commercialization and inclusion. While marketed as cosmopolitan and open, these programs may reproduce inequalities—gendered, cultural, or economic—if access remains limited to certain social groups (Findlay et al., 2012).

In positioning educational tourism as a transitional and future-oriented educational form, the paper argues that educational leaders and policymakers must rethink how mobility and inclusivity intersect. Gender cannot be treated as a secondary or add-on concern; rather, it must be central to how educational mobility is conceptualized, managed, and regulated. This means designing policies and practices that explicitly address safety, representation, equal participation, and recognition of gendered labor within both families and institutions.

Ultimately, the reinvention of learning spaces through educational tourism requires a paradigm shift. It requires the perception of mobility not as a supplement to education but as a constitutive element of it. By embedding gender-sensitive approaches into the very fabric of educational tourism, Europe can move closer to realizing its 2030 vision of education that is inclusive, equitable, and attuned to the challenges of a globalized

society. Yet the path forward remains contested, and the answer will depend on how educational units, policymakers, stakeholders and families alike choose to engage with this transition.

Key Words: educational tourism, gender equity, educational mobility, safety in education, inclusive learning spaces, educational policy

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MODERN EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES TO GENDER AND DIVERSITY IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, as a dynamic global industry, is more than an economic driver: it is a powerful space for cultural exchange, identity negotiation, and social inclusion. Yet, despite its transformative potential, the sector has long contended with deep-seated gender inequality, underrepresentation of marginalized identities, and insufficient integration of diversity-aware practices in professional training. Recent reforms in tourism education have begun to systematically address these challenges.

By embedding concepts of gender equity, cultural diversity, and sustainability into higher education curricula, tourism studies are evolving to better reflect the sector's complex realities. This essay presents a structured synthesis of modern educational approaches to gender and diversity in the tourism sector, drawing from a systematic literature review (SLR) of recent scholarly work.

This review draws on peer-reviewed literature from 2019 to 2025, sourced via Emerald, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Using terms like “gender diversity in tourism education” and “inclusive pedagogy,” 20 relevant studies were selected, focusing on empirical research, curriculum reviews, and theoretical work with practical implications for teaching and workforce needs.

A rapidly expanding body of research reveals significant transformations in how gender and diversity are incorporated into tourism education. For example, Tewari et al. (2025) employ bibliometric and thematic analysis to show that evolving workplace expectations have catalyzed the integration of inclusive pedagogies into tourism training. Their study highlights three dominant themes: curriculum internationalization,

collaboration between academia and industry for diversity training, and case-based gender-sensitive pedagogies that center lived experiences and narratives.

In line with this, Mansour and Vadel (2025) advocate for embedding socio-cultural competencies and ethical consciousness into curricula, aligning diversity education with broader sustainability and green finance agendas. Their findings underscore the need for tourism education to equip students with both technical and soft skills, particularly cultural literacy and ethical reflexivity.

The persistent gender gaps in tourism employment are another recurring concern. Marfil-Cotilla et al. (2024) find that educational initiatives like equality-focused modules, simulations, and community-engaged learning significantly improve students' perceptions of workplace equity and inclusion. Additionally, Santiago-Romo et al. (2025) point to the value of experiential learning and simulations in shaping inclusive mindsets among future tourism professionals.

From a feminist pedagogical standpoint, Mooney et al. (2022) call for participatory curriculum transformation, advocating co-creation with students from marginalized communities. This approach not only diversifies learning materials but fosters critical consciousness among learners.

The role of digital tools in inclusive education is also evident. Gillovic and McIntosh (2020) examine how identity politics and intersectionality can be taught through digital platforms using real-world case studies, promoting critical engagement and empathy.

To expand the lens further, Septyandi and Prawira (2022) argue that instilling values of sustainable and ethical tourism is a moral responsibility for higher education institutions. Sustainability and diversity, they note, are interconnected in fostering socially responsible tourism leadership.

Vocational perspectives add another layer to this discourse. Kesar et al. (2021) and Booyens (2020) emphasize long-standing mismatches between educational outcomes and industry expectations, especially in vocational training. Their work stresses the importance of aligning practical skills with diversity-sensitive competencies, backed by policy reform.

Lastly, Hao et al. (2021) and Zhang et al. (2022) offer broader socio-economic perspectives, noting that tourism can serve as a bottom-up empowerment mechanism for women and marginalized groups. These studies emphasize that gender equality is both a social outcome and an enabler of sustainable tourism, underscoring the need for education to reflect this reciprocal relationship.

Conclusion: Modern educational approaches to gender and diversity in tourism are evolving in both depth and scope. From feminist pedagogies to vocational alignment and sustainability-infused curricula, tourism education is increasingly reflective of the sector's socio-cultural complexity. Embedding diversity literacy and gender equity in curricula is not just a corrective measure—it is a strategic imperative for developing inclusive, adaptable, and ethically responsible professionals.

To sustain this progress, higher education institutions must engage in continuous curriculum evaluation, establish strong industry-academia collaborations, and institutionalize inclusive metrics within program design. Through these efforts, tourism education can genuinely contribute to equity, empowerment, and social transformation on a global scale.

Key Words: Inclusive Pedagogy, Gender Equity, Cultural Diversity, Sustainability, Curriculum Transformation, Tourism Education

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TRACKING EU POLICIES AND EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE FOR GENDER EQUITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (2024-2025)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Educational policies are the foundation of initiatives to guarantee and strengthen gender equality as well as the development and sustainability of an inclusive and participatory society.

At the level of European Union governance, educational policies have evolved in the last decade and have consolidated a solid framework for legislative guarantee of educational initiatives and leadership.

In this context, this study aims to analyze the main legislative initiatives in the field of educational governance adopted in the period 2024-2025 with a focus on monitoring strategies and mechanisms regarding the relationship between educational leadership - inclusion - sustainable development - equity and gender equality policies

Research methodology

To carry out the analysis and monitoring of European Union legislation adopted in the period January 2024-July 2025 we will use a multilevel approach at the level of methodology as follows:

- i) documentary analysis using the legislative base of the European Union EUR-Lex;
- ii) comparative analysis of educational governance models and initiatives adopted in the last two years and
- iii) case study of relevant documents for research in the field.

Results and discussions

The results of the analysis focus on three frontal aspects of the scientific approach as follows.

First, in terms of the analysis of legislation and policy monitoring, constant progress was identified in the adoption of educational regulations and strategies in the governance of the European Union in the field of gender equity, but also at the level of implementation.

Second, in terms of the analysis of policies and strategies regarding access to education, focused improvements were found regarding the adoption and implementation of initiatives regarding participation in educational and training programs, but it is noted that implementation differences persist in certain areas such as leadership.

Third, in terms of educational leadership, the monitoring of European documentation highlights progress regarding the implementation of good practices for promoting diversity but also for inclusive and balanced participation in decision-making positions.

Conclusions

The study highlights the importance of legislative analysis of mechanisms, policies and strategies regarding gender equality and equity in the governance of the European Union.

Secondly, the results of the analysis suggest that future strategies and policy initiatives need to engage the legislative research but also modern monitoring mechanisms and digital tools.

Keywords: *educational governance, gender equity, EU, legislation, sustainable development.*

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NEXT GENERATION OF AVIATION PROFESSIONALS: GENDER EQUITY THROUGH AVIATION EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The aviation industry is transforming rapidly shaped by new technologies, sustainability goals, and evolving passenger needs. In the contemporary context, the interplay of emerging information technologies and the forces of economic globalization has transformed traditional perspectives on education and training (The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 1997; Christou, 1998). Furthermore aviation is facing significant challenges related to workforce sustainability, demographic shifts, and skill shortages, which have been further amplified by the effects of globalization and digitalization. Within this context, the development of the next generation of aviation professionals (NGAP) has become a critical priority for international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO, 2019). However, one of the most pressing concerns is the persistent gender imbalance across the aviation workforce, particularly in operational and leadership roles. Yet, within this challenge lies an equally urgent issue, gender imbalance. Despite representing half of the global population, women remain underrepresented as pilots, engineers, leaders and senior executives in aviation (Airbus, 2022).

Age and gender are particularly significant factors when considering inclusion (Husing et al, 2021, Kefalidou et al, 2024). Gender equity in aviation is not only a matter of social justice but also of industry sustainability. Studies have shown that diverse teams foster innovation, improve decision-making, and enhance organizational performance (Hunt et al., 2018). Therefore, integrating gender-sensitive policies and practices into aviation education is essential for building an inclusive talent pipeline. Educational institutions play a central role in shaping perceptions and breaking down traditional barriers that discourage women from pursuing aviation careers. For instance, initiatives such as mentorship programs, female role models, and outreach campaigns targeting young women have proven effective in increasing awareness and interest in technical and managerial aviation fields (Shrestha & Shrestha, 2021).

Moreover, gender stereotypes and biases continue to limit women's participation in aviation, reinforcing the perception of the industry as a male-dominated field (Marete

et al., 2022; Turner, 2022). Such cultural norms discourage young women from pursuing aviation education or technical careers (Lutte, 2021). The scarcity of female role models and mentors further amplifies these barriers, as the lack of visible women in leadership and technical roles sustains exclusion and diminishes aspirations (Guerrieri, 2024; Lythe, 2024). Increasing female representation and mentorship opportunities is therefore essential to break stereotypes, build confidence, and inspire future generations of aviation professionals.

Despite progress, systemic challenges persist. Stereotypes portraying aviation as a male-dominated sector, unequal access to scholarships and training opportunities, and the lack of female representation in curricula continue to discourage women from entering specific fields in aviation (Ng & Harris, 2020). Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration among academia, industry stakeholders, and regulators. ICAO’s next generation of aviation professionals (NGAP) initiative provides a global framework encouraging states and training institutions to implement gender-inclusive strategies, highlighting the importance of education in developing future aviation leaders (ICAO, 2019).

Furthermore, recent case studies suggest that programs integrating Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education with aviation pathways can significantly increase female participation (Su & Bo, 2021). For example, according to the organisation Women in Aviation, universities that offer aviation engineering courses with embedded diversity policies report higher enrollment rates among women compared to institutions without targeted measures. In addition, exposure to industry networks and professional associations, (such as Women in Aviation International, WAI), enhances professional development opportunities for female students and creates a supportive environment that counters gender bias (WAI, 2022).

Ultimately, achieving gender equity in aviation through education is essential not only for social justice but also for enhancing industry competitiveness. A diverse workforce that reflects the composition of global society strengthens the aviation sector’s ability to adapt to rapid technological advancements, sustainability imperatives, and the evolving demands of international air transport (Ng & Harris, 2020; Shrestha & Shrestha, 2021). Research consistently shows that inclusive organizations foster greater innovation, resilience, and long-term performance (Hunt et al., 2018; World Economic Forum, 2023). Therefore, this paper argues that, integrating gender-sensitive policies, innovative curricula, and collaborative partnerships between academia, industry, and regulators is critical for nurturing the next generation of aviation professionals (ICAO, 2019). The transition toward a gender-balanced workforce should not be seen merely as desirable, but as a strategic necessity for ensuring long-term industry sustainable growth, operational resilience, and innovation across the aviation sector (Airbus, 2022; IATA, 2021).

Ultimately, achieving gender equity in aviation through education contributes to both fairness and competitiveness. By preparing a diverse workforce that reflects global society, the aviation industry is better equipped to adapt to technological changes, sustainability imperatives, and the demands of a growing air transport sector. This paper argues that the integration of inclusive policies, innovative curricula, and collaborative partnerships is key to nurturing the next generation of aviation professionals. The

transition toward a gender-balanced workforce is not only desirable but indispensable for ensuring long-term industry resilience and innovation.

Keywords: Aviation Education, Workforce Development, Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

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FROM LITERATURE TO STREAM: A CROSS-CULTURAL PROJECT ON GENDER, IDENTITY, AND INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

This presentation shares the story of an interdisciplinary project that brought together literature, STREAM activities, and international collaboration, all with a special focus on how gender is experienced in education. The inspiration came from the works of Alki Zei, the much-loved Greek author whose novels have shaped generations of readers and often touch on themes of identity, justice, and equality (Zei, 1982; Zei, 2009). For our students, Zei’s stories became more than literature—they were a gateway into reflecting on social roles, cultural identity, and the way gender influences everyday life.

The project took place in a primary school and unfolded in close cooperation with a partner school in Greece. Students on both sides read and discussed selected works by Zei, exchanging their thoughts on the characters, the situations they faced, and the questions of fairness and equality raised in her writing. These discussions quickly moved beyond the pages of the books and into the students’ own lives, as they shared personal reflections on how gender is represented in their families, schools, and communities.

To deepen this engagement, we linked the literary work with STREAM-based activities. Students created digital storytelling projects, designed visualizations, and built creative responses that connected literature with science, technology, and the arts. This not only allowed them to express themselves in new ways but also gave them the tools to question how gender is represented in both traditional cultural narratives and modern technological environments. The integration of literature and STREAM reflects recent research that highlights the value of interdisciplinary practice in making complex issues such as gender more accessible and engaging for students (Bybee, 2013; English, 2016).

One of the most valuable aspects of the project was the intercultural dialogue. By working directly with a school in Greece, students experienced firsthand how cultural context shapes the way gender is understood. The exchanges helped them to see both the differences and the similarities in their perspectives, creating a strong sense of empathy and inclusion. In this way, the project demonstrated how schools can become spaces not only of learning but also of genuine cultural and personal connection. This aligns with European educational research stressing the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in policy and practice (Beetham & Demetriou, 2021; UNESCO, 2020).

The presentation will highlight three key insights from this experience:
1. Literature as a starting point for social reflection: How stories such as those by Alki

Zeī can open doors to discussions about gender, identity, and equality in a way that feels personal and meaningful to students.

2. The power of interdisciplinary practice: How combining literature with STREAM activities encourages creativity, critical thinking, and deeper engagement with sensitive topics such as gender (Francis & Skelton, 2005).
3. The role of international partnerships: How collaboration across borders can broaden perspectives, foster empathy, and strengthen the inclusion of gender perspectives in education.

This project aligns with the ICOMEU 2025 sub-themes of gender analysis in education, good practices on gender equality in educational units, and technology-driven inclusion in learning environments. It offers a practical and human-centered example of how schools can address gender issues through innovative teaching practices that value both cultural heritage and modern educational tools.

Key Words: Gender in education; interdisciplinary learning; STREAM; literature; Alki Zeī; cross-cultural collaboration; inclusion.

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DOES SIMULATION SOFTWARE FOSTER INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION? AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The integration of digital technologies into education has transformed how learning environments address diversity, accessibility, and equity. Inclusive education, grounded in the principles of social justice, aims to ensure that all learners—regardless of ability, background, or circumstance—can participate equitably in the learning process (Navas-Bonilla et al., 2025). Technology-driven inclusion leverages digital tools, assistive technologies, and artificial intelligence (AI) to reduce barriers, personalize learning, and expand opportunities for participation across diverse populations. Adapting Learning through Technology A central feature of technology-enabled inclusion is its ability to adapt learning experiences to the varied needs of students. Assistive technologies such as screen readers and augmentative communication devices are particularly valuable in supporting learners with disabilities, while interactive applications, mobile devices, and immersive technologies like augmented reality enhance motivation and engagement across broader learner groups. These affordances extend beyond disability, supporting linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic inclusion through flexible, learner-centered approaches (Navas-Bonilla et al., 2025). The use of online training environments, particularly simulations, adds a valuable dimension to inclusive education. Simulations allow students not only to learn theoretical concepts but also to experience the consequences of their decisions in authentic contexts.

In higher education, this approach fosters complex skill development by providing opportunities to apply theory in practical scenarios, supported by structured scaffolding from educators. Simulations encompass a wide spectrum of activities, from role-play and standardized patient encounters to immersive software-driven experiences. As Rooney and Nyström (2018) note, their defining characteristic is the learner’s ability to influence outcomes through their own decisions and actions. An application of simulation-based learning in the field of airline management illustrates both the promise and challenges of this approach. While some students engage deeply with the activity, others perceive it primarily as a competitive game or resist investing effort in learning the software, thereby limiting the educational benefits. This highlights the need for careful pedagogical framing to ensure that simulations are understood as learning opportunities rather than solely as performance-based tasks. Institutional and Pedagogical Frameworks Institutional frameworks emphasize the importance of embedding technology within inclusive pedagogical approaches. UNESCO (2024) underscores the necessity of robust ICT infrastructure, capacity-building for educators, and AI-driven personalization to enhance equity in education. Teacher competence in both ICT and assistive technologies is crucial; without appropriate training, there is a risk that digital solutions will reinforce exclusion rather than mitigate it. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a useful framework, advocating for accessibility

and adaptability as core design principles. Benefits and Challenges Research indicates that technology enhances engagement, collaboration, and learner autonomy.

Futurelab’s handbook (Walker & Logan, 2009) demonstrates how ICT fosters creativity, independence, and peer collaboration, while also strengthening social inclusion through meaningful interactions and the appreciation of diversity. However, disparities in the application of inclusive technologies remain evident. Studies reveal a concentration on sensory disabilities, with socio-cultural dimensions of inclusion underexplored (Navas-Bonilla et al., 2025). Furthermore, challenges such as the digital divide, limited resources, and insufficient teacher training hinder equitable implementation (UNESCO, 2024).

Technology-driven inclusion in education represents both a profound opportunity and a significant responsibility. When effectively integrated, digital and assistive technologies can expand access, foster collaboration, and personalize learning, transforming classrooms into inclusive spaces. To achieve this potential, sustained investment in infrastructure, teacher professional development, and inclusive policy frameworks is essential. Only through such systemic commitment can education systems ensure that all learners, irrespective of differences, are empowered to thrive.

Key Words: Inclusive Education, Educational Technology, Simulation-Based Learning.

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MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN HIGHER EDUCATION: TRANSNATIONAL LESSONS FROM THE EU-FUNDED PROJECT SHECOACH

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ABSTRACT

Gender mainstreaming, as an approach to policy-making and a cornerstone of inclusive education and social justice, takes into account the needs, concerns, and interests of both women and men and aims to address -obvious but also hidden- gender inequalities (Council of Europe [a & b], n.d.; EIGE, 2022; Hanawald, 2023; UNESCO, 2013). However, its implementation in educational and training contexts remains inconsistent (UNESCO, 2013, 2015). This paper explores practical steps for translating gender mainstreaming into concrete practices within educational settings, drawing on the experiences and outputs of the EU-funded project SheCOACH, which aims to promote gender equality in sports and (basketball) coaching education in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Spain.

SheCOACH: “Gender Equality in Coaching” is an Erasmus+ Sport project under agreement number 101133095, implemented from January 2024 to October 2026. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative involving the Cyprus Basketball Federation (coordinator), the Greek Basketball Coaches Association, the Greek NGO Symplexis, the University of Murcia, the Basketball Federation of Castilla-La Mancha, the Italian NGO L’Orma, the organization Sport Coaching Europe, the European Network of Sport Education, and the Romanian Hub for Innovation Policy.

The primary target groups of the SheCOACH project are: National and regional basketball and other sports federations; Coaches' associations; Coaching education providers (universities, VET centers, colleges, etc.); Local, regional, and national sports and education policymakers. SheCOACH aims to integrate gender perspectives into sports coaching education by mainstreaming gender issues across curricula, raising awareness among coaching educators and authorities, and promoting inclusive policies. The project also seeks to highlight the benefits of women’s participation in coaching, especially in men-dominated sports, and to increase women’s involvement in basketball coaching education and training.

The SheCOACH objectives have so far been achieved through the implementation of the following clusters of activities:

(a) Primary research at the national and transnational levels, providing recommendations for coaching education and qualification providers on how to incorporate gender issues into coaching courses and curricula (all SheCOACH research reports are available at www.shecoach.eu/resources).

(b) Online capacity-building programme to train coaching education providers in gender mainstreaming. The full programme description is available at www.shecoach.eu/resources, and the eLearning platform (<https://shecoach-platform.eu>) can also be accessed via the project's main website (www.shecoach.eu).

(c) Framework for gender mainstreaming in coaching education. This is available as an online document at www.shecoach.eu/resources, as well as in the form of a digital course on the project's e-learning platform.

(d) Dissemination and awareness raising (social media campaign, interviews, newsletters, etc. <https://www.facebook.com/shecoach.eu>, <https://www.instagram.com/shecoachproject>, <https://shecoach.eu/news>).

The project's activities have highlighted three key areas where gender mainstreaming can be successfully implemented, both in higher sports education and beyond (Benschop & Verloo, 2011; EIGE, 2022; European Parliament, 2017; Hodgins et al., 2022; Mayer, 2009; Reiners & Wood, 2015; Suskie, 2018; UNESCO, 2016):

(1) Curriculum development, through the integration of gender-sensitive perspectives and inclusive learning materials into coaching education;

(2) Capacity building, by designing and delivering training modules that enhance the awareness, knowledge, and skills of educators and future coaches regarding gender equity; and

(3) Policy alignment and institutional change, achieved by connecting project activities to broader European and national gender equality frameworks.

Methodologically, this study draws on the project's primary and secondary research, documentation, training evaluations, participants' feedback, and European and international best practices to demonstrate how these strategies can contribute to dismantling gender stereotypes, reducing barriers for women in coaching education, and promoting inclusive leadership practices (Benschop & Verloo, 2011; EIGE, 2022; UNESCO, 2016). The findings suggest that EU-funded educational projects and transnational cooperation can accelerate the integration of gender into sports education and broader educational contexts. In addition, comparative research at national and transnational levels provides evidence-based recommendations and strengthens the transferability of practices.

The discussion places SheCOACH within the wider discourse on gender mainstreaming in education, emphasizing the importance of transnational cooperation, digital tools, the active involvement of stakeholders, and sustainable policy measures. The project, which is still ongoing, provides a specific framework comprising practical recommendations for educators, policymakers and project designers who wish to incorporate gender auditing and gender mainstreaming systematically into educational curricula and management practices (Hodgins et al., 2022; Laurillard, 2012; Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

Disclaimer: *The SheCOACH project is co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them. Project: 101133095 — SheCOACH — ERASMUS-SPORT-2023.*

Key Words: gender mainstreaming, EU project, inclusive education, coaching education, gender equality

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PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS THROUGH EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES: A GENDER AND SERVICES MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Education is a rapidly growing service sector in many economies and consists a considerable factor in economic competitiveness (Gupta & Kaushik, 2018). Students are acknowledged as the primary customers of education institutions and teachers are the providers of services (Douglas, McClelland, & Davies, 2008). Education and travel have been intertwined for centuries (Stone & Petrick, 2013). This has led to a variety of different types of experiences aimed at utilizing travel for educational purposes, often referred to as educational tourism (Abubakar, Shneikat, & Oday, 2014; Stoner et al., 2014; McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017; Kim & Jeong, 2018; Talawanich, Jianvittayakit, & Wattanacharoensil, 2019; Choi & Bae, 2022).

Educational tourism is a type of thematic tourism and as such it can be considered as a go-between tourism and education, where education or learning is the primary or the secondary goal of the travel (Ritchie, Carr, & Cooper, 2003). Thus, educational tourism is a type of tourism related to the acquisition of new knowledge and new skills (Tang, 2021). The understanding of educational tourist motivations and behaviours could be proved very useful in the case of attracting international students and

promoting a region as a preferred educational tourism destination (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

The increase in exchange programmes at school level as a policy development across Europe has become increasingly influential regarding European Educational programmes (Schratz, 2014). The foundation for assessing Erasmus+ KA1 projects aimed at professional development lies in the exploration of the complex interplay between the continuing professional development of teachers, the European dimension in education and the school culture (Martins, Tinoca, & Gaio Alves, 2024). These projects, which are part of the Erasmus+ programme, are about the mobility of students and teaching and non-teaching staff for learning purposes (Martins, Tinoca, & Gaio Alves, 2024).

Motivations for studying abroad have been addressed in a range of studies (Maiworm & Teichler, 2002; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Krzaklewska, 2008; European Commission, 2014; Lesjak et al., 2015; Bryntesson, Börjesson, & Haru, 2018).

In the tourism sector, perceived travel risk refers to situations where the decision to avoid travelling to certain destinations is clearly predicted because of terrorism attacks, political instability or health risks (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998b).

The present research investigates the role that Herzberg's motivation theory, push-pull motives and perceived travel risk play for the participation of Primary Education teachers in European Educational Programmes.

The findings of the study show that the Primary Education teachers from the prefectures of Imathia, Larissa and Pieria present similarities and differences when gender demographics are incorporated to the dimensions of motivational factors and perceived travel risk in their choice of travel destination for educational tourism and continuing professional development purposes.

The present research could be used as a policy tool for the European educational organizational and administrative services to promote the participation of teachers in European Educational Programmes. More specifically, the promotion of educational tourism and European Educational programmes like Erasmus+, requires the integration of a gender-sensitive approach. Gender influences access, safety perceptions and motivations for participation, making it essential for service managers to address these dynamics in destination planning and promotion. The implementation of inclusive, gender-aware policies enhances both the equity and competitiveness of educational tourism destinations and the aligning with EU gender equality objectives also strengthens the credibility and long-term sustainability of such initiatives.

Key Words: services management, educational tourism, thematic tourism, tourism destination, European Educational Programmes

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DIGITAL AND SOFT SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

The rise of emerging technologies in the era of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0, together with the need for digital transformation have created a new and demanding business environment and workplace (Di Gregorio et al., 2019). In this context, employability (defined as the ability to obtain-maintain an employment and obtain new employment, if required) is determined by the possession of a wide variety of digital and soft skills (De Campos et al., 2020). According to UNESCO (2023), digital skills refer to the ability of an individual to use effectively digital devices, IT applications and networks to access and manage information. On the other hand, soft skills refer to the personal, interpersonal and behavioral characteristics of a person, which allow effective communication and enhance the possibility of cooperation (Nilufar and Qizi, 2020).

Academics and professionals argue that both digital and soft skills are extremely important to provide future professionals with profound skills and knowledge needed in competitive working environments (Zhang et al., 2023). Therefore, they should be developed in every university's curriculum (Jasim Mohammed et al., 2023), especially in schools of business and economics. At the same time though, several studies indicate that there is a gap between students'/graduates' skills and the requirements of the work environment (Noah & Aziz, 2020; Elo et al., 2024). Other studies (Hirudayaraj et al., 2021) show that higher education students/graduates don't meet employers' expectations, mainly regarding the possession of soft skills. Finally, prior research confirms that gap and focuses mainly on the lack of soft skills training and education (Dolce et al., 2020).

The aim of this paper is to further study and enlighten this gap. After identification and categorization of digital and soft skills according to the literature, an online survey was conducted among 200 undergraduate Greek business school students and 200 professionals working at Greek companies. The research attempts to explore beliefs and perceptions about: i) the importance of specific digital and soft skills in the modern marketplace and employability, ii) the degree of actual development of digital and soft skills within university curriculum and iii) the degree of digital and soft skills possession by young graduates entering the workplace.

The results show that there is a gap between the perceptions of professionals and students, concerning the importance of digital and soft skills in employability. This gap

is smaller concerning digital skills and larger concerning soft skills. Moreover, professionals believe that the degree of digital and soft skills possession by young graduates entering the workplace is rather moderate and low, especially concerning soft skills. Students, on the other hand, believe that the level of digital skills developed through their university's curriculum is rather moderate and high, while soft skills are not so much developed through their studies.

The outcomes of the research can provide the basis of discussion among business schools and external bodies such as companies, associations of professionals etc., about the actual importance of digital and soft skills in the modern marketplace, as well as the need for deeper integration and development of such skills into universities' curricula.

Key Words: digital skills, soft skills, Industry 5.0, digital transformation, higher education, research.

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EDUCATION & MANAGEMENT: FROM KNOWLEDGE TO CAREERS THROUGH GENDER PERSPECTIVES

WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN GREEK EDUCATION: CHALLENGES, BARRIERS, AND PATHS TO INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

This presentation explores the under-representation of women in educational leadership in Greece, focusing on the multiple personal, organizational, and socio-cultural factors that hinder women’s progression to positions of authority within the education system. Although women constitute a majority of teachers—especially in pre-school and primary education—they remain a minority among school principals, senior administrators, and leadership roles. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data (including recent literature and empirical research), this study aims to elucidate why women, despite possessing necessary qualifications and experience, often do not pursue or succeed in attaining positions of responsibility.

Key findings indicate that the barriers are multifaceted. Organizationally, the centralized and bureaucratic nature of the Greek educational system imposes rigid selection procedures and limited scope for autonomous leadership, which diminish the attractiveness of leadership roles. Social and family responsibilities—especially care of children and household obligations—disproportionately fall on women, creating a double burden that conflicts with the demands of administrative leadership. Psychological factors such as low self-confidence, internalized gender roles, and stereotypes about “appropriate” leadership behaviors also play a significant role. For example, women leaders are often expected to conform to masculine models of leadership in order to be taken seriously, a pressure that leads to stress and identity tension. Emerging literature from abroad also highlights that perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms—such as sleep disturbance, fatigue, mood changes, “brain fog,” and other cognitive effects—can exacerbate these challenges, negatively impacting job satisfaction, performance, and decisions regarding promotion or taking on additional responsibilities (Hardy et al., 2018; Menopause in the Workplace review, 2024).

Data specific to Greece—including studies such as Women in Managerial Positions in Greek Education (Athanassoula-Reppa & Koutouzis, 2002) and Effectiveness, Leadership Style and Gender of Secondary Education School Principals in Athens (Anastasiou & Oikonomou, 2020)—confirm that women are underrepresented in leadership in larger and more complex school settings. Greek case studies also report that even when women have strong academic credentials and professional experience, they often do not advance either because they are not

encouraged, because of fear of conflict with family roles, or because of structural disincentives.

Based on these findings, this presentation proposes recommendations for policy and practice. These include: implementing more flexible and supportive working arrangements; promoting workplace cultures that recognize health or life-stage related challenges (such as menopause) and reduce stigma; establishing mentoring networks and leadership development programs tailored for women; and reforming selection processes to ensure transparency and fairness. Importantly, there is a pressing need for research in Greece that specifically examines the relationship between health/life-stage factors (e.g. perimenopause/menopause) and women’s decisions about leadership roles in education. Longitudinal, mixed-methods studies could help establish causal links and inform interventions.

Key Words: Educational Leadership, Gender Equality, Women in Education, Glass Ceiling, Gender Stereotypes, Educational Administration

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GENDER EQUALITY IN TEXTBOOKS: GENDER STEREOTYPES AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF TEXTBOOKS

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ABSTRACT

School textbooks are among the most influential mechanisms for transmitting social values and norms. Through language, imagery, and examples, they convey not only knowledge but also implicit social messages about gender, power, labor, and social roles (Apple, 1979; Sadker, et al., 2009). These implicit messages constitute what is known as the hidden curriculum, which operates alongside the official curriculum, shaping students' attitudes, expectations, and behaviors (Snyder, 1971).

In this context, the analysis of school textbooks reveals that gender stereotypes persist despite policies promoting equality. Women and girls are more often represented in traditional roles (mother, teacher, caregiver), while men and boys are linked to high-status professions, science, and technology (Blumberg, 2015; UNESCO, 2020). In addition, boys and men are usually depicted in energetic roles (exploring, experimenting, doing things), while girls and women are usually shown as passive (watching the men/boys, talking). This gender imbalance is not merely statistical - it serves as a mechanism of social reproduction, as students internalize the models presented to them as natural and desirable (Connell, 2002).

The hidden curriculum is further reinforced through the language of textbooks, where the masculine form often functions as the “neutral” gender, and through the selection of examples that reflect traditional family and labor structures (Alexopoulos, et al., 2022; Maidou & Polatoglou, 2008). Even when women appear in non-traditional roles, they are frequently accompanied by references to emotionality or morality, thereby indirectly reinforcing stereotypes of femininity.

The impact of these representations is multifaceted: they influence teachers' expectations, students' performance through mechanisms such as stereotype threat (Steele, 1997), and, most importantly, girls' career aspirations in STEM fields (Brussino, & McBrien, 2022). International studies show that school textbooks continue to underrepresent women and promote limited role models for both genders (Crawford et al., 2024).

In this presentation I will focus on the images and drawings, that accompany the text in 2 textbooks from the secondary educational level, because pictures are the first thing that catches the eye in a book, and furthermore, images have an immediate, subconscious impact. The main axes of analysis will be: Quantitative Representation: How many times do men/boys appear as central characters versus women/girls, Professional Representation: How are professional roles portrayed, Stereotypical representation: prestige and power professions vs care, support occupations, Active-passive roles: Who takes action vs who observes or cares? Color Codes and Appearance: Use of traditional colors (blue/pink) and emphasis on women's

appearance. Through this analysis I want to explore whether the images, even if the text promotes equality, nullify the message through visual stereotypical representation.

Addressing gender stereotypes in school textbooks requires not only revising content but also critically examining the hidden curriculum—training authors and educators to deconstruct stereotypes, and promote balanced gender representation, through the development of pedagogical practices that foster equality and empathy (UNESCO, 2020).

Key Words: Gender stereotypes, school textbooks, hidden curriculum, educational equality, gender representation in education

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GENDER SOCIALIZATION, STEREOTYPES & LEARNING

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS IN MARINE TOURISM AT THE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Marine tourism plays an increasingly important role within the global tourism industry, requiring both specialized knowledge and practical competences. While higher education has traditionally emphasized theoretical learning, the integration of experiential modules has gained importance as a way to better prepare students for professional roles. This study, conducted as part of a bachelor thesis at the International Hellenic University under the supervision of Dr. Georgios Skoufas, explores student perceptions of introducing skill-oriented courses in marine tourism at the post-secondary educational level.

The research was implemented at the Department of Business Administration, Marketing and Tourism. A structured questionnaire was designed and distributed digitally through QR codes and online platforms, ensuring a fully paperless and sustainable process. This choice was intentional, aiming to reflect principles of environmental responsibility that align with the philosophy of marine tourism. By adopting a digital-only approach, the research minimized material waste while simultaneously improving accessibility and convenience for respondents. A pilot test with six students confirmed clarity and reliability before full deployment. In total, 216 valid responses were collected, representing approximately one-fifth of the department's student population. The survey included demographic items, questions on attitudes toward marine tourism, and sections on motivations, barriers, and preferences for practical modules. Data were analyzed using JASP and non-parametric statistical tests (Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis H) to explore differences across gender, year of study, and specialization.

Results indicated broadly positive attitudes toward the integration of marine tourism into the curriculum. Students expressed strong interest in hands-on modules such as scuba diving and speedboat handling, particularly when linked to recognized certifications that could strengthen employability. They also indicated preferences for smaller class sizes, blended teaching formats that combine theory with practice, and affordable participation fees. Motivations for participation included skill acquisition, career development, and personal engagement with marine activities, while barriers primarily concerned cost, time, and accessibility. Notably, statistically significant

differences between demographic groups were limited, suggesting widespread agreement on the value of such courses.

Beyond documenting student preferences, this research highlights the strategic importance of designing curricula that combine theoretical knowledge with practical components. The findings make clear that students did not envision a replacement of theory with practice, but rather a balanced integration of both. This balance reflects a learning environment where academic rigor is preserved while applied training enhances professional readiness, producing graduates who are both knowledgeable and skilled. At the same time, the results emphasize that student perspectives can serve as a valuable guide for institutions seeking to adapt their curricula in ways that remain inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with industry needs.

In addition, the study contributes to the broader dialogue on the future of tourism education. By capturing the voices of students, it emphasizes the demand for programs that are forward-looking and responsive to real-world challenges. Future research could investigate in greater depth how learners would prefer this balance to be structured—such as the relative weight of classroom-based instruction compared to experiential field activities. Expanding the scope to include cross-university comparisons, qualitative interviews, and longitudinal studies would also provide richer insights into how blended approaches influence both learning outcomes and career development. Taken together, these directions highlight the potential of student-centered models to inform curriculum innovation and to ensure the long-term relevance of higher education in marine tourism.

Key Words: marine tourism, experiential learning, higher education, student perspectives, skill development, sustainability

MORAL PHILOSOPHY AS A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING SEXISM ON THE INTERNET

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this presentation is to introduce an educational project carried out during the 2024–25 school year, within the framework of the course Philosophy in the 11th grade of Senior High School (in the 2nd grade of the Greek high school), specifically in the chapter on Moral Philosophy, under the subsection The Search for a Criterion of Moral Rightness (Βιρβιδάκης, Καρασμάνης, και Τουρνά, 2023). The main objective was for students to approach the material in an innovative, exploratory, and creative way by connecting it to contemporary issues, in particular gender-based online violence. The pursuit of gender equality in education is presented here as an essential condition for achieving social justice and for cultivating moral choices. By engaging with key theories and clarifying core concepts, the project sought to critically employ theory as a tool for understanding contemporary reality.

Students were encouraged to investigate the causes of moral choices and to distinguish morality from fear or calculation. They were further asked to reflect on how major ethical theories could be applied to contemporary dilemmas. A central aim was the critical examination of a contemporary issue: how Gender-Based Online Violence can be defined, and how challenging it is to discern the intentions hidden behind an online comment.

The project was approached through the method of an Educational Scenario, using modern tools and real-life dilemmas (Menable, 2024) in a collaborative group setting. This presentation also reports on the outcomes of the two-hour educational activity, which revealed the remarkable flexibility and adaptability shown by students in meeting the demands of an innovative and alternative mode of learning—integrating theory and transforming it into lived experience. The student groups succeeded in presenting their findings while also proposing peaceful ways of resolving conflicts and demonstrating skills and attitudes of empathy, inclusion, and social cohesion, within a framework that recognizes multiple gender identities and the diversity of student experience.

Finally, this presentation suggests the interdisciplinary implementation of this teaching intervention in the subject Modern Greek Language and Expression (11th and/or 12th grade), within the thematic units: Social Racism, Gender Equality, Technology–Internet, Social Media, Fair and Unfair Speech.

Key Words: moral philosophy, educational scenario, gender based violence online, gender stereotypes, collaborative learning.

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Έκδοση. ΙΤΥΕ Διόφαντος, Αθήνα, 6:

EMOTIONAL LITERACY FOR EQUITY: CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND EMPOWERING ALL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Recent research in educational psychology and gender studies highlights that school environments often reproduce traditional gender roles through unequal emotional expectations and stereotypical behavioural norms. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), when implemented in a structured and holistic way, serves as a powerful tool for dismantling these patterns and fostering educational spaces rooted in equity and inclusion for all students.

This presentation explores how SEL practices can challenge implicit gender stereotypes by strengthening emotional literacy, empathy, and student agency—regardless of gender identity or expression. Drawing on established theoretical models (e.g. CASEL) and examples from real-world classroom practice, the presentation showcases activities such as storytelling, reflective journaling, and collaborative learning, which promote emotional authenticity, resilience, and mutual respect.

SEL is not merely a behavioural management tool. It is a transformative path toward a pedagogy of equity, empowerment, and social justice—one that allows every learner to feel seen, valued, and capable of thriving in a diverse and emotionally intelligent classroom.

Key Words: Emotional Literacy, Gender Stereotypes, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Student Agency, Equity in Education, Inclusive Pedagogy

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DECONSTRUCTING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS: A TEACHING PROPOSAL FOR MODERN GREEK LANGUAGE IN THE SECOND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a teaching scenario that was implemented in the Modern Greek Language course in the second year of high school, with the theme "School as a social institution" and a focus on the deconstruction of gender stereotypes. The educational intervention is part of critical pedagogy and draws on the theoretical principles of critical literacy (Luke, 2000; Janks, 2010), according to which language is a social and ideological construct capable of reproducing or challenging established forms of power.

The introduction of the scenario is based on the observation that gender stereotypes continue to permeate the school environment, textbooks, and children's reading material (Sidiropoulou, 2019). Moreover, international studies have shown that language, through lexical and grammatical choices and textual conventions, often contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequalities (Cameron, 2003; Sunderland, 2006). In this context, the scenario aims to enable students to identify, analyze, and transform gender-related linguistic and semiotic practices

The methodology followed is based on the use of multimodal texts and authentic materials, such as opinion articles, interviews, advertisements, podcasts, and short films. According to Kress (2010), multimodality provides new possibilities for critical analysis, as students are asked to decode not only written language, but also images, sound, and audiovisual narratives. Group work encourages dialogue and the exchange of views, promoting a participatory and experiential pedagogical process (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

In comprehension activities, students were asked to identify the general and specific meaning in texts related to gender stereotypes, interpret the author's comments and contradictions, analyze their intentions, and examine the lexical and grammatical choices that structure the argument. At the same time, through transformative exercises (e.g., converting passive to active syntax), the dynamics of linguistic form in shaping semantic focus were highlighted.

The written work culminated in the drafting of a planned oral presentation in the form of a speech to the "Youth Parliament." The students took on the role of representatives of their school and took a public stand against gender stereotypes, proposing practical solutions for their deconstruction in their social environment. This highly communicative activity allowed school learning to be linked to social reality, strengthening the sense of citizenship and democratic participation.

The results of the implementation show that students developed increased sensitivity to gender issues, improved their skills in understanding and producing discourse, and learned to approach texts as ideologically charged products. In addition,

the use of multimedia tools and creative forms of expression (such as podcasts) enhanced their interest and active engagement.

Overall, the scenario confirms that language education can serve as a field for critical analysis of social relations and as a vehicle for empowering students. The connection between theoretical framework and teaching practice highlights the role of schools in promoting equality and cultivating a democratic culture. The study concludes that similar approaches can also be used across different subjects, contributing to the development of active and critically thinking citizens.

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SCHOOL BULLYING AND GENDER IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

School bullying is a complex phenomenon, with its primary distinction being between direct and indirect forms (Olweus, 1993). In the former case, incidents manifest openly, while in the latter, the victim or victims are not present. There are also more specific forms of bullying, such as racial bullying and sexual bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Psalti & Constantinou, 2007). Incidents of school violence or bullying are increasingly observed in educational systems both internationally and in Greece. Research findings highlight gender as a significant factor in both victimization and the role of the perpetrator in bullying cases, pointing to differences between the two genders in relation to these roles (Christou, 2005). This paper undertakes a literature review of the phenomenon of school bullying through the lens of gender, focusing on secondary education. The study explores the different perceptions, expressions, and response strategies to bullying among boys and girls, based on three research questions: a) How is aggressive behavior defined and perceived by boys and girls? b) What forms of aggression are expressed by each gender? c) How do boys and girls respond to incidents of school bullying?

Relevant literature indicates that involvement in bullying incidents is more frequently observed among boys (Psalti & Constantinou, 2007). Boys tend to display more direct, physical aggression (Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001), whereas girls primarily adopt indirect or relational forms of aggression, such as spreading rumors or social exclusion (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Regarding the handling of bullying incidents, studies show that girls are more likely to defend victims through emotional or social support, whereas boys often assume the role of bystander or even participant (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). Moreover, the psychological consequences of different forms of bullying appear to be more intense for girls, especially in cases of emotional victimization (Prinstein et al., 2001). Most gender-based bullying behaviors occur in classrooms and hallways, often under the supervision of teaching staff (Lipson, 2001). The lack of awareness and sensitivity regarding the phenomenon on the part of teachers and parents is considered by experts to be a factor placing adolescents in both the role of bully and victim (Agathonos & Georgopoulou, 2004; Tsiantis, 2008).

The findings of this literature review highlight the need for educational policies and interventions that enhance the recognition and management of all forms of aggression. The role of the teacher in secondary education is crucial in shaping a safe, supportive, and equitable school environment. Secondary school educators are called upon to recognize gender-based differences and to adopt strategies that promote inclusion, solidarity, and collaboration within the school setting.

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GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN CHILDREN’S AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA AND THE FORMATION OF GENDER IDENTITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The study presents a literature review of gendered representations in children’s audiovisual media and their impact on the formation of gender identity in early childhood. It combines theoretical frameworks such as performativity of gender (Butler, 1990/2006), Gender Schema Theory (Martin & Halverson, 1981) and Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1998) to explain how media shape social expectations and children’s cognitive schemas. The analysis identifies persistent patterns of stereotypical representation: overrepresentation of male action and leadership roles and the association of female characters with caregiving, appearance and passivity (Hentges & Case, 2013; Dill & Thill, 2007; Walsh & Leaper, 2019). It examines linguistic differences where female characters use more polite, emotionally oriented language while male characters display decisiveness and more direct rhetoric (Azmi et al., 2016; Fought & Eisenhauer, 2022). It highlights visual means of communicating power through color, framing and spatial placement (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

The review links representations to developmental stages: sensitivity up to about 3 years, a rigidity period at 4–7 years, and increasing flexibility at older ages, which defines the window for interventions (Kohlberg, 1966; Martin & Ruble, 2010; Halim et al., 2013). Comparative examples such as Peppa Pig and Bluey demonstrate variation in effects depending on content and directorial choices; some contemporary products promote equitable caregiving and non-stereotypical activities while others reproduce traditional models (Gkala & Georgalou, 2023; Walsh & Leaper, 2019). The review documents that long-term and repeated exposure can “cultivate” stereotypical beliefs, but targeted educational interventions and anti-stereotype programs reduce these beliefs

in the short term and, to some extent, longer term (Gerbner, 1998; Bigler & Liben, 2007; Hentges & Case, 2013).

Recommended applications for preschool education include selective use of audiovisual material with equitable representations, integration of critical literacy into daily teaching, teacher training on gender equality, and collaboration with parents for critical media selection at home (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Luke, 2012; Papadimitriou & Sofos, 2022). The study argues that early exposure to diverse, non-stereotypical representations supports identity fluidity and broadens children’s choices and imaginations, and that educational responsibility requires the systematic and methodical use of media toward this goal (Solomon, 2016; Diamond, 2020).

Key Words: Children's Audiovisual Media, Gender Identity, Gender Stereotypes, Early Childhood Education, Critical Literacy

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LATENT GENDER MESSAGES IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY TEXTBOOKS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Education is a cornerstone of socialisation, shaping students' attitudes, values, and expectations. Beyond the official curriculum, school textbooks also convey “hidden” messages that transmit social norms, gendered expectations, and cultural values, influencing not only academic performance but also young people's educational, career, and personal choices. Within this context, the Technology subject functions not only as a vehicle for knowledge and skills, but also as a factor that informs students' career orientation and their perceptions of gender roles.

Aim: This study investigates the presence and extent of latent gender messages in Technology textbooks used in the 7th and 8th grades of Greek lower secondary education, and examines how linguistic and visual choices are linked to occupational roles in relation to the principle of gender equality in education.

Methodology: We conducted a qualitative content analysis of Technology textbooks for grades 7 and 8, focusing on language, illustration, and references to professions. The coding scheme included the categories “masculine / feminine / neutral / dual-gender reference.” This approach brought to light latent ideological content which, although not explicitly stated, can exert a strong influence on the formation of attitudes.

Results: In the current Technology textbooks (grades 7–8) we identified 177 instances of masculine reference and none in the feminine. The illustrations include 25 depictions of male figures (15 showing faces and 10 showing men's hands), three mixed depictions (male and female together), and only two depictions of female figures. Most occupational roles and technological activities are attributed to men or described through male figures or terms. Women are either absent or appear in secondary roles, with limited involvement in technology production or innovation.

Conclusions: The findings document a substantial gender asymmetry in Junior High School Technology textbooks, which runs counter to principles of equality and inclusion as well as to the guidance of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) on inclusive educational materials.

Recommendations: To address this issue, textbook content and related materials should be revised to ensure a more balanced gender representation. We recommend the use of gender-neutral or dual-gender forms, greater visibility of female role models in images and examples, and the avoidance of gendered labelling in professions and activities.

Key Words: Gender equality; latent messages; school textbooks; Technology; lower secondary education.

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THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON THE CHOICE OF CONSTRUCTION PLAY: THE ROLE OF SPACE AND MATERIALS IN KINDERGARTEN

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ABSTRACT

Play in kindergarten serves as the primary vehicle for learning and social development in preschool-aged children (Berk, 2013; Flee, 2010; Hart et al., 1997). However, it often conveys social and gender stereotypes, while it is significantly influenced by the stimuli offered by the physical and pedagogical environment (Brito et al., 2021; Eliot, 2010; King et al., 2021). This influence is reflected in the choices of children during free play in the classroom (Hjelmér, 2020).

This paper presents a case study aimed at observing and analyzing children's choices during their engagement in free construction play. The research was carried out in a public kindergarten, attended by 21 students (N=12 boys, N=9 girls), aged 4 to 6 years. Data collection was carried out through direct observation in the field, using a specially designed observation checklist. The intervention program was organized into three distinct phases: (a) initial recording, (b) intervention in the space and materials, and (c) final recording. During the first phase, the researcher, who was classroom teacher, recorded the children's choices during free play for a period of one month. In the second phase, which lasted two weeks, the classroom space was remodeled based on the "Mosaic" approach. In this context, the intervention included the enrichment of the construction material, as well as the possibility of free movement and interconnection between the corners of interest. The children studied the possibilities of the space, chose the ideal spot for the development of their play, designed and shaped it based on their own needs and preferences. In addition, they enriched the existing building material with loose parts that they collected from the outside of the school and their home. This was followed by their free engagement with construction play in the new environment for 3 months. In the third phase, the observation process was repeated for another month, with the aim of investigating possible changes in the children's choices. The data were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods.

The results of the research showed an increase in children's involvement in construction play, with particular emphasis on the significant increase in girls' participation. This change seems to be linked to three main factors, (a) the enrichment of the available material, (b) the reconfiguration of the space based on the children's suggestions and (c) the possibility of free movement and interconnection of corners of interest. The variety of materials contributed to the simultaneous and smooth

involvement of more children in construction play, limiting tensions and conflicts. The introduction of loose parts enhanced creativity and particularly stimulated the interest of girls, who in the first phase of the observation did not reveal significant involvement in this type of play. Regarding the design of the space, it was found that the active participation of the children contributed decisively to the creation of a learning environment that responded to their needs, specificities and expectations. Providing the opportunity for free movement and the interconnection of the construction corner with other corners (e.g. dramatic play, visual arts, music) acted as a catalyst for the development of more creative forms of play, as well as for the conception of imaginary stories through collaborations of children from different corners. This element contributed decisively to the inclusion of a greater number of girls as it strengthened their interest, offering them the opportunity to combine construction play with forms of play that are traditionally chosen more by them, such as social-dramatic or artistic play.

In summary, the traditional classroom configuration—with isolated corners of interest and limited, one-sided construction materials—does not seem to promote equal opportunities for all children to participate equally in the play and learning process, nor does it seem to mitigate gender stereotypes in children's play. On the contrary, a modern, democratic approach that incorporates children's voices in the design of the space and in the selection of materials and processes, that allows children to make decisions and connect their multiple interests, seems to free their play from gender stereotypes, and to enhance the participation of all without discrimination.

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GENDERED PERSPECTIVES AND DIGITAL EQUITY

TIGHTROPE WALKING AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN GENDERED SPACES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates systemic gender and racial dynamics experienced by female school administrators and Black leaders. The author examines how they perceive, navigate, and respond to conflicting gender-based expectations in educational leadership. This analysis of the status of women in administration roles and impact on their career advancement and professional identity (Harris et al., 2024; Mullen & Robertson, 2014, 2021) extends to their efforts as transformational agents of change in gendered spaces. Role incongruity theory that concentrates attention on agentic and communal characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 2002) is among the influential theories incorporated into this analysis.

Specifically, the literature review explores intersectionality and the impact of race and gender in female school leadership. This analytical process uncovered *shifting to fit*, a phenomenon that describes the changes many Black women leaders must undergo to have a career in systems driven by the status quo and expectations of administration built upon racial/gender hierarchies (Mullen & Robertson, 2014, 2021). Importantly, the author identifies female leaders' strategies and coping mechanisms for addressing as well as overcoming challenges encountered with gender-based expectations and the double-bind, a psychological phenomenon: Conflicting messages expose them to a “no-win situation” resulting in unfavorable outcomes (Chikwe et al., 2024; Eareckson & Heilman, 2024; Nater et al., 2023; Stagoll, 2005; Zheng et al., 2018).

Methodologically, library databases (EBSCOhost, etc.) and Google were searched, in addition to reference lists in published works. Initial results (1,606) narrowed with focus on a 2015–2025 timeframe, yielding 756 sources. Concentrating on peer-reviewed publications produced 73 classical and contemporary research studies. This selection highlights school-related topics of identity, inclusion, and equity; role incongruity and feminist theory; gender stereotypes; and gender bias and discrimination by such researchers as Jill Blackmore, Alice Eagly, Kay Fuller, Madeline Heilman, Steven Karau, and Christa Nater.

The author provides productive ideas for persevering and flourishing through supportive networks, collaboration, and mentoring; leadership program preparation; workplace coaching and training; and dedication to gender and racial equity in the culture. Further critical analysis is needed of identity-specific school policy and practices, as evidenced in studies of trans education policy (Weymouth-German & Mullen, 2024; Mullen & Weymouth-German, 2024). Ongoing inquiry into

intersectional factors (race, sexual orientation, age, etc.) as connected to gender identity (LGBTQIA+ and so forth), stereotypes, and workplace culture is also encouraged.

Key Words: equity, female school administrator, gender, gender identity, role incongruity theory, shifting to fit

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LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION, 'GLASS CEILING' AND THE 'MOISTURE TRAPS'

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, educational leadership has shifted from the traditional model of the “charismatic leader”—defined by individual traits such as intelligence, creativity, diligence, and emotional stability—toward transformational leadership approaches, where authority is distributed among multiple actors operating within democratic and collaborative structures. Within this framework, the school principal’s ability to engage in open and effective communication with all members of the school community emerges as a key component of successful leadership (Saitis, 2005; Fasoulis, 2008; Chronopoulou, 2012) and enjoyable workplaces for both teachers and students.

The challenges of the 21st century—such as increased pressure to align with international strategies, the demand for improved school performance indicators, and the need to balance school autonomy with outward-facing accountability—have highlighted the importance of participatory, emotionally intelligent, and values-based leadership (Dieronitou, 2014). Moreover, as Evans (1997) suggests, characteristics commonly associated with female leadership—recognition, support, respect, interpersonal connections and the meaningful engagement of human resources—are instrumental in enhancing teacher self-esteem and job satisfaction, which in turn foster improved student outcomes and organizational effectiveness. Education, as a social institution par excellence, needs leadership that reflects the entirety of its human potential. Half of the human capital is feminine and for the time being gender dynamic is not being taken into account carefully. Promoting women in leadership roles is not only a matter of an ideal justice, but also a strategic choice for creating resilient, equitable and innovative educational organizations. Nevertheless, the question remains about which are the choices we need to brand as a society to eliminate these barriers, non-visible ceiling, or slippery escalators, that gender biased perceptions introduce, preventing women from reaching to the high positions or preventing them from pursuing managerial pathways.

This study explores the role of gender in educational leadership among women who are already in managerial positions, focusing on the phenomena of the “glass ceiling” and understanding the “moisture traps” as implicate or clear forms in overcoming barriers of gendered exclusion. It aims to demonstrate how so-called “feminine” leadership traits contribute to sustainable development in educational organizations, challenging traditional power structures and advocating for more inclusive leadership practices. On the other hand, its objective is to reveal the leadership

style, ability and vision in the educational organizations they lead that are common in female leadership. For this reason the sample was female principals & deputy principals and in general women in senior positions in secondary education -lower and upper- of the directorate of western Thessaloniki along with some others from the region of central Macedonia.

The analysis of the research results reveals that the majority of participants highlighted family obligations as the most significant barrier to pursuing or preserving leadership roles. Other obstacles included gender stereotypes, biased selection councils, and the persistent tradition of male dominance in leadership. These findings mirror international literature, where the balance between professional duties and family responsibilities is steadily one of the strongest obstacles reinforcing the glass ceiling occurrences. Correspondingly, as a result of an effort to redefining leadership culture, by female traits, seems to produce a new perspective to transformational leadership with meaningful deduction as support and respect enhance both student performance and teacher job satisfaction. According to the survey's data, in order to overcome gender biased barriers need both women to empower themselves through skills and networks and also institutions change values and policies that unconsciously reinforce gender inequality. The dual focus—personal agency and systemic reform—are the essential ‘moisture traps’ for truly sweeping the glass ceiling from the fog that is all over educational organization progression (OECD (2025), Trends Shaping Education 2025).

REVEALING THE FEMININE PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

What is the meaning of feminist philosophy in education? How can feminist theory of education can be defined? How can the feminist approach in teaching be revealed? Feminist philosophy is philosophy that is aimed at understanding and challenging the oppression of women. Feminist philosophy examines issues that are traditionally found in practical ethics and political philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology and philosophy of language. Under these circumstances Feminist Pedagogy seeks to connect social justice with learning and acknowledges a connection between power and knowledge in the learning environment. Knowledge is socially produced rather than individually produced. Feminist pedagogy disrupts power dynamics that undergird the traditional classroom. Rather than a classroom headed by an instructor who bequeaths knowledge to their students, feminist pedagogy creates a classroom of people dedicated to the co-construction of knowledge. Moreover, it is indicative the fact that feminist theories in education challenge traditional power structures and advocate for equitable learning environments for all genders. They critique existing educational systems, arguing they often perpetuate gender inequality and limit opportunities, especially for women and marginalized groups. Furthermore, feminist pedagogy emphasizes student empowerment, collaborative knowledge construction and challenging the status quo. Without doubt, core principles of Feminist Theory in Education is shared knowledge construction, meaning that teachers and students collaborate to co-construct knowledge, student empowerment, meaning that feminist pedagogy aims to empower students by valuing their experiences and voices, fostering critical thinking and encouraging active participation. In addition, we must be mentioned to address social justice, which recognizes the connection between social justice issues and learning, linking classroom dynamics to broader social inequalities.

Aim of this paper is to analyze feminist theory and its use in qualitative research in education, through theories such as Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism and Multicultural Feminism.

Key words: Feminism, Education, Philosophy, Pedagogy, Gender, Equality

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND TEACHER EVALUATION: RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENDER EQUITY IN GREEK SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teacher evaluation combines the promise of objectivity with significant risks of reinforcing existing inequalities. This study examines these dynamics in Greek secondary schools, with particular attention to gender equity. While AI is promoted as a tool for efficiency and fairness (European Commission, 2020; Barocas & Selbst, 2016), evidence shows that algorithmic systems can replicate entrenched inequalities (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018; Binns, 2017; Selbst et al., 2018). In Greece, where systematic teacher evaluation has only recently been introduced (OECD, 2023), the risks are acute. Women represent 68% of teachers but hold only 28% of principal positions (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2024). Algorithmic systems trained on historical data risk reproducing these disparities through biased promotion outcomes, gendered stereotypes in student feedback, underestimation of teachers in rural schools, and incomplete or anonymized data (Raji et al., 2020; Voutyrakou et al., 2025).

Greek educators have expressed concerns, stressing the need for transparency, participatory processes, and training (OECD, 2023). International frameworks such as the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2022) and the European Commission’s AI Act (2021) highlight accountability and oversight, while scholars emphasize fairness audits and human-in-the-loop validation (Rahwan, 2018; Raji et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Smith & Jones, 2024).

Methodologically, this study builds on a systematic literature review of international debates (Bulut et al., 2024), complemented by qualitative document analysis of Greek teacher appraisal policies (OECD, 2023) and European legislative frameworks (European Commission, 2021). A comparative perspective situates Greece within broader European and international experiences, ensuring that the proposed framework is both theoretically robust and context-sensitive.

To address these challenges, the study integrates Organizational Justice Theory (Colquitt, 2001), which prioritizes fairness and transparency in appraisal, with Gender Theory (Butler, 2006; Acker, 1990), which explains how organizational practices reproduce inequality. Building on human resource management and performance evaluation literature, a SMART hybrid framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) is proposed. The framework combines anonymized student records, peer reviews, and teacher self-assessments with algorithmic processing, human validation, and iterative fairness audits. Legal and financial constraints in Greek schools are acknowledged, making data triangulation and continuous auditing essential design features (Raji et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022). Comparable hybrid approaches internationally have been shown to enhance trust and fairness (Smith & Jones, 2024).

The contribution of this study is twofold: it addresses a clear research gap by systematically linking AI-assisted teacher evaluation with gender equity—a perspective rarely explored in Southern European contexts—and it develops an applied, context-sensitive framework that translates ethical principles into actionable policies. By embedding fairness audits, transparency mechanisms, and participatory validation, the model aligns with international ethical standards (UNESCO, 2022) and offers a practical roadmap for both policymakers and educators.

Policy implications include the need for AI literacy training for educators, the creation of independent auditing bodies to oversee algorithmic systems, and clear national guidelines to safeguard equity and privacy. By combining theoretical analysis with applied solutions, the study argues that only hybrid, participatory, and ethically guided frameworks can ensure AI serves as a tool for promoting—rather than undermining—gender fairness in education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Teacher Evaluation, Gender Equity, Ethical Innovation, Organizational Justice, Greece

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THE RELATION OF SELF-CONTROL, SELF-RESPECT AND SELF-ESTEEM IN FEMALE SCHOOL LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

The core tenets of effective leadership are self-control, self-respect, and self-esteem, especially for school administrators who deal with difficult social, emotional, and moral dilemmas on a daily basis. Effective school leadership is built on a foundation of self-control, which influences the growth of self-respect, which in turn fosters self-esteem. The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in the face of impulses and temptations is more specifically referred to as self-control.

High self-control makes it possible for school leaders to consistently exhibit tolerance, equity, and careful decision-making—even while under pressure. According to research, exercising self-control is crucial for upholding ethical norms and professional limits in addition to one's own well-being.

When people acknowledge and uphold their own ideals and values, self-respect emerges. School administrators can develop a sense of integrity by practicing self-control, which includes acting consistently and making moral decisions. Being able to match one's behaviors with one's underlying principles, especially in the midst of hardship, is a fundamental component of self-respect.

The general feeling of one's own value or worth is known as self-esteem. For school administrators, having self-respect is essential to having strong self-esteem. Leaders who exercise self-control and treat themselves with respect foster confidence in their skills and support a healthy self-image.

The path from self-control to self-respect and, eventually, to self-esteem is both transforming and fundamental for school leaders. Self-respect ensures a feeling of personal integrity, self-esteem gives leaders the confidence to act and motivate others, and self-control makes ethical leadership and resilience possible. Effective, moral, and influential educational leadership requires the development of these traits.

Gender stereotypes and elevated expectations are among the particular professional and cultural obstacles that female school leaders frequently face. It becomes a personal and professional necessity in this situation to develop self-control, self-respect, and self-esteem. Supporting female leaders in educational settings requires an understanding of how self-control serves as the cornerstone for self-respect, which in turn fosters self-esteem.

The ability to manage one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, particularly in the face of stress or provocation, is known as self-control. This ability is crucial for female

school administrators to meet the many demands of leadership, including resolving disputes, rendering fair judgments, and remaining composed in the face of criticism.

Leaders who continually behave in accordance with their values, despite external challenges, exhibit self-respect. Self-control is the key to self-respect for female school leaders because it enables them to maintain their morals and resist pressure to compromise.

Self-respect is the foundation of self-esteem, which is the feeling of one's own worth and self-assurance. Self-respect functions as “evidence” that supports self-esteem when female school leaders perceive themselves behaving with honor and morality.

To sum up, self-control is the crucial first step for female school leaders because it allows the development of self-respect, which forms the basis of self-esteem. When combined, these attributes enable women to successfully negotiate the particular difficulties of educational leadership with courage, honesty, and fortitude, which benefit both the women and the school communities.

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EXPLORING ECEC PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER AND PLAY IN THE NURSERY SETTING

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ABSTRACT

Gender stereotypes continue to subtly shape children's experiences in early childhood education, particularly through play which is an essential medium for learning and development in these early years. Gender dimensions are thought to be contributing to the development of identity and social skills. However, as stated by Kongidou (2010, 2015), gender related stereotypes influence play choices, limiting children's creativity and self-expression. The purpose of this study is to explore the views of pre-service Early Childhood Education and Care teachers in relation to the gender dimensions of play and the pedagogical role they believe they should adopt in managing these issues. This is considered important so that preservice educators will be empowered during their studies and practicum, in order to be able to support play practices that deconstruct social and gender stereotypes. Based on a larger scale ongoing study this study seek to explore the perceptions of 45 first year Early Childhood Education and Care pre-service teachers regarding the gender dimensions of play in Greece.

They were invited to respond to an online questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. Initial analysis of the findings indicates that while many pre service educators promote inclusive and open ended play, implicit biases can still guide toy selection, activity suggestions, and responses to children's choices. Boys are often encouraged toward physical, competitive, or construction-based play, while girls are more frequently steered toward nurturing, domestic, or artistic activities. These patterns may limit children’s social and cognitive growth by constraining their exploration of diverse roles and skills. The paper concludes by highlighting the need for critical reflection in pedagogical practices and suggests strategies for fostering gender equitable play environments that support all children’s development free from limiting stereotypes.

The pedagogical role is considered crucial, especially through collaboration with parents, in enhancing the cultivation of equal opportunities (Kogidou, 2020). The self-perception of undergraduate ECEC pre-service teachers as those creating positive change in non-gender specific play opportunities is promising and reinforces the need for continuous education and awareness. Promoting equality through play in early childhood requires pedagogical practices that respect and highlight diversity, break down stereotypes, offer a variety of play incidents and materials, and strengthen partnerships with parents and society. The role of the educator as a role model and supporter is crucial for the implementation of these goals. According to Kalemis and Kallini (2024, p. 12), —as educators, we need to know how gender role stereotypes influence the way students see the world and what images are presented to them in the classroom. We need to teach babies and young children how visual images influence their attitudes and prejudices. We need to discuss and dismantle stereotypes that appear

in popular culture and visual media, and it is strongly believed that this can be done from preschool age. Suggestions for future practices of ECEC pre-service teachers in supporting their pedagogical role is considered of high importance.

Key Words: ECEC pre-service teachers’ perspectives, gender stereotypes, early childhood play

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WOMEN AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES: BRIDGING THE DIGITAL SKILLS GAP

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: In today’s digital world, where technology is of paramount significance, there is an increasing demand for people skilled in information and communication technologies (ICT) (European Commission, 2025). Accordingly, UNESCO defined the term “digital skills” “...as a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. They (digital skills) enable people to create and share digital content, communicate and collaborate, and solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfillment in life, learning, work, and social activities at large.”(2023). In essence, digital skills entail two components: i. “the entry-level” digital skills, indicating basic functional skills required to employ and practice on digital devices and online applications, are generally regarded as a critical component of a new set of literacy skills in the digital era, including traditional reading, writing and numeracy skills; ii. “the advanced spectrum” of digital skills are the higher-level abilities that allow users to apply technologies such as cybersecurity, cloud computing, AI and Machine Learning, big data analytics, web development, digital marketing and e-commerce. In this regard, digital skills have shifted from “optional” to “critical” and need to be enhanced with transversal “soft skills”, namely the ability to communicate effectively in both online and offline mediums (UNESCO, 2023).

Methodology: The paper draws on existing literature research and applies a systematic document analysis/a systematic review. Electronic databases such as Web of Science (WoS), Scopus and Google Scholar, as well as documents by the European Commission (EC), UNESCO etc. will be extensively examined based on the search strategy pertaining to the purpose of this paper.

Discussion: However, there are still significant gender gaps, between men and women, in digital access, leadership, and participation, exacerbated by the i. limited access to decision-making positions, ii. societal stereotypes, iii. lack of education and iv. workplace discrimination. In particular, there are major inequalities focused on digital skills in both developing and developed countries, namely socio-economic status, race, gender, geography, age and educational background. Gender divides in digital skills are discouraging: women are 1.6 times more likely than men to report lack of digital skills as a factor impeding their use of digital technologies (UNESCO, 2023). It is noteworthy that acquiring new digital skills provides new potentials for i. women’s economic empowerment and financial independence; ii. diverse perspectives from women in technology bringing about more creative and innovative solutions; iii. bridging the digital gender divides (European Commission, 2025a & b; UNESCO, 2023).

Conclusion: To this end, strategies to promote digital skills for women entail the following key aspects: i. systematic collection of sex - disaggregated data for planning, designing, deploying implementing and evaluating public policies, including digital policies and tools; ii. designing and employing digital tools mindful of gender equality, bias and gender stereotypes; iii. motivating women and girls to acquire digital skills and competences; iv. building a solid and safe digital environment (including online platforms) for women and girls, in all their diversity, having isolated violence, sexism, hate speech, harassment, online bullying (European Commission, 2025; von der Leyen, 2024).

Key Words: Digital skills, Digital gender gap, Digital skills gap, New technologies, Women

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GENDERED PERSPECTIVES ON EQUITY, IDENTITY, AND BRANDING: THE CASE OF FEMALE-DOMINATED POSTGRADUATE COHORTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL HELLENIC UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to highlight that the experience of postgraduate women at the School of Economics and Business Administration, International Hellenic University (IHU) can be analyzed as an "In-between space"/Third space (Bhabha, 1994) where their own goals (career, identity, and self-improvement) meet the institutional frameworks (branding, reputation, and pedagogy). In this space IHU university branding is not just seen as a marketing tool, but as a mediating framework of equity and identity which also functions as a symbolic resource fostering belonging, recognition, and empowerment. The symbolic dimension of IHU branding—linked to teaching quality, cooperative culture, affordability, and inclusivity—emerges as a critical factor in the women's identity formation and belonging.

The research design comprised of structured online questionnaires (N=200) which gathered data on different aspects including socio-demographic backgrounds, employment status, study program, study motivations, institutional branding and reputation in the academic year 2022-23. Importantly, the study population is notable for its gender dynamics, as an impressive 84% of the individuals in the study group were women. The findings highlighted three related facets of the gendered student experience. First, women's representation in the sample underscores their heightened participation in PG study. This pattern resonates with more general trends observed across Europe, as women have increasingly availed themselves of PG degrees as a means of advancing their career, increasing employability, and achieving professional status in a competitive job marketplace. The fact that the primary motivations for enrolling in PG study were career advancement (69%) and personal development (46%) aligns with Leathwood & Read (2009) and Morley (2014) suggesting that women are primarily motivated to enter PG study to improve employment prospects and career advancement. Second, while both female and male participants highlighted cost, a

public university, and online study as desirable characteristics of PG study, women particularly prioritized flexibility and accessibility in distance learning.

To conclude, this research paper sought to contribute to the discussions on equity, inclusion, and student empowerment, in HE, demonstrating how identities not only permeate the motivations to pursue PG, but also the meanings integrated in it. Last but not least, it highlighted the need for gender-sensitive perspectives in PG education and university branding policies.

Key Words: Gender Identities, Greek postgraduate education, university branding

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