



SOCIO-EMOTIONAL, CREATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SKILLS IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT: TEACHERS' VIEWS

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Abstract:

Today, more than ever, there is a need to integrate socio-emotional competencies and creative skills into the formal education of children and adolescents to promote sustainable development. To this end, teachers' role is not only pivotal but also multifaceted and in order to respond effectively to everyday challenges and demands,

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emphasis should be given to their ongoing professional development. This research study aims to explore the views of primary education teachers regarding the development and management of students' socio-emotional, creative and sustainable skills. The sample of the research consisted of 214 teachers from Greece, all master's degree graduates. The results indicate that Greek teachers support the socio-emotional development of their students, prioritizing, however, the cognitive role of the school. It was also found that, even though they are generally positive towards creativity and sustainability, they lack knowledge of relevant techniques that develop these skills. In conclusion, the educational system should support and develop students in a holistic approach, preparing them to acquire not only knowledge but also skills essential for the active citizen of the 21st century.

Keywords: conflict resolution, stress management, diversity recognition, risk-taking compliance, creative problem-solving, active citizenship

1. Introduction

It is obvious that today, more than ever, substantial changes are taking place both for our country and for humanity, regarding our development and our future. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), along with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and nanotechnology, have evolved spectacularly with applications, among others, in healthcare, electronics, pharmacies, architecture, mathematics, games, with cost-effectiveness and reduction in human error for AI (Gökçearslan *et al.*, 2024), with medical-engineers at the University of Arizona working on bacterium-sized biological computers that could be injected into people's circulatory systems to "hunt down" cancer cells, for nanotechnology making the vision of the ancient Myrmikidis from Miletus or Athens somewhat real. It concerns a craftsman who, together with Callicrates, built a quadriga with a driver so small that one could cover it with a fly's wing, as Pliny the Elder mentions in his work *Naturalis Historia* (Xanthacou *et al.*, 2025). And this is creative thinking, openness to experimentation and to the evolution of culture.

On the other hand, Janus in our time also shows another, less rosy side. Revisionist tactics, conflicts, and geopolitical redefinitions, along with economic crisis and the rapidly worsening climate crisis, are decoding a period of major uncertainty, making things more complicated, with no easy recipes for a solution and a "turn for the better". In recent years, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of ICTs has inevitably changed, with constant connectivity of individuals, that is to some extent, "pathological use of the internet", through interactive platforms, multimedia content, virtual experiences, providing a digital environment, that can lead to high levels of stress, anxiety, disorders and screen addiction in young people and adults. The general population, adults as well as the internet generation (iGen) or generation Z (born between 1995 and 2012) and generation A (born between 2013 and 2025), live connected to the internet, with the younger ones having been "socialized" mainly through mobile, DVDs,

computer or video games, social media. For example, in Spain and not only, research in 2021 also showed that the use of the internet in individuals aged 15 to 44 is 98%, at risk for developing possible health and mental health problems (Aragay *et al.*, 2024). In a similar study in Greece (Triada *et al.*, 2023), with participants aged between 18 and 35 years old, it has been shown that the use and misuse of the internet and social media create a feeling of loneliness as an emotional state observed in all age groups, and it can lead to behavioral dependence and psychological problems.

iGen-Gen Z and Gen A are characterized, according to research, by a decline in cognitive and emotional intelligence, with the latter also exhibiting attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity and autism spectrum disorder. Generation Z shows increased anxiety and depressive symptoms, with 20-25% of Generation A having developmental problems. Especially in Greece, 1 in 4 adolescents suffers from a mental disorder (Chrousos, 2025, p. 46-47).

All the above, with their positive and negative specific points, are warning bells for families, schools, communities, and societies, so that harmful behaviors should be prevented as much as possible, especially for the younger generations, to ensure well-being in the immediate future. The metaverse, as Stephenson prophetically named it in his novel *Snow Crash*, is now here (Xanthacou *et al.*, 2025). As Gramsci aptly says, "*the old world is dying, and the new one is struggling to be born: now it's the world of monsters!*".

Living in the digital era and interacting with others, how will we reduce the increasing daily aggression among juveniles, with gangs and bullying phenomena (even at the kindergarten level in our country), where these actions are simultaneously videotaped by juvenile observers? How will we meet demands that argue that solving complex problems requires creativity and emotional intelligence, skills necessary for active citizenship in our century? How will we address challenges, such as overcoming diseases, poverty and environmental degradation, with the aim of sustainability? What are the measures that adult society, parents, teachers, and the official state take so that the future is truly sustainable for the coming years, for the coming generations? A future more inclusive, more human, with emotion regulation from the participants, with empathy towards others.

1.1 Socio-emotional, creative and sustainable skills for the school of the 21st century

Being professors and researchers in higher education, we focus on the school and possibly on parts that are under-functioning today, shaping dystopia in programs, plans or in teacher training.

Today, international organizations (e.g. WHO, OECD, UNESCO), as well as studies on new trends in education, underline the value of 'Life Skills' for a productive life. These skills refer to personal actions, actions towards others and the environment. Skills, such as self-awareness, empathy, decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, creative thinking, critical thinking, emotion and stress regulation, qualify for multiple benefits (educational, social, cultural) (Saravanakumar, 2020; Tsoli & Babalis, 2023).

The focus of interest is no longer on the one who knows a lot, the 'generalist', but neither on the 'specialist'. Today, we are looking for a resourceful person with a fertile mind, who builds relationships and encourages lifelong learning, the 'versatilist' (Schleicher, as cited in Trevallion & Cusanelli, 2021, p. 10).

Researchers, governments and international organizations are promoting policies in favor of sustainability, socio-emotional learning and creativity, always with education as a background.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) promote Education for Sustainability (EfS), where individuals must transform the way they think and act; that is, individuals as agents of change. EfS adopts, after the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda, where "...all learners acquire the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity..." (Papavasileiou, 2015; United Nations, 2015, as cited in García-González *et al.*, 2020, p.2).

"The current education system around the world in a few years will resemble a steam engine that is slowly running out of steam", write Robinson and Aronica (2019). The utilization of multi-logical, multi-directional thinking, that is, the utilization of all forms of thinking, divergent-creative-lateral thinking and convergent-critical-vertical-analytical-logical thinking, mental fluency and flexibility, frustration tolerance, risk-taking, sensitivity to environmental problems, a playful disposition, empathy and creative problem-solving, are among other creative skills with which we must equip children, future citizens, at school and in the job market later (Papavasileiou *et al.*, 2020; Xanthacou, 2011). Creativity and innovation are key competencies of the 21st century in our postmodern societies.

Finally, with a view to screen addiction among younger generations, not only in our country, and based on the giant aggressive behavior almost daily in Greece by children and adolescents, studies show that some things in the field of education and school have been done imperfectly or at least with zero result. Health and mental health researchers point out that school, as well as everyday life and the labor market, are social spaces where social and emotional learning is crucial for a balanced and happy development of individuals, groups, and communities (OECD, 2015). Socio-emotional skills, such as self-awareness, self-knowledge, emotional control, impulse control, social awareness, empathy, emotion regulation, cooperation-relationships-participation, internal motivation, ability to produce creative solutions in conflicts and responsible decision-making, enhance resilience, adaptability and ultimately mental health. Socio-emotional skills are proven, through research in schools (Durlak *et al.*, 2015; Osher *et al.*, 2016; Schoon, 2021), that they seem to reduce behavioral bullying and problems and enhance school performance, creating supportive environments where students feel safe and simultaneously that they are understood in the school environment and valued as entities.

Despite the obvious benefits, however, it is apparent that sustainable and socio-emotional skills, beyond rhetoric, have not actually actively entered formal education and teacher education and training (Alam, 2022). Even if some teachers implement special programs-for example, socio-emotional learning- they find it very difficult to integrate them into the curriculum in the daily teaching approach, either due to a lack of teacher training (Ferreira *et al.*, 2020; Xanthacou *et al.*, 2025), or due to poor planning on the part of formal institutions, or due to resistance to new, different learning approaches. There is also the case that teachers recognize the value of creative skills but refuse to integrate them into the planned curriculum (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2025).

Finally, what do primary school teachers believe regarding the development and management of socio-emotional, creative and sustainable skills in students? This constitutes the field of our empirical research in this paper.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of the study is to investigate the views of primary education teachers regarding the development and management of students' socio-emotional, creative and sustainable skills. More specifically, the study investigates whether:

- Teachers recognize and utilize the diversity of the children without disapproving of their choices.
- Teachers favor cooperation, interactions and exchanges of children with classmates, the school unit and, more widely, other groups of the community.
- Teachers recognize the interests and talents of children outside the culture of conventional education as well.
- Teachers know the characteristics of creative problem-solving.
- Teachers use approaches to control children's impulsiveness before making decisions.
- Teachers manage phenomena of fruitless, wild competition and children's conflicts in the school environment.
- Teachers perceive subtle signs of children's violence in the form of "virtue signaling".
- Teachers qualify attempts to change a person as an escape from the daily routine dictated by the person's curiosity.
- Teachers recognize "defective social spaces" in the school area.

2.2 Means of Data Collection and Survey Sample

The teachers were asked to answer a questionnaire regarding their views by answering a total of 12 "open-ended" questions in the form of scenarios. These scenarios were largely adopted from international literature (real events, stories-narratives, myths). The axes of the questionnaire were: impulse control, conflict resolution, stress management, bullying 'hotspots', collaboration, conflict-violence phenomena among students, diversity

recognition, cooperation, risk-taking compliance, knowledge of the interests of children outside the culture of conventional formal education, creative problem-solving, active citizenship. It is a broader study, a part of which has been used here for the needs of this publication.

The research sample consisted of a total of 214 primary education teachers, all master's degree graduates in humanities, school counseling and school psychology. The selection of teachers in the sample was based on the ease of access the research team had to various graduate students working as teachers and to various schools from a wide number of regions in the country.

2.3 Statistical Analysis Method

For the purposes of this study, only descriptive and statistical data are presented. Percentage frequency distributions are shown in table form.

3. Findings and Discussion

The first question (Table 1) refers to a fantastic story. *"Once upon a time, on the edge of a forest, there lived a farmer who took care of his fields. One day, he met a hungry weasel. He fed it, he took care of it, they became friends. The people who were seeing them together said, "Throw it away. It's wild. It will harm you." Years passed. The farmer got married. He had a little girl. They all lived together. People were asking him to get rid of the weasel. One day, when he returned home, he saw the weasel at the door with blood on it. The farmer kills it on the spot. He runs to the crib, the baby was sleeping; next to it a big, dead snake".* How could you use this story in your classroom with your students? Choose only one answer....

Table 1. Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding students' impulse control before decision-making

Responses	N	%
To be careful and cautious when interacting with wildlife and family, especially when there are small children. These animals belong in their own habitat.	4	1,9
To discover the meanings of history and connect them to everyday situations and relationships (with friends, relatives, etc.).	116	54,2
To think about what they would do if they were in the farmer's shoes, to find and record solutions to avoid the sad outcome of the story.	65	30,4
I wouldn't tell it. Such stories don't interest today's children.	5	2,3
Something else. What?	24	11,2
Total	214	100

Most teachers (54,2%) emphasize the 'understanding of the meaning' as a favorite mental process, and it is systematically cultivated in formal educational practice (Xanthacou & Kaila, 2011). However, it is worth noting that a satisfactory percentage of respondents (30,4%) choose to approach the story's scenario by inviting students to manage the protagonist's "outburst of impulsiveness" and place themselves in the farmer's shoes. Guided by empathy, they invite children to record solutions to avoid the sad outcome of

the story. The roles here are more active. The value of prevention, initiative, solution-finding, involvement and discussion around early criticism and prejudice is strengthened.

The second question (Table 2) aims to explore the respondents' views regarding children's stressful manifestations when given an assessment criterion. Where do teachers attribute this behavior?

Table 2: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding children's stressful manifestations during assessment

Responses	N	%
They don't know the content; that's why they can't answer.	13	6,1
They don't know how to read and memorize the content.	5	2,3
They don't have a positive self-image and self-confidence.	29	13,6
They have learning problems that haven't been addressed properly.	6	2,8
They can't handle pressure; they can't deal with the stress of tests.	146	68,2
Something else. What?	15	7
Total	214	100

Most of the respondents mainly focus on the psycho-emotional dimension of the problem, specifying that *"they can't handle pressure"* (68,2%) or/and *"they don't have positive self-image and self-confidence"* (13,6%), while bypassing the cognitive factor.

In the supplementary question to the teachers, if there is a possibility to help the individual, all of them answered affirmatively. What interventions do the teachers of the sample finally suggest? (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding the type of intervention-assistance in students' stressful reactions during assessment

Responses	N	%
Intervention in the psycho-emotional dimension of the problem.	120	56,1
Intervention in the cognitive dimension of the problem.	76	35,5
Something else. What?	18	8,4
Total	214	100

Most teachers (56,1%) are in favor of psycho-emotional intervention-assistance towards the student. And this is manifested by support and reinforcement: a) at an interpersonal level, between teacher-student: *"with the development of healthy relationships, intimacy and trust. To make children feel satisfied and happy in school", "the student may not have had opportunities for experiences of success. He is afraid of failure. He must be given the opportunity to speak ..."* and b) at a collective level, assistance to the student, by involving in the 'communication game' and other agencies, such as family and a specialist scientist in the school area: *"with the help of the teacher, parents and a specialist, so that he learns to manage such situations", "assessment should also be given to groups, so that after joint work and cooperation, he can receive help", "cultivate a climate in the classroom, where mistakes are not condemned"*. It concerns approaches that are, to some extent, related to strategies, such as

“positive education” or “positive schooling”, where schools serve as a living lab for social and emotional behavior (Ronen & Kerret, 2020, p. 6).

It is worth noting, however, that many teachers (35,5%) point out intervention in students at the cognitive level: *“I encourage it discreetly to proceed to subsequent assessment tests to unblock it”, “to teach children ways of learning and consolidating the content”, “the child can be helped by going through the process of taking other tests, such as a project”*.

Although the necessity of transforming education into a sustainable education that looks forward to sustainable well-being, mental resilience and well-being for all is strongly expressed, it seems that the education sector remains slow to adapt, because the ‘weights’ of the formal, uniform evaluation and job competition are dragging it down.

The theme of wild competition is covered by the next question-scenario: *“Two friends are leisurely enjoying the scenery on a trip to Africa. Suddenly, they see a cheetah from far coming towards them. One gets up and runs as fast as he can. The other sits down and puts on his shoes. “What are you doing? Run”, the first shouts. “Leave the shoes now”. “Wrong”, replies the second one. “What I need now is to run faster than you”*. The scenario explores the phenomenon through three questions:

- A. What thoughts and feelings does the above story evoke in you? (Table 4)
- B. What are the most common types of similar behaviors? (Table 5)
- C. How could you better process such phenomena with your students? (Table 6)

Table 4: Distribution of the teachers’ responses of the sample regarding their views on the wild competition of the scenario

Responses	N	%
Attempts to think, analyze, understand and draw conclusions; rationalizes.	99	46,3
Contrasts the behaviors of the two friends in terms of values (good-bad, impulsive-calm, ...)	47	21,9
Expresses a concise monologue of negative emotions (fear, anger, sadness, terror, anxiety, disgust, etc.).	41	19,2
Attempts to connect the content of the scenario with reality-current events.	27	12,6
Total	214	100

As can be seen from the responses of the subjects of the sample, a large percentage of teachers (46,3%) present thoughts and emotions by resorting to popular tactics, such as analysis, understanding, logic, conclusion and lessons learned. They say: *“those two are friends, they are together on the journey ... Why would one want to run faster than the other? Of course, putting on shoes is correct. He will run faster”, or “...composure is the best way to deal with a difficult situation”*. With the mechanism of denial, the content of the scenario is smoothed, either by resorting to indefinites, such as *“functional assumptions can be proved detrimental”*, or by completely rejecting the scenario, such as *“I would hesitate to mention it in class, because it gives the message that the strongest-smartest will survive”*, or finally by resorting to lessons, such as *“I go slowly to arrive quickly”, “let him who saves himself be saved”*, etc. The tactic of sterilization deprives the scenario of its symbolic fabric, its silent

messages, its fruitful connections. Fruitful discussions about disappointment, failure and life upheavals have no place in school.

A smaller number of teachers (21,9%) contrast the behaviors of the two friends in the story in terms of values, such as: *"it makes me concerned, because the first thinks about the second and is good for him, while the second acts inhumanly and not with collective action"*, or *"I distinguish the feeling of competition of the second person and the altruism of the first"*. However, there are also cases where the confrontation takes on a different purpose, where one's kindness seems to be identical with weakness or stupidity, such as *"I feel admiration for the mature confrontation of the second person. The first turns his back on the problems, the second stands in front of the problem and tries to deal with it"*. The cunning of the 'shoer' is equalized with intelligence, the ability to survive; characteristics that are preferred in the era of late modernity (Rosa, 2021) in the everyday life of the 'flexible person' (Sennett, 2009) who trembles at the idea of failure.

To a lesser extent (19,2%), the content of the scenario transmits messages of potential danger, where the subjects of the sample react with short or one-word answers, such as *"I feel anxious, scared"*. Without the advantages of hope and optimism, the scenario with the cheetah prevents teachers from connecting with real-life phenomena and current events. And obviously there is no reason to discuss them with their students. Where do teachers identify similar behaviors to those in the scenario? (Table 5)

Table 5: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample
 regarding their identification of similar wild competitive behaviors

Responses	N	%
Mainly among my students.	62	29,1
Mainly among my students' parents.	51	23,8
Mainly among my colleagues.	78	36,4
Somewhere else. Where?	23	10,7
Total	214	100

Many interviewees identify competitive situations in adult colleagues (36,4%) and parents of students (23,8%), with the society of students - classmates being prone to impulse, absence of control and competition for a percentage 29,1%. And because every childhood delinquency has a prehistory that was built on what we did not see or did not want to see, a typical and cold school climate that does not favor the "art" of spontaneous, warm communication, of active cooperation, cannot easily de-escalate tensions between children. If we add the role of parents who are usually permissive and lenient with their children, but strict with the children of others, the school setting turns into a field of barren conflicts, indifference and a meeting of "strangers".

In response to the question of how you could better process competition phenomena with students, the teachers made the following choices (Table 6):

Table 6: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding ways of best processing competition phenomena with their students

Responses	N	%
By direct one-on-one discussion with students who exhibit similar behaviors and come to my attention.	38	17,8
By indirect approaches of analysis and discussion, with the help of relevant texts, together with all students.	107	50
By reporting and describing current events on social media (e.g., a seventeen-year-old girl was beaten and left helpless on the road).	54	25,2
In another way. How?	15	7
Total	214	100

It is found that teachers largely prefer (50%) to process "difficult" topics through indirect approaches of analysis and discussion rather than through reporting and describing current events on social media (25,2%) or even through direct discussion with students who exhibit competitive behaviors (17,8%). Teachers prefer to suggest techniques, such as role-playing, experiential actions, 'allegories', 'indirect parallels'. Social awareness, quick social conception, initiative-taking, decision-making and actions around issues, such as health, road behavior, human and animal abuse, may be considered to shock and burden children and mainly concern adults.

Socio-emotional skills and life skills exist in several educational systems around the world, with programs that focus on relationships, self-control and social support, programs for teachers and students with very positive results in intervention and prevention (Ronen & Kerret, 2020).

The next question is about a scenario that explores teachers' opinions on adult corrective interventions in the face of arguments between children (Table 7). *"Three students fight in the schoolyard. They have found a half-broken electronic game on the street. The first student claims it, because he found it. The second claims it, because he knows how to fix it. The third one claims it because he is poor and has no games".*

Table 7: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding adult interventions in the face of children's claims disputes

Responses	N	%
Let the children manage the problem themselves	47	22
Intervene and ...	167	78
Total	214	100

We see that a large majority of teachers (78%) believe that it is appropriate to intervene either: a) by compromise and sharing, strengthening cooperation in the game, *"to play together, to join forces, because in that way it will be more fun", "to share the responsibilities, the child who knows how to make it should do it, and then give it to the child who found it to play, and finally to the poor child with the promise that all three children will share in recess",* or b) by reflecting and looking for solutions the children themselves, with the aim of developing negotiation skills and awareness of behaviors. *"I would let the children express their*

arguments so that we can have a discussion to realize the three different mindsets, namely entitlement, skill, self-pity", or finally c) by reprimanding and removing the game in order to avoid conflict, "I will say that if they do not agree on the game, I will take it because in this way no one deserves to have it".

The next question-scenario refers to an educational program that was implemented in the Oklahoma region (Robinson and Aronica, p. 267-270) called "book buddies" and includes cooperative procedures between kindergarten children and elderly people from a nursing home. A program that "breaks" conventional perspectives of exchanges with successful results for both children and the elderly. What are the views of the teachers in the sample regarding this project? (Table 8).

Table 8: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding the cooperation and interaction of children with different groups of the community

Responses	N	%
Positive view.	206	96,3
Negative view.	8	3,7
Something else. What?	0	0
Total	214	100

The vast majority of teachers (96,3%) are positive about the cooperation of different ages. They claim: "reading together expresses care, exchange of experiences, inclusion", "both sides benefit. The elderly gain a new goal, they feel useful", "it is hopeful to cultivate respect for the elderly but also the older to come back close to the child within them". Few are cautious or dismissive towards this idea (3,7%), referring either to the 'generation gap' or to the fact that "the teacher should do his job without the intervention of external factors".

The next question explores teachers' views on the management of some of the signs of violence in student interactions, through "virtue signaling", which start as jokes to end up in bullying and beatings. The scenario is based on a Snoopy celebration. Celebrations have always produced emotional and mental release. How do teachers react if they hear children declare that they are celebrating because they were slapped in a 'happy slapping', i.e., an online spanking dating? What is the most favorable strategy for managing the problem on the part of teachers? (Table 9).

Table 9: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding the establishment of 'strange' celebrations

Responses	N	%
I'm not doing anything. I believe that we should not control children's spontaneous, humorous thoughts and feelings.	7	3,3
It surprises me; I can't easily understand the "happy slapping phase"; I need to be informed.	32	15
Without referring to the specific child, I would open a discussion in the class about what celebration and fun are, and what feelings they evoke in us.	158	73,8
Something else. What?	17	7,9
Total	214	100

A vast majority of teachers prefer (73,8%) discussions, reflection and exchange of opinions in the classroom, so that students can understand the pathological symptoms that are perceived as fun by children -spanking dates-, are circulating on the internet and are evolving into brutality. Some of them do not seem to be informed (15%), while a very small percentage do not want to intervene in children's humorous events (3,3%).

The next question-scenario arises from the teenage experiences of Matt Groening-known throughout the world as the creator of The Simpsons (Robinson and Aronica, p. 21-23). Through this, the artist's strong motivation, self-motivation and personal involvement in the learning process of the field of his interests emerge. He himself as a teenager, narrates: *"I found friends who had the same interests, we hung out and drew comics. We brought them to school and presented them to each other. As we got older, we got better, we started making movies. Instead of going to football games, we went to the local university and watched movies. They told us that we can do all this later, after we finish school"*. What advice do teachers give to these children (Table 10)?

Table 10: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding children's "different" interests

Responses	N	%
To continue cultivating their interests, but after school, in their leisure time.	128	59,8
To focus on their lessons, because they are missing out on the school content that is essential for their future development.	2	0,9
Something else. What?	84	39,3
Total	214	100

It is found that the majority of the teachers (59,8%) state that the children in the scenario should continue to cultivate their interests, but after school, in their leisure time. The academic route takes precedence. School learning seems to have a strong weight, with interest-based learning being included in the 'hobby' category.

However, there is also a strong percentage (39,3%) that chooses the "other" category, where teachers express themselves with a variety of views: a. to make the individual collective, *"I would ask them if they wanted to present it to the class plenary"* b. to use talent in a future profession to invest in their friends and interests, *"I would make reference to how important it is to think together with friends and even with common interests"*, c. to integrate the interests of children in the school context, *"I would try to integrate the cinema, the drawing, humor into the daily learning process"*.

The next question-scenario is derived from a fable from Bettelheim's (1995) work: *"The Charm of Fairy Tales"*, where *in the jungle of Africa there lived a flying monkey named Pepper. One day Pepper wanted to go to the big city. There, people tried to trap it and put it in a cage. Pepper escaped and returned to the jungle*. The question records teachers' views regarding attempts at change that may also have elements of risk, as an escape from routine and are prohibited by curious dispositions (Table 11).

Table 11: Distribution of the teachers' responses of
 the sample regarding attempted changes with elements of risk

Responses	N	%
The environment in which Pepper lived was ideal, surrounded by greenery and freedom. He should appreciate it and feel lucky.	13	6,1
Curiosity 'burned' Pepper. What was a monkey doing, especially a flying one, in the big city? He had to do what the other monkeys did.	3	1,4
It was an experience for Pepper. And since he was flying, he wanted to get to know the big city. It wasn't easy to catch him, he thought.	106	49,5
Something else. What?	92	43
Total	214	100

The majority of respondents (49,5%) believe that the 'flying monkey', overcoming personal and social obstacles, tried to enjoy the city experience. He used his diversity as an advantage -he flew- and succumbed to the challenge and curiosity about the unknown. A slightly smaller percentage (43%) chose the category "something else", emphasizing issues related to diversity, tolerance, and acceptance. *"Diversity sometimes functions negatively and causes fear. People try to adapt to it"*. Or issues related to risk, overcoming fear and psychological resilience. *"We must get out of our shell, have the courage to discover new things"*. Or even issues related to the consequences of the venture. In preference for the known, the data is better: *"Better first in the village than second in the city"*, *"curiosity can often imprison us"*.

The next question records teachers' concerns regarding the connection between phenomena of violence, conflicts, and delinquency among children with the spatial configuration of the school, the neighborhood and if they identify what researchers call a 'defective social space' in their school (Table 12).

Table 12: Distribution of the teachers' responses of
 the sample regarding "defective social spaces"

Responses	N	%
Yes (I have noticed)	84	39,3
No (I have not noticed)	130	60,7
Total	214	100

Most teachers (60,7%) state that they have not identified any conflict phenomena in any area of the school. However, the statements of the teachers who responded positively consider that the size, density and maintenance of the school play an important role: *"when a school is large, with no downgraded and unruly students. When there are 'blind spaces' that are not distinguished from the supervisors, all of this constitutes a cause for argument"*. Some ideas for teachers that would stop these phenomena are an increase in yard supervision, discussion with parents and students, shaping yard areas into pleasant areas, such as play areas and other factors of positive relaxation.

In the next scenario, *the teachers have taken 5-year-old children from a kindergarten in Bern for a walk to an aqueduct, explaining to them the genius of the construction. Then the*

children are asked to draw the aqueduct. Observing the drawings, they saw the drawing of a child who had put shoes on the pillars of the aqueduct. How do teachers evaluate this drawing? (Table 13).

Table 13: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding the acceptance of diversity

Responses	N	%
The child may have a problem with perception and understanding	65	30,4
Perhaps the child does not like drawing, is bored with drawing	8	3,7
Perhaps the child does not know how to draw, some drawing lessons would be good	0	0
Something else. What?	141	65,9
Total	214	100

The majority of teachers (65,9%) choose the category of "something else", that is, the freedom of their opinions. Their statements are directed in two directions: a. The child is a personified aqueduct. *"Drawing is free, there are no rules"*. And b) *"the child is showing some problem"*. *"He is probably in a bad situation"*. *"I would ask the child himself why he drew like that"*, while some teachers state that *"the child has a problem with perception and understanding"*. This question aims to explore teachers' views about issues of recognizing the diversity in special talents of students by avoiding premature criticism and evaluation of their productions. It is based on Steiner & Adler's (2022, p. 96) description of a childhood production by the painter called Paul Klee!

The next question-scenario aims to explore whether teachers can distinguish between a conventional standardized clearly defined problem and creative problem-solving. The scenario was asking 5-year-old children the following: *"Margarita had six balloons. Two broke. How many balloons does she have now? Use your papers and colors and paint the remaining balloons"*. The teachers were asked if the above activity is a creative problem-solving activity (Table 14).

Table 14: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding creative problem-solving

Responses	N	%
Yes (it's creative problem-solving).	105	49,1
No (it's not creative problem-solving).	91	42,5
Something else. What?	18	8,4
Total	214	100

As it seems, teachers' views are divided into those who consider the problem to be creative (49,1%) and those who believe it is not (42,5%). The teachers with a positive view justify their choice by the presence of balloons and colors during the development of the activity. They do not focus at all on the absence of motivation and curiosity, namely the fact that the activity in question does not forcefully cause the child to get involved in the search for answers through a 'riddle', something paradoxical and mysterious, namely what happens to a creative solver. The teachers, moreover, who declare that it is not a

creative problem, claim that *"it is a typical mathematical problem; it has a complete step-by-step guide and limits the children"*.

The next question-scenario aims to investigate how the school culture manages environmental issues, how it shapes *"the school class that cares"* about the environment, whether it knows the mechanisms of nature and is inspired by it. In this scenario, reference is made to the framework of programs for the protection of marine ecosystems and coastal areas, where teachers ask students to create signs and place them on the beach. The texts on the signs are as follows: *I keep the sea and the beach clean, and plastics kill the turtles*. What do teachers believe about this activity? (Table 15).

Table 15: Distribution of the teachers' responses of the sample regarding the approach to environmental issues and problems

Responses	N	%
I approve (the activity in question)	157	73,4
I reject (the activity in question)	29	13,5
Something else. What?	28	13,1
Total	214	100

The vast majority of teachers (73,4%) approve the proposed activity on the grounds that *"it involves children experientially and creatively"*, *"children acquire environmental awareness, a sense of responsibility and the value of collective effort"*, *"it is an activity outside the classroom and cultivates the concept of active citizenship"*. The very small minority of teachers who reject the activity (13,5%), justify their opinion: *"The message is aggressive"*. *"It would be good if positive phrases were used for children"*, e.g. the phrase *'plastics kill turtles'* shows something bad".

Sloganeering with the use of *"we must"*, navigating the surface of things and impressionism cannot feed the spirit and attitude of the active citizen. The child must understand from an early age that there is a mutual interdependence within our natural world and that millions of species work together to create the life that is provided to us for free. And yes, the plastics do kill turtles and not only. Therefore, education should not be afraid of words, but of the consequences of foolish actions. Education should be brave and creative.

4. Conclusion and Further Research

The present research aims to detect teachers' views regarding developing-managing socio- emotional, creative and sustainable skills in the school environment with their students. Teachers submitted their views in a questionnaire with open-ended questions in the form of scenarios. The axes of the questionnaire were: impulse control, conflict resolution, stress management, bullying 'hotspots', collaboration, conflict-violence phenomena among students, diversity recognition, cooperation, risk-taking compliance, knowledge of the interests of children and outside the culture of conventional, formal education, creative problem-solving, active citizenship.

The sample of the research was a total of 214 teachers, all master's degree graduates, from a wide number of regions of the country. The sample selection method has its limitations. The results of the study cannot be generalized to the entire population of Greek teachers, because the sample was recruited by convenience sampling.

What do Greek teachers say about the above topics?

A. Socio-emotional skills

- 1) Regarding the skill of impulse control, the vast majority of teachers focus on children's understanding of the meaning of the story-scenario and the accompanying conclusions-lessons learned; a popular process that is cultivated in typical educational practice.
- 2) Regarding students' stressful manifestations when assigning an evaluation, the vast majority of teachers focus on the psycho-emotional dimension of the problem, conveniently bypassing the cognitive factor. Regarding the type of intervention, half of the teachers focus on helping the psycho-emotional dimension by strengthening the child's self-confidence on an interpersonal and collective level, without forgetting, however, the cognitive part, by teaching ways of learning and consolidating the content, while almost a quarter of them are oriented mainly to the cognitive sector and the concept of evaluation.
- 3) Regarding the views of teachers on issues of wild competition, the vast majority of respondents resort to popular approaches: analysis-understanding- logic- criticism- conclusion- lesson learned. Regarding where similar competitive behaviors are found, teachers mainly emphasize that they are between colleagues, while disputes between students follow. Furthermore, regarding the intervention of teachers in the face of disagreements-conflicts between students, the majority of respondents prefer indirect approaches of analysis and discussion through texts, with the tendency to distance children from real situations and discussions about current problems that abound, among other things, on social media. On the other hand, in an intense argument between students aiming to claim an object-game, teachers in their capacity seem to manage the issue with corrective interventions, such as compromises, negotiation, and sharing among themselves.
- 4) Regarding students' cooperation, interaction and exchanges with different community groups, the vast majority of teachers-postgraduates are positive. The results are similar for this scenario in previous research with teachers without master's degrees (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2025).
- 5) Regarding the management of some uncontrollable signals of violence in student interactions through 'virtue signaling' that start as jokes to end up in bullying and online spanking dating, a fact that children perceive as fun, a joke, a game, the majority of respondents refuse to exchange views in class to understand the pathological symptom that is meant as fun for children. Regarding the connection between the phenomena of violence, conflicts, and delinquency of children with the spatial configuration of the school, the

majority of teachers respond that they have not noticed, while one third of the sample supports the opposite, referring to degraded spaces and places where children gather, while they themselves believe that the ongoing bullying can be addressed in a timely manner with the participation of parents, children and teachers.

B. Creative skills

- 1) Regarding teachers' views on students' cultivation of different talents, interests and personal involvement in learning processes outside school, the majority of teachers-postgraduates (59,8%) agree with the comment, however, "...*after school, in their leisure time*", without burdening their academic route, while in a previous survey (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2025), 63% of teachers without master's degrees gave the same answer.
- 2) Regarding the recognition of the diversity and special talents of the students by avoiding premature criticism and evaluation of their production, the majority of teachers give priority to the 'other answer' (65,9%), with their answers attributing the issue to the child's vivid imagination (about half of them) and the other half to attribute problems of perception and understanding of the child. But if we also consider problems of perception and understanding (30,4%), we conclude that the vast majority of teachers-postgraduates agree more with this attitude. In a previous study with teachers without master's degrees (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2025), a third of them recognize the special talent of the child in the scenario, while one third of them interpret the production as an indication of some problem that concerns the child. We must not forget that in the present scenario, the production of the child concerned the later painter, Paul Klee.
- 3) Regarding the inquisitive, adventurous, risky and uncertain nature of the person-hero of the scenario, the teachers, both those with master's degrees and those without (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2025) -half of the sample for both cases- are generally positive.
- 4) Regarding teachers' knowledge (both those with master's degrees and those without -Nikolaou *et al.*, 2025) of the 'creative problem-solving' technique, it seems that they do not distinguish (the majority of them for teachers without master's degrees, half of them for those with master's degrees) a creative problem from standardized closed-type exercise. At the same time, they think that materials, colors, etc. are enough for children to express themselves creatively!

C. Sustainable-Environmental skills

- 5) With reference to activities that refer to slogans and "routines" of the traditional school in relation to environmental issues, teachers without master's degrees (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2025), in the great majority (84%), as well as

teachers with master's degrees in the great majority (73.4%), approve them spectacularly and even describe them as creative. Thus, the ignorance of teachers is highlighted, as in the case of creative problem-solving regarding creative techniques.

In conclusion, Greek teachers with postgraduate studies, in terms of children's impulse control skills, focus on understanding the meaning of the scenario, the analysis, the criticism and the lesson learned; a popular process in formal education. The same process is observed in issues of wild competition, and the same techniques are applied to students, as well as to victims of violence through "virtue signaling" in student interactions that may result in bullying. That is, teachers tend to leave the symbolic content of the scenarios as opportunities for fruitful connections with reality- current events and phenomena on social media. The sterilization policy leaves life outside school.

On the other hand, however, Greek teachers agree on cooperation topics between students and people outside the school. They also accept attempts at change that may also be risky, even theoretically, considering that in this way children are compensated through experience. They accept with reservations the cultivation of different talents outside school "in their leisure time". Regarding students' stressful manifestations during assessment, teachers mainly focus on the psycho-emotional dimension of the problem, bypassing the cognitive factor while opportunistically accepting the assessment.

The teachers at the pedagogical level show ignorance regarding creative techniques, as seen in the creative problem-solving and the "slogans" that they perceive as creative in relation to environmental problems.

The present research will be complemented with a program of experiential activities on socio-emotional, creative and sustainable activities and then with observation, key in the areas under study and for a small sample of teachers to detect what teachers do and say in the actual field with students in the classroom.

The continuous training of teachers with coordinated activities and their direct participation is also an important and essential response for a more qualitative school in the 21st century. In times when ICTs, AI and virtual subjects are rapidly advancing and where social media dominate as a way and place of communication for the younger members of our modern societies.

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