

Children's Rights through the Lens of UOWM Academic Staff: Framework Development, Strategic Actions, and Professional Identity Considerations

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Abstract

This presentation outlines the strategic framework developed for the establishment and operation of the Center for the Promotion of Children's Rights at the University of Western Macedonia. The Center has been created in collaboration with UNICEF and is now part of the national Network of Centers for Children's Rights in Greece. A central aim of this initiative is to ensure the Center's sustainability and long-term impact. In addition to outlining the strategic framework, the presentation is focused on the findings of a reflective process undertaken by the Center's academic and coordinating team. This process followed a capacity-building workshop delivered by UNICEF's academic team and constitutes a small-scale study examining key thematic areas such as participants' expectations, perceived personal and professional benefits, and future directions for learning and professional development. Specifically, the critical reflection was guided by the following research questions: What were participants' expectations regarding the content of the initial Workshop on Children's Rights? How did they perceive their experience as "trainees" in the workshop? In what ways did it benefit them personally and professionally? How have they integrated—or how do they intend/plan to integrate—children's rights into their academic and research interests? In what ways can their engagement with the Center contribute to their ongoing professional learning and development? Thematic qualitative analysis was employed to analyze participants' responses. The findings revealed both a positive disposition toward academic and professional growth and a set of concerns related to the effective pedagogical implementation of children's rights through best practices.